



# APT 2021

19<sup>th</sup> Academic Practice and Technology Conference (APT2021)  
 Co-hosted online by the London School of Economics & Political Science,  
 Imperial College London and University College London.  
 Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021

<b>Session Start Time</b>	14:20
<b>Breakout Room</b>	3
<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	Reflecting on a student's view of interactions and communications before, during and after lockdown
<b>Presenters (lead &amp; co-presenters)</b>	Eileen Bracken
<b>Institution</b>	University of Limerick
<b>Format</b>	Case study
<b>Abstract</b>	An undergraduate student addresses her own particular context, in which core abilities were purposefully nurtured during students' early engagements in problem-based learning, and which were subjected to changes in practice occasioned by Covid, She seeks to identify and present a reflective view of the features of such course provision that may usefully be carried forward from the lockdown experience, to the post-Covid period. This projection is based on her records and reflective reviews in the period influenced by the pandemic. It is further informed by reference to the publication in the year before Covid struck of summarised evidence-based student claims for development. The author critically identifies and explores the ways in which she and her classmates have been developing their practice and particularly their communications using technology. She explores the developments that she hopes will be sustained when the 'new normal' emerges.
<b>Session Description</b>	I will address the student experience sub-theme directly, drawing on the records of my experience-based learning and development that I kept during that time, and comparing them with a published account of the experiences of students in the year prior to the pandemic. Our course structure expected us to engage in reflective review informed by data that we had accumulated during our experience. I will draw on much of that for this presentation. The major changes that confronted me and my peers, and on which I will concentrate, were the need to engage in group working online, to

interact in these circumstances with peers who were initially strangers, and above all to engage with the demands of our student-directed, student-managed programme. This was a programme that was unobtrusively framed around the Kolb Cycle, engagement with Dewey's active experimentation and testing featured frequently, and in the online circumstances depended heavily on effective interactions between peers. I would hope in a presentation to have time to illustrate the various stages in our (perhaps unwitting) application of Kolb Cycle as demanded by the course structure, with examples of the challenges with which we were confronted during that opening semester - in each case picking out my and our dependence on effective use of appropriate technology.

I have assembled an account of my reflective review in a paper which I will submit now if the proforma allows. I hope that this may be available to conference participants, so that any presentation by me would take some such form as brief coverage of:

1. Experiential learning online - trigger tasks, group working, presentations, evidence-based reflective reviews, forward planning;
2. Peer interactions – formally in team working, and constructively in peer contributions to reviewing;
3. My thoughts on what I hope will continue after near normality returns, and what I will welcome as a return of previous practice.
4. Questions and responses.

Professor John Cowan, who facilitated my reviewing at the time, and who prompted me to assemble this submission, has already enrolled for the conference and will be around to support me if the discussion takes on pedagogical depth.

(Word count only 353, I am afraid; I have tried to address the demands succinctly and have nothing more to add, really. Character count 1870)

Nothing to add about session



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<b>Session Start Time</b>	14:20
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<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	Conclusions from the HWOnline-PGTOonline project: When good practices in online education prepare you for “emergency learning”
<b>Presenters (lead &amp; co-presenters)</b>	Mari-Cruz Garcia Vallejo
<b>Institution</b>	Heriot-Watt University
<b>Format</b>	Case study
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The HWOnline/PGTOonline project was aimed at enhancing the delivery of the portfolio of online postgraduate programmes at the School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society (EGIS) of Heriot-Watt University. The project introduced the pedagogical model of learning communities as well as the use of multimedia materials (audio and video) to avoid the feeling of isolation and to keep students motivated. The analysis of the results of the EGIS student survey for the 13 academic courses that were redeveloped during the project, from the academic year 2017-2018 to the academic year 2019-2020, shows that students preferred the pedagogical approach of learning communities, instead of the previous self-study model, to keep them motivated. Although the low response rate for the student survey (less than 23% for distance learning students) does not allow to draw significant conclusions yet, , the 13 courses redeveloped as part of the HW Online project gathered higher positive feedback for both the qualitative and quantitative questions included in the survey. Live webinars, interactions with other peer students as well as with the tutor through discussion boards and group activities, and the use of multimedia content, were the most valued enhancements from student feedback.</p>
<b>Session Description</b>	This case study describes how the pedagogical enhancements introduced by the HWOnline/PGTOonline project addressed the feedback and expectations about online education from the distance

learning students enrolled in the online postgraduate programmes delivered by EGIS

The HWOnline/PGTOnline project was launched in April 2018 and the first phase ended in March 2020. The two main pedagogical enhancements introduced by the project were:

- Replacing the previous self-study model by the theoretical model of the learning communities. This model fosters online interactions between all the members that comprise an online learning community since the feeling of belonging help students to keep focused and motivated. (Wenger-Trayner 2015)
- Use of multimedia (audio and video) to help students understand complex concepts (Krause et al 2017).

The case study summarises the analysis of the EGIS end-of-semester survey, which runs for S1 (September) and S2 (January), for distance learning students and for the successive academic years of

- 2017-2018 (courses before introducing the pedagogical enhancements),
- 2018-2019
- 2019-2020.

The case study analyses survey results for the 13 academic courses (15 credits) that were redeveloped in the first phase of the project. The analysis compares student feedback for the original courses, before introducing the pedagogical enhancements (152 students' responses) versus student feedback for the 13 redeveloped courses, after introducing the pedagogical enhancements (74 students' responses)/ Although the low responses in the survey (less than 23% responses for distance learning students) does not allow to draw significant conclusions yet, the redeveloped courses gathered a much positive feedback than the previous versions of the course (for both quantitative and qualitative questions). From the student feedback online interactions (discussion boards, webinars) and multimedia content were the most valued elements of the re-developed courses.

The case study concludes with a final reflection about the lessons learnt from the HWOnline/PGTOnline project and how the pedagogical model of the learning communities helped students and course leaders in HWOnline programmes to successfully cope with the "emergency learning" situation that took place during March 2020, when the UK went into lockdown as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. Feedback from the course leaders who were running HWOnline courses at that time shows that the disruption to their teaching was minimal as the pedagogical enhancements brought by the project allowed academics to keep in touch and looked after their students well-being.

The case study fits into the conference sub-theme "Staff and student experience" as it presents a pedagogical model for online education based on the foundation of learning communities of practice, in opposition to the individual study model that some education providers adopt for the delivery of their online courses. The analysis of

the student survey for three consecutive academic years (and comparing student feedback before and after introducing the new HWOonline pedagogical model) suggests that distance learning students prefer an online study model in which they can feel that they are part of a community, a model that encourages synchronous and asynchronous online interactions.