



The Design Society Chat Room: Reflections on a Year of Design Education Online

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Research Journey



July 2020

After the first wave of the pandemic.

We still thought that COVID would not have a huge impact.

We have little experience with “emergency measures to get online fast.”

What are the differences between our expectation and reality?

September 2021

We have one year’s experience of teaching online.

We have advice to share.

This will have an impact for future...

We can reflect on our practice to improve in the future.



Research Journey

DS Chat Room 2020:

Design Education Transition to Online

- We shared our experience of Global Design.
- Four key areas were suggested.
 - Group work
 - Studio Work
 - Prototyping
 - CAD modeling
- 12 challenges were identified
- 6 solutions were suggested

E&PDE 2021:

Transition to Online: What Have We Learnt?

- We shared our experience and research on focal points for student satisfaction
 - Student engagement
 - Student well-being
 - Lecturer – student connection
- 19 challenges of teaching online were identified
- The top 3 key challenges were selected
- 16 solutions were suggested

DS Chat Room 2020: Design Education Transition to Online

- **Challenges identified:**

- Students working with users in the design process
- Remote video-meetings are a poor substitute for the rich interaction that happens naturally in a studio environment
- Student team bonding (particularly for first year's)
- First year's initial experiences of studio work, and impact moving into the second year of studies and beyond
- Some students are working in difficult circumstances, kitchen table - low-grade laptops etc to ensure a 'fair education for all'
- Spotting the quiet ones that need help
- Work shifts from continuous time to discrete, event-based, assignments - changes the way to engage design assignments
- How to enable (let students do) design teamwork across the cloud
- Zoom fatigue
- How to develop ways for embodied experiences for students in research through design
- Home internet connections
- Foster inclusion and overcome cultural barriers in distant and blended teamwork? How?

DS Chat Room 2020: Design Education Transition to Online

- **Solutions and examples of practice:**

- Group working using distributed teams who come together and disseminate work
- Studio teaching using a mixture of live lectures and pre-recorded short videos
- Technicians can make model making and prototyping videos to teach students techniques
- Students can use low-cost materials such as cardboard to begin with model making
- Hackathon style modules
- Encouraging progress of tasks by reducing the requirements into smaller segments

E&PDE 2021: Transition to Online: What Have We Learnt?


- **Challenges identified:**

- Students reluctant to turn cameras on
- Digital Break out rooms are difficult to manage – You don't get a good sense of student discussions – You might feel you are interrupting
- Early prototyping was greatly reduced
- Introverted students feel alienated
- **Opportunistic interactions happen less**
- First year students don't build up a bond with each other and the staff.
- Group think become prevalent
- Sharing design work becomes difficult
- **Difficult to study at home – shared accommodation**
- Lack of spontaneity because of overthinking
- **The computer screen feels 2D and there is a lack of 3D thinking**
- Difficult to get a sense of student wellbeing
- Team building is difficult
- 1-2-1 discussions with students are heavily time constrained
- Hard to measure engagement
- Content needs rethought for online
- Online behavior can be less formal and more a kin to social media
- Screen fatigue
- The “human centered” element can get lost as part of the design process

E&PDE 2021: Transition to Online: What Have We Learnt?

- **Solutions to key challenges:**
 - “Fika Room” where students can drop-in
 - Using novel technology such as Gathertown/slack/discord for a virtual university
 - Plan opportunities for spontaneity
 - Using alternative materials to encourage early prototypes e.g. Play-Doh
 - Change thinking of model making as a proof of concept and not an end goal
 - Dedicating time to activities that students skip in a virtual environment
 - Quick Hackathon type activities using £1 store materials
 - Using AR/VR (still very expensive)
 - Adapt public places to support teaching – Physical spaces for online learning.
 - More time at home = Productivity and more screen time. Designing value adding activities away from the screen.
 - Designing different types of activities. Eyes closed learning?
 - Learning on mobile
 - Using Social Media to create a sense of community
 - Using meditation to alleviate stress
 - Using novel technologies for peer-to-peer feedback
 - Send students on a “walkabout activity” to observe and learn

Expected Challenges	Experienced Challenges
Remote video-meetings are a poor substitute for the rich interaction that happens naturally in a studio environment	Digital Break out rooms are difficult to manage – You don't get a good sense of student discussions – You might feel you are interrupting
Zoom fatigue	Screen fatigue
Student team bonding (particularly for first year's)	First year students don't build up a bond with each other and the staff.
	Team building is difficult
First year's initial experiences of studio work, and impact moving into the second year of studies and beyond	Sharing design work becomes difficult
Work shifts from continuous time to discrete, event-based, assignments - changes the way to engage design assignments	1-2-1 discussions with students are heavily time constrained
	Opportunistic interactions happen less
Some students are working in difficult circumstances, kitchen table - low-grade laptops etc to ensure a 'fair education for all'	Difficult to study at home – shared accommodation
Home internet connections	
Spotting the quiet ones that need help	Difficult to get a sense of student wellbeing
	Introverted students feel alienated
	Online behaviour can be less formal and more a kin to social media
	Students reluctant to turn cameras on
	Hard to measure engagement
Students working with users in the design process	The “human centered” element can get lost as part of the design process
Foster inclusion and overcome cultural barriers in distant and blended teamwork? How?	
How to enable (let students do) design teamwork across the cloud	
How to develop ways for embodied experiences for students in research through design	
	Early prototyping was greatly reduced
	The computer screen feels 2D and there is a lack of 3D thinking
	Group think become prevalent
	Lack of spontaneity because of overthinking
	Content needs rethought for online



Can we build a timeline of
support for design education
online?