# **Introduction**

**This file contains data used for a study into students’ experiences of synchronous online tutorials carried out by Kathy Chandler, EdD student at the Open University. The thesis is available on ORO.**

**The student data consists of learning network tables and diaries from 10 students studying an Open University undergraduate health and social care module from October 2019 to June 2020. This data was used as the basis for stimulated recall interviews. Vignettes of the students’ narratives are also included. The participants gave their consent for this information to be deposited within ORDO and** used for future research and learning in accordance with the OU Data Research Management Policy. The student names given are pseudonyms.

The tutor data consists of two forum conversations about the vignettes of the students’ narratives, one from the tutor forum for the module studied by the student participants and another from the associate lecturer common room forum. Permission for the anonymised content of the forum posts to be deposited in ORDO was given by the tutors who consented to take part in the study. The tutor names given are pseudonyms.

Information has been redacted where necessary to preserve anonymity. Otherwise, the written information is as shared by the participants without changes to spelling or formatting, although emojis did not copy always across from the forum conversations.

# **Student data**

# **Amie**

## ****Learning network table and diary sheet****

Table

Description automatically generated

**Tutorial 1**

Title of session: Society and Health

Date of session: [exact date redacted] December 2019

Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?

I joined in on time when the tutors were just introducing themselves.

What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do? Tutors presented slides, showed videos and talked about the topic.There were also some interactive activities, where students were allowed to write on a white board, and those were really engaging.

How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others? It was quite convenient to contribute ideas. I could write on group chat and teachers would respond.

What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?

This particular tutorial was probably the best I have ever attended. It was focussed, clear and engaging. It helped me understand how i should attempt my assignment and gave me confidence and information to proceed.

How did you feel during the tutorial? I felt totally absorbed. Every bit of information was useful and relevant and i was trying hard to capture and take in everything.

What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial? This tutorial gave me plenty of ideas to improve my TMA. It gave me noew angles to think of and helped upgrade my essay.

Any other comments?

## **Vignette**

**Amie\* is not currently working but is at home with her own children. English is her second language and whilst she previously studied extensively in her country of origin, she finds study in the UK different and challenging. She has two friends who support her with her studies, and she is part of a WhatsApp group that she describes as very active and supportive. She has never met any of the WhatsApp group in tutorials and she has not contacted her tutor outside of tutorials. She completed a diary and was interviewed about the third tutorial in her module. Here are her thoughts about it in her own words.**

\* Amie has chosen her own pseudonym.

I haven’t attended too many tutorials. Last year was my first year with the university and I attended one tutorial but that was not beneficial at all, so I did not bother attending any more tutorials until this year and to be honest with you, they were better. All of the tutorials that I attended this year were quite good. The tutorial in my diary sheet was in fact the best one that I attended. That was really, really good.

I think there is a lot that can be done to improve the quality of tutorials. Instead of just delivering the lecture, if teachers can enable students to interact with them more or if students can offer their opinion and get feedback, that would be more helpful, which in my last tutorial was done. So it was engaging. It was more beneficial. Because, the way the university operates, most of the students are doing their studying at home. For most of them, these online tutorials are really important because it’s the only time they are communicating with their teachers. So if their quality can be improved, that will benefit the students a lot.

Students need some extra time to communicate with the teachers, so when they have given the lecture, there should be time for questioning and answering to clarify any ambiguities, anything that they need to ask because for some students like myself, I have young kids, so attending a face-to-face tutorial is not always possible. Online is our only option.

This tutorial was better because instead of just talking themselves, the tutors encouraged the students who were attending the tutorial to participate, to present their ideas briefly. So you know, that was a better way of doing it. In that way, students were getting to say what they wanted to say, and a lot of ideas were being written on that whiteboard. Plus, they were more focused, those tutors. They were not repeating themselves. What they were saying was making sense. Some tutorials which I have attended in the past, the teachers, to be honest with you, I think they just recycled the slides from last year because even the assignment questions, they did not bother changing it. It’s not just me. We have a WhatsApp group of students. So our students often say that they just present slides to you from the past.

In this tutorial they explained everything in detail. They explained everything very well. It was really focused on how to present your work. It had a lot of information for the assignment, a lot of relevant ideas that we can discuss.

They said, ‘Which wider social factors have an impact on children’s health?’ They asked the students to write on a board, so a lot of students participated and wrote, and then they acknowledged which responses were right. So, they were encouraging students to participate more in the discussion about the topic. It was not just one-way flow of information. It was two-way. It helps because it’s information from so many people, so many ideas and I was pretty much engaged. I was enjoying it and I was learning at the same time. I was excited. I was happy that I attended a tutorial different from the past tutorials.

It is sometimes hard to capture everything because a lot of information is being passed. A lot of things are being said and written down but luckily, recordings are available, so you can always go back and watch a tutorial.  When I did my assignment, I went to that tutorial two or three times, just to refresh my knowledge. Just to get a lot of ideas, you know.

They played videos, they played clips and then they discussed them. So that was good because if it is only a PowerPoint presentation, that does not refresh your memory that good, so when they actually played a video and actually discussed it, that was a better way of doing it. We discussed them in the whole group, not smaller groups.

I just wrote. I did not use the microphone. I am more comfortable when I am writing. My spoken English is not very good. It’s getting better.  Learning a new language is not that easy. When I am talking or even when I am listening to English, I am constantly translating it in my mind. It’s a bit more work, a bit more processing for me than if things are said or if I have to say them in my first language. But I do understand most of it, 90% of it. If it’s a good tutorial, I feel motivated and satisfied as well. I feel thankful for the teachers for giving me good ideas and guidance and not too exhausted.

Having small children does make it hard. I do have to tell them to just sit down and watch TV for some time, but, you know, it’s not guaranteed that they will just sit down, not for an hour and a half, and one of my children has learning disabilities. He doesn’t take instructions very well. The online tutorial is my only hope, the only way that I can interact with my tutors.

In this tutorial, they were not my own tutors. Both of them were sharing the teaching. No one took the lead in particular and that was better, as you get the best of both really. Both were good in their own way and the combination worked for them, as well as for us.

I previously had an online tutorial with my tutor as well. My own tutor was doing it with another teacher.  It was okay. It helped more when I went to attend a face-to-face tutorial because there were less students. I could ask what I needed to ask. I wouldn’t really say that it does make a difference whether it’s your own tutor or some other tutor. It depends on the tutor. If they are good, they are good.

I attended this tutorial because I wanted to get better scores on my assignments. Last year was a really busy year for me because I was doing another course at the same time. I couldn’t pay much attention to my modules. So, this year, I am relatively free, so I thought of attending as many tutorials as I can and that really helps me.

My ideal tutorial would start off with presenting relevant information, a lot of guidance to students, interactive activity and then I would try to allocate some time for students and teachers to have a conversation or discussions or a question-and-answer session at the end. One thing: timings. Because most of the tutorials are in the night, like from 7 to 9, it is a bit difficult for parents to attend. If there were some during the day as well when kids are at school, then I can attend tutorials with, you know, more peace and quiet.

I have always wondered if maybe teachers could provide students with some good examples of assignments because in my journey learning to write critically and in an academic style of writing, I have had to glean information. If teachers can present some good examples and label them, like, ‘This is a good introduction because this…’, ‘That part is good because it is explaining that…’. I do struggle with critical writing. I have heard from people in some other universities that they do provide you with some good sample assignments to guide you, but last year, there was no such example. This year, there has only been one example. If there could be more, that would be helpful, I think.

# **Deborah**

## **Learning network table and diary sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of contact** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Occasionally** |
| Personal contacts e.g. family, friends | X1 X2 X3 |  |  |
| Work colleagues | X1 X2 |  |  |
| Open University staff |  |  |  |
| Other OU students |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Tutorial 1**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: Society and Health |
| Date of session: [exact date redacted] December 2019 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you? I was set up in my kitchen which is my makeshift study area. I had a 3 week old baby asleep in a pram next to me and a 6 year old watching Netflix to allow me to take part in the tutorial. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do? There were some interactive parts with a whiteboard as well as breakout rooms. This was in addition to the powerpoint. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others? There were IT issues that caused some problems with taking part. I don’t think tutorials are the place to build relationships because they are so short and you don’t always see the same people in the tutorials as in previous tutorials. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial? Gained a better idea of how to set out the next TMA and what topics to discuss in the TMA. Also understood better about the topic that is being used for the TMA. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial? I felt the tutorial was quite fragmented and didn’t seem to flow all that well. Not sure if that was caused by the fact that one of the hosts was fairly new to tutorials (had only completed 1 in the past) and the 2nd host hadn’t done tutuorials for months. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial? I will be able to plan my next TMA in a different way than I had originally thought. |
| Any other comments? Apart from gaining knowledge on how to set out my TMA’s I have never really gotten much out of the tutorials and feel that I would benefit, in the same way, from just having the powerpoint sent to me to go through on my own. This could be just the way I work though. |

**Tutorial 2**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: Writing a Report |
| Date of session: [exact date redacted] February 2020 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you? I was set up in my kitchen. My 3-month-old was being looked after by my partner in the livingroom and my 6 year old was in his room playing. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do? The tutorial was mainly the 2 tutors going through a powerpoint with only one whiteboard session that lasted 5 minutes. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others? It was easy to contribute to the session via the [chatbox]. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial? I understood how to lay out the report for the TMA after that tutorial. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial? I felt the tutorial was informative towards the end. The first part was a review of the previous 2 sections of the module. That part I felt was longer than necessary. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial? I structured my report differently according to the tutorial. |
| Any other comments?  N/A |

## **Vignette**

**Deborah\* is currently on maternity leave and studying with a view to a career change. Her partner is very supportive of her studies and she has two other personal contacts with whom she often discusses her learning. Her only contact with other students is via the forum, which she always contributes to when instructed, and tutorials. Her only contact with her own tutor is via her assignment feedback. She completed a diary and was interviewed about tutorials 3 and 4. These are her thoughts about them in her own words**.

\* Deborah chose her own pseudonym.

For tutorial 3, I was set up in my kitchen which is my makeshift study area.  I had my baby asleep in a pram next to me and my son watching Netflix. I felt the tutorial was quite fragmented and didn’t seem to flow all that well. It was mainly a PowerPoint presentation, although there was a couple of times when they brought in a whiteboard that we could put our ideas on.  I found the whiteboard actually quite a messy tool to use because you can’t see where somebody’s typing until they’ve finished typing, so it ended up quite a jumble of just letters and numbers at one point because everybody was typing over the top of each other. I think the whiteboard is a good idea if you could see if somebody was typing.

There was 22 in the tutorial and from the chat box, it looked like everybody was attempting to take part. They put us into like smaller groups to discuss a video and then we all came back together to discuss what the smaller groups had come up with. It was assumed we had all watched the video. I had watched the video, but it wasn’t shown at the time of the tutorial. I don’t know if that was the intention or not because there were IT issues. I find with the tutorials, there’s quite a few IT issues from those presenting the tutorials.

It was a typed discussion in the breakout room. We didn’t really speak to each other. It was more we typed up our ideas on the whiteboard and again, it was a bit messy. The whiteboards didn’t get brought back into the main room. When we came back to the main discussion, it was just a PowerPoint that was in front of us. We were just asked to put our views in the message box on the right-hand side.

I would have done just as well if I’d asked for the PowerPoint to be emailed and not actually taking an hour and half away from my home life to be sitting listening to somebody read a PowerPoint out. I felt it was just a summarised version of the topics I had been learning. I wouldn’t say it was a complete waste of my time, but I didn’t feel that I got much out of it. I was a bit deflated coming to the end of it.

I always try to do the face-to-face tutorials if I can because it’s easier to ask questions and get assistance with a tutor. Also, it is nice to sit and discuss with people that are doing the same course as you, any little nuances that they may have found along the way. I appreciate that people have got different circumstances, so they need different times, different days, different locations but I haven’t with this course recognised the same name twice in any of my online tutorials, so you can’t really build a relationship. If you do some of the face-to-face sessions, then you do build up a relationship.

Tutorial 4 was a much better tutorial. It was one of the best ones. I actually took notes on the tutorial. Sometimes, I just start doing my assignment and kind of half listen because all they’re doing is reading out a PowerPoint that I’ve got access to anyhow but that one, I was actively listening to it. I got better marks than I have ever done, so looking back on it, I think it did help me a lot.

There was a bit of summarising the two topics that we had been working on in the module, but it wasn’t just reading a PowerPoint that was put in front of us. I appreciated the time being taken to explain the fundamentals of report writing and not just about the subject of the course that I was doing. It wasn’t so much a verbal discussion, but the chat box got to its full capacity. So, people were entering into the discussion and it was helpful because I’m not in a practice setting. It was good to hear from those that do write these reports on a regular basis as part of their job, just giving little hints and tips as to how reports should be laid out, any keywords that should be included in the report, which you wouldn’t have got from the PowerPoint presentation had it just been sent out to you. A tutorial has to have a PowerPoint element, but I wouldn’t have it as just a summary of the topics. I would want it to have more advanced information.

I don’t know what stops people from using the microphone. I know, myself, I don’t like the sound of my own voice. I don’t know if it’s something as simple as that or…. The tutorials that I’ve been in, it’s not been encouraged. It’s been suggested, but it’s not been actively encouraged by the tutors. And it’s not something I’ve done a lot of… to be the person to start the verbal conversation, so I tend to just stick to the typing in the chat box. In breakout rooms, I would try and encourage the verbal communication, rather than typing all the time. Again, it’s very difficult because it’s all to do with people’s personal behaviour whether they’re confident to speak or not but I would try and encourage that more.

The first tutorial, the tutors split the tutorial in half, so that each had a section doing the talking. The other person was keeping an eye on any questions that were coming up on the chat box and answering them. The second tutorial again, they split the PowerPoint into two but when one person was doing their part of the PowerPoint, the second tutor was very quiet, didn’t answer anything that was on the chat box and didn’t really chip in with any additional information. They were letting their colleague do their part. I actually preferred the first approach. I found that better because it meant then that there wasn’t a build-up of questions. You can just keep an eye on the chat box, as well as listening to the PowerPoint. I think the one that’s not actively talking should be looking at the chat box for the questions if they can answer the questions. If not, then maybe stop the discussion to ask for the answer to the question. I find if they can work as a team, that’s probably the best way to do it.

I’ve never actually taken part in a tutorial that my own tutor’s taken part in. When choosing tutorials, I make sure that it is relevant to that stage of my module and it’s something that’s going to give me more information and help me with my assignment. I don’t have enough free time to attend tutorials that are not really relevant to what I’m doing. I only get my oldest son for half the week. He’s at his dad’s the other half, so I try and avoid any tutorials that are based on my half of the week because I don’t want to take any time away from him and also, any tutorials that fall on the weekend, especially if I go back to work. My partner is going to be the one that’s at home looking after my youngest, so I wouldn’t think it would be very fair for him to have to keep the parenting duties at the weekend as well. I try and make my studies fit my home life, rather than my home life fit my studies. At the end of the day, as much as I’m working hard to get this qualification, my family and my home life are more important.

# **Joanne**

## **Learning network table and diary sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of contact** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Occasionally** |
| Personal contacts e.g. family, friends | X1 | X2, X3 |  |
| Work colleagues |  |  | X4, X5, X6 |
| Open University staff |  |  | X7 |
| Other OU students |  |  | G1, G2 |
|  |  |  |  |

**Tutorial 1**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: Society and Health |
| Date of session: [exact date redacted] January 2020 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  At home with the laptop. Nobody else in the room and no TV or distractions. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do? |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  Easy, get a response when typing in the chat box from both tutors and students. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  How society can impact a child’s wellbeing |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Good and restored confidence |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  Nothing, I don’t think. |
| Any other comments? |

**Tutorial 2**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: Writing Your Report |
| Date of session: [exact date redacted] February 2020 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  At home with the laptop. Nobody else in the room and no TV or distractions. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  Asked to contribute our ideas to what roles and organisations can support a child |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  Easy, get a response when typing in the chat box from both tutors and students. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  How a report is different to an essay |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Confident, sometimes lost focus. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  Focus on report writing |
| Any other comments? |

## **Vignette**

**Joanne\* is working full-time with children and young people. Her work colleagues are interested in what she is learning. She receives a lot of support from her partner who is a student in a different faculty of the same University. She is part of a large student WhatsApp group and a Facebook group and has one student in her tutor group whom she messages individually. Joanne says that she does not usually initiate contact with her own tutor but appreciates their regular emails and she sometimes replies. She completed a diary and was interviewed about the third and fourth tutorials in the module. Here are her thoughts about them in her own words.**

\*Joanne chose her own pseudonym.

When choosing a tutorial, the first thing I will go by is to try and get on the tutorial for my tutor cos obviously, sometimes they differ in things that are more important to them in your assignment, so I normally try and gauge what they like. The only other thing after that is just my availability. I’m generally looking for evening ones. I don’t think there’s any weekend ones that would work for me, but I would look for evenings or weekends because I work from Monday to Friday, 9 to 5.

I normally try and get on when the room first opens, so five or 10 minutes before it actually starts. I normally try and say hello to the people when I first go on. I don’t like to speak on a tutorial, but I think we don’t have that option this year. We have the option to do it, but it’s not utilised. I prefer to type in the chat box than to actually speak on the microphone. The microphone is weird because you can’t see anyone, and I just feel like there’s a delay and it can be quite awkward. Way at the very beginning of my studies or maybe in the second year, there may have been once where a tutor had a camera but since then, I’ve never experienced that.

So, I think I started having a bit of chitchat with another student. I don’t really talk to a lot of the other students on my course, so it was just quite useful just to see you know ‘How are you?’ ‘How are you getting on?’ That’s quite good. I always find that quite a nice thing to check against how I’m getting on. If I’m thinking [slight laughter], ‘I don’t know what any of this is about’, I find someone there who also feels the same.

Tutorial 3 was informative. I find my tutor very good. At the end, it seemed to start to drag on a little bit, but I don’t know if that’s because of the amount of time that you’re sitting in front of a screen. I don’t think I’ve had one this year but sometimes, you do get a tutorial where you’ll have even just a five-minute break. You might need a rest break or to get yourself a drink and I think that helps greatly.  If you don’t get that, my brain does start to wander. Also, when I’m on the laptop, I’ll be thinking, ‘Oh, I wonder what happened with that in the news today’. I know towards the end that definitely happened. My mind wandered off a little bit.

The tutorial restored my confidence. I don’t speak to many other students, so for me, I kind of think, ‘Am I on the right track?’ You’re asked to contribute, and the tutors do make sure they pretty much try and respond to everybody, whether it’s just, ‘That’s a good suggestion Joanne’ or something like that. That’s good cos it’s encouraging you.

We had two activities where you can type on the page. It would be something like ‘What does this word mean to you?’ or ‘What does this sentence mean to you?’ It was obviously around health and well-being. And I think we had the same with resilience and you would type out what you thought. If you couldn’t do it on the actual page, then they encouraged you to just do it in the chat box. I think on the first time it did work. The second time it didn’t, so I just wrote it in the chat box.

We’ll have a tutor who talks us through the tutorial and we’ll normally have somebody else who monitors the questions and pretty much kind of controls the chat box. So, one tutor is normally talking to you verbally through the system and the second tutor is normally responding through the chat box. Sometimes they might speak, but I think most of the time they’re just trying to keep on top of any questions that come up in the chat box. Whereas in a normal class environment, where you’re face-to-face, you might wait until the end to ask your question, people generally just ask their question as and when they think of it, so I think that’s why you then have that second tutor trying to address those. If you’re paying attention to what is being shared with you on the screen, sometimes, if there is a flurry of questions, you can miss those. I think it could be a bit more structured because there might be a question there that I’d find really useful to know the answer to. I feel like there should only be two or three times when you have times for questions.

What I gained from tutorial 4 was the difference in writing styles between a normal essay and a report. In that one, we did have a video that we watched. Then afterwards, we were asked ‘What practitioners would be involved with this situation?’ It was like assessing a child or young person’s situation and then who you might signpost them to. I would like to have more interactivity, so I quite like it when we’re refreshed by doing an activity from the materials, such as watching a video. That really brings your focus back to that particular thing and obviously, it’s a bit of a wave like ‘Hello! You need to pay attention to this section’ [slight laughter].

It was easy to get a response when typing in the chat box from both tutor and students. I’m always happy to join in and contribute in answer to the questions that are phrased to us. I do quite enjoy the tutorials [slight laughter]. I think there were around 10 to 12 people. With most tutorials I’ve ever done, there’s really only about three or four people that generally would ask questions.

I think our tutor was on their own for this one. The questions were still addressed in the chat box, but again, possibly because they couldn’t answer them all straightaway, that helped because questions were saved for where there’s a particular prompt for questions. It definitely made it easier to follow the tutorial. I’d rather focus on the person that’s talking and the slides that they’re showing and then have a moment that’s like, ‘Okay, ask questions.’ I think if everyone knows you’ve just got that one tutor on their own, they understand that they’re not going to be able to speak and look at questions at the same time, so then you save your questions maybe.

In this tutorial, I felt confident, but I sometimes lost focus. Sometimes I feel like I already know about a particular thing. I was more interested in part one, which was the writing of the report, rather than part two, which was reflecting on the report. So I think in a way, that’s why I lost focus. Not that I thought, ‘Oh I already know this’, but that wasn’t necessarily my need.

I think it’s really interesting to be part of this study that you’re doing. It’s made me think a little bit about what could add to the tutorials and maybe I need to think about how to focus a little bit more as well [laughter].

# **Karen**

## **Learning network table and diary sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of contact** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Occasionally** |
| Personal contacts e.g. family, friends |  |  | X1  X2 |
| Work colleagues |  | G |  |
| Open University staff |  |  |  |
| Other OU students |  |  | G1  G2 |
|  |  |  |  |

1. **Your experiences of [module code] online tutorial(s)**

**Tutorial 1**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: **Society & Health** |
| Date of session: [exact date redacted] January |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  **I was at home, in my office, there were no distractions but I was stressed due to my partners recent ill health.** |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  **The tutors used breakout rooms and the whiteboard to encourage participation** |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  **Very easy to contribute, there were 2 tutors so one would talk and the other would check the chat box** |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  **The expectations for the TMA, step by step guidance through all the points** |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  **I felt that the tutorial gave me motivation, I really enjoyed it.** |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  **I realised that I should copy & paste my information directly from the discussion forum rather than separately so that dates etc can be seen** |
| Any other comments?  **This tutorial really got me back on track after a few difficult weeks** |

**Tutorial 2**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: **Getting to grips with TMA 04** |
| Date of session: [exact date redacted] January 2020 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  **In my office at home with no distractions** |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  **Tutor asked for input either by talking or using the chat box, tutor gave everyone opportunity to join in and answered questions.** |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  **Easy to join, it was encouraged although nobody seemed to want to talk and used the chat box instead** |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  **General expectations for TMA04** |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  **I felt motivated, I was comfortable and free to engage in the session** |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  **There was mention of being able to add personal experience to the TMA and although I probably won’t, it’s an added option is appropriate.** |
| Any other comments?  **Tutor’s sound was intermittent but that’s just technical issues and didn’t affect the information being passed on** |

## **Vignette**

**Karen\* works full-time teaching childcare in a further education college. She is well supported by colleagues, some of whom have studied similar modules. She also discusses what she is learning with her friend and her mum and she has a supportive partner. She has not needed to contact her tutor during the module, but she receives emails from them and feels comfortable getting in touch if she needs to. She is part of a Facebook group and WhatsApp group and whilst she never posts, she does not want to leave the groups in case she misses anything. She was interviewed about the third and fourth tutorials in the module. Here are her thoughts about them in her own words.**

\* This is a pseudonym.

I like the tutorials. I know you’re not really speaking to other people, but you work away at home on your own and all of a sudden, other folk are there doing the same thing and asking the same questions or asking questions that you haven’t thought about. Last year, I did hunt out the ones that my tutor did because that made sense, but it didn’t seem to fit as well this year. My tutor seemed to do the face-to-face tutorials that I couldn’t go to.

Last year, I felt familiar and comfortable with the tutorials. Tutorial 3 was quite different. We had to think about the social factors that can impact on health, but part of the assignment related to a forum. What I really wanted out of that tutorial was to find exactly how we had to do that. I just couldn’t get my head round it. It became apparent in the tutorial that other folk were wondering about that as well. Prior to that, my partner was really ill. My studies gave me something to focus on for myself. He was home by then and it gave me a bit of normality. I think that tutorial just got my head switched back into it all.

On a couple of occasions the tutors used the whiteboard, and everybody had to chip in and write down their thoughts. It was quite straightforward. I think that was the first tutorial I’d been on that used the breakout room and it felt a bit strange initially. You’re just sort of put into these rooms and expected to communicate with people. But everybody’s in the same boat, aren’t they? Everybody just started typing and we got some kind of conversation going. It’s difficult typing though because as you’re typing, somebody else puts something else on and sometimes it doesn’t flow. I tend to just type, and I think most folk do. I wouldn’t say I’m not confident using the microphone. Maybe I’m not confident. I don’t know why I don’t use the microphone. Some people do.

There was two tutors there, so one was talking, and they took turns doing different sections. The other one was keeping an eye on the chat box, answering questions, whereas for tutorial 4,there was only one tutor there who asked us to talk because it’s difficult to facilitate plus keeping an eye on the chat box. There were odd questions going on at the side because somebody was on the tutorial from work, so they said they couldn’t use the microphone, but certainly not the same volume of chat box as the first one. I think it probably made it easier to follow what was happening. I’m normally listening, but I’m also reading the chat box the same time cos you’re scared in case you miss anything. Because the tutor was encouraging folk to use the microphone, they seemed to be more reluctant to do that. There’s a symbol where you can put your hand up. So, it’s well organised and controlled to a certain extent.

There were some technical issues with the sound. One minute the tutor was loud. The next minute they were quiet and a couple of times, somebody put in the chat box that they were having difficulty hearing. Actually, once you got used to it, you zoned in.

For this essay, you had to either pick one of two options. It was an hour and half and I think probably an hour was spent on the topic for first option. Although I did get a lot of information from it, most of it wasn’t relevant to the topic that I had picked. If there’s two options, you’ve always got to listen to the other stuff as well. It’s still important that I know the stuff about the other topic. You’re encouraged to link to the other topics in the module, so there was a couple of things actually that came up and I thought, ‘Ooh, I’ll just scribble a note of that’.

I haven’t joined any of the other sessions for that tutorial, but I’ll go back and look at the recordings. I don’t always cos I think they’re all much and such the same. Certainly, last year, when I was new to this, I was going back and looking at all the recordings and I’m not saying it muddled me even more but sometimes, you’re better just watching a couple and then getting your head down. One tutor is happy to accept one thing and another’s more flexible about it. If the tutorials were in the tutor groups, it would keep it more focused.

Generally, students always join in. I really would have liked to go to some of the face-to-face ones, but they would be a four-hour drive for me for a round-trip, probably having to stay over, so I really just have to go to the online tutorials. It would be nice to see faces to make it more personal. There’s quite big numbers in the tutorials though. Sometimes, there’s about 20 people. That would be a lot of faces on a screen when you’re maybe needing to work through some sort of presentation as well. I suppose the smaller the number, the more interaction you would be able to have. If it was your own tutor group, you would feel like you would know your own tutor a bit better or your tutor might feel they would know you a bit better. There’s not really that closeness. You don’t really have that face-to-face personal relationship when it’s online. I think, had I been face-to-face and actually met my tutor, that makes that personal connection then. It’s that putting a face to a name.

I would like to have more tutorials. They always seem to just be around when an assignment is due. They’re really good because you are just sitting at home in front of your computer, just working your way through it, feeling very on your own and even though you know your tutor’s there and there’s other students doing the same thing, it’s that connection, even if folk don’t want to use the microphones. It just puts you all in the same place for one common reason. You could choose to go for one or you could choose to go to three. If there was one of the assignments that you were finding really difficult, you would maybe go to them all.

There’s just a lot of virtual life going on just now. Even just on the telly and you’re seeing the guy that reads the weather from his back garden. You’re seeing people in their personal space and although it was quite strange initially, there is something quite nice about it. It makes it all personal. It makes it a bit more real.

I’m always aware of the tutor just because of my job and thinking, ‘Gosh, that’s a lot for them’. It’s a long time when it’s just you that’s talking. I’m now facilitating these virtual classrooms and its very strange cos I’m on the other side. I can totally see that folk don’t want to use the microphones [laughter]. At some of them, I will use webcams. I think the students would be better if they could all see each other. When you’re used to being in a classroom face-to-face with the interaction, whether it’s questions or comments or a bit of a joke or banter, I really miss that. You’re just very aware that it’s just your lone voice in the middle. It’s just a new way of working. But I guess, the university tutors, that’s what they do all the time. We’ve almost got to redesign our whole units. I’m at an advantage because I’m doing distance learning. I can picture it laid out and I can imagine what a virtual classroom looks like but for some of my colleagues, it’s just been terrifying.

# **Korina**

## **Learning network table and diary sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of contact** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Occasionally** |
| Personal contacts e.g. family, friends |  |  |  |
| Work colleagues |  |  |  |
| Open University staff | My tutor |  |  |
| Other OU students |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Tutorial 1**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session:  Preparing for TMA 01 learning event. |
| Date of session [exact date redacted] November |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  I was in my bedroom and on my laptop where it was quiet. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do  I was able to give my views regarding about the TMA 01 and the tutor did give respond to any questions I had and helped to understand the tutorial. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  It was easy as we all gave our ideas. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  It did highlight points what I can alter in my TMA . |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  I was good |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  I did look at my TMA again to think if I could change anything such as referancing. |
| Any other comments?  I am enjoying my course as it interesting as I work as an early years practitoner. |

## **Vignette**

**Korina\* works part-time in a nursery. According to the learning network table she completed, the only person she discusses her studies with is her own tutor, whom she contacts often. She completed a diary and was interviewed about the second tutorial in the module. Here are her thoughts about them in her own words.**

\* Korina chose her own pseudonym.

Well, this tutorial was about my first assignment regarding how we could structure essays and it just gave us support on how assignments should be laid out. It did actually focus on the assignment question, which was helpful, and it made me look back on my assignment thinking ‘Oh, have I done that bit’? It refreshed my knowledge on it. This is my next level as well, so obviously, I’d like to step up a bit higher in my grades and do my best.

We got involved as well, the students, if we had any opinions, if we had any questions regarding the assignment, which was helpful. So it was nice to get the feedback from other students and the good thing is about it, the tutor was explaining it in a way which I tried to understand cos sometimes, it’s different aspects, how tutors explain things, isn’t it? [laughter] I mean all tutors may be different how they explain things. So, it was me trying to understand everything in my own ways.

I personally found it really good because you get to know from the other students, their feedback and you can work along with the other students. It’s nice. I love to find opinions of the other students and making sure they’re all right as well. It’s like on the forum as well, I make sure that all the other students are all good… It’s my personality. I’ve always loved to communicate and help other people out. I’ve always tried my best to.

The good thing was that the tutor did email the slides. So, we could email that tutor, the one that was doing the tutorial, if we had any questions.  Sometimes they’ll say, ‘Have you got any questions left?’, but sometimes, on the hotspot, you may not, so it’s good that you can actually speak back to your tutor. There was just the one tutor doing the tutorial and it was a different tutor from the one for my tutor group.

Some students did use the microphone to talk. I think there was only one student.  I like to type [laughter] to tell you the truth. Cos I find it easier that way. It’s depending on the area where you are doing the tutorial as well cos if you’ve got family members, they do let you know that… [slight laughter]. You may have children and it’s sometimes the background noises… You don’t want that as well.

We had like a sort of a poll of questions and everyone had to give their feedback, yes or no, ‘What would you…?’, ‘How would you feel…?’, your sort of personal… Basically, it was more of what we thought, so we gave our opinions of what we thought of health personally ourselves. So, the tutor let us explain it. We actually typed in our own words. It was good to see all different students’ views, as well, cos again we all had different views about well-being. It wasn’t like questions, but it was just like what we thought of it, our ideas, views about it, so yeah.

I was feeling good because I was sort of structured in it and I was doing it at my own pace in my bedroom. I didn’t have no disturbance, you know what I mean? Cos obviously, [slight laugh] I didn’t do it in front of the TV or something where you can easily distract yourself and I was just personally myself in my own bedroom, quiet, which does help as well.

What made me feel good was the structure of it, the way it was presented, the different parts of the tutorial. It just broke it down to help out about assignments and my first assignment. I felt good generally. To me, it was structured in a way which I could understand, personally, in my own way. All tutors are all different really and they do it in their own different ways. Like my own tutor would be different, the way how they explain to me and it’s been really good with my tutor, who is very understanding. I can rely on them, you know, if I need any support or regarding about the assignment and if I need to speak to them with any concerns, I can just email them, and they’ll call me. So, I find that important, cos obviously, they’re the main one. They’re going to mark my assignment and they’re my main tutor.

This was my first tutorial I had attended for this module. I did give my viewpoints about how you would give support to children in their well-being. The working with different students, getting their views, it’s nice to be part of it, even if they’re not my students in my group. Obviously, this is a distance learning university, so it’s not as though we go to uni and have the lectures and that [slight laughter] so we don’t meet other students in that way, do we? I wouldn’t say there’s no barriers where I felt like, ‘Oh God, I don’t feel part of it’. It was so nicely done.

I like doing more of the practical side of it, to tell you the truth. I’m more of a practical girl, ideas and stuff like that. I like to give my views verbally, like I’m speaking to you now. Don’t get me wrong, I can speak, I mean write, my views down, like I was on the tutorial, but… I couldn’t… Personally, I would like it more practical sort of style, which is getting more of the students’ views, cos sometimes, it can feel like too much writing, too much knowledge in one and a half hours. It can be a bit daunting to have all that information into you straightaway.

No, there weren’t any videos. There were more like the written side of it, as I can remember. I would enjoy something more the picture side of it. I’m not saying they don’t have it, but some more images may help cos of me being visual and more practical. I’m quite happy, the way they are set out. I’m just only saying I’d like a bit more of the practical side of it, I mean the visual side of it. They already do it but yeah, besides that, I’m quite happy with all the tutorials what I’ve been through, personally, myself.

# **Lisa**

## **Learning network table and diary sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of contact** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Occasionally** |
| Personal contacts e.g. family, friends |  |  | X |
| Work colleagues |  | X |  |
| Open University staff |  |  | Very Occasionally to hardly ever  X |
| Other OU students |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

1. **Your experiences of [module code] online tutorial(s)**

**Tutorial 1**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: Success with assignments |
| Date of session: [exact date redacted] October |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  At home nothing going on around me. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  Lots of getting involved with questions and being able to add what we through in the chat box as well as on photos. They broke the tutorial in to 2 parts doing a part each while the other watched the chat box which was good help when replying to others comments. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  I did not really put anything in to the chat box just being I'm not very good with my spelling and there was lots of people in this tutorial but I listen and read what others have said and take note of things I need to look in to for myself. Im very much a face to face person I need to have a conversation with them to get involved as I'm not very confident in my work (all the face to faces for both my courses are very far away). |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  - Going over what is expected in TMA is always helpful in the first TMA  - Looking at the basics of referencing because it doesn't matter how many time I read about referencing I always end up getting it wrong, so nice to go through with other people. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  I feel better on the basics  I felt like they covered a lot when over a lot of helpful things for my notes.  there was lots of chatter in the chat box which was helpful in a way but sometimes was left waiting for the typing for a while. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  For my next tutorial I will try and get more engaged |
| Any other comments?  I feel like there should be more tutrials so that less is rushed through also could do with pacific subject like just on referencing or how to get the most out of one theme eg like a real lesson would be.  Hopefully the next one will have less about the tma cirtiral and more about the subjects them selves. |

**Tutorial 2**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session:  Society and health |
| Date of session:  [exact date redacted] December |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  At home nothing going on around me. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  We two group video to watch, as well as anonymous lists making though out all of the different topic covered. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  I found it really easy, I really like how there has been someone to watch the chat box at all time. Again I didn't really add anything in to the group I'm not sure why I don't its just something I like to watch and take notes but not get involved so much if it isnt on the anonymous lists that we made today. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  yes I did learn lots, I come away feeling very confidant from this tutorial. I helpped me foruce my thoughts and know that I am thinking in the right way and i made some really good notes and points about things I should do that will help me when looking in to case studies. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Fine it covered so really helpful bits as well as being really short and packed. There wasn't much time spent on unnecessary things that have been gone over before. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  Think about the question ‘what limits the effectiveness of their work’ to promote critical thinking.  I really liked how Ali used things she had seen in the last TMA as group feed back and what we should do to help us.  also when looking at case studies making a table to look at the wider social factors and then the effect this has on the YP. |
| Any other comments?  I would still like more tutorial.  I would love to go to a face to face one what there is none in my currant area at the moment.  I also really loved looking at more videos together. Helped me look at it more deeply. |

## **Vignette**

**Lisa\* works with young people. She has dyslexia. She sometimes discusses what she is learning with her sister and also her manager at work, who supports her by checking her assignments. She hardly ever contacts her tutor. She has no contact with other students outside of tutorials and does not post on forums, although she reads them. She describes herself as a ‘silent student’. Face-to-face tutorials are too far away for her to attend. She completed a diary and was interviewed about the second and third tutorials in the module. Here are her thoughts about them in her own words.**

\* Lisa chose her own pseudonym.

Tutorial 2 was very assessment based, so it went over what is included and how to set up an assignment and it broke it down, so like intro should be 10%. I didn’t take too many notes because I also do my own spider diagrams. I’ve got both of them in front of me and on this one, there’s not a lot to do with the assignment topic, it was very much like how to set it out and how to set paragraphs out and then a little bit on referencing, it’s very factual… as to what they were looking for. There was lots to do. I loved the anonymous add-in coz I don’t really write in the chat box. I do get involved when they ask a question and then you just post it on the actual slide for everyone to see. We had to watch videos before on this one because the videos were quite long if I remember rightly. It was good, but I enjoyed my second one a lot better [laughter].

For tutorial 3, I think it was the tutor. I think it was very much to do with them, linking it to their work, the assignments their students had done and saying like, ‘I noticed that a lot of you were doing such and such and here’s how to change that’. It was a lot less factual than the first one. It was what I needed, so a lot about the social and health, and how to link them, and how to think critically, literally just by asking one question.

My ideal tutorial would be a lot more about the course cos I can find a lot of the stuff that was in the first tutorial online, like all of the help on how to set out your assignments and things like that. I’d love more tutorials, just to sort of help focus all the notes and everything that’s going through my head. It really sort of brings them together being able to listen to someone else talk about it.

The second one was an hour and a half, and I found that I concentrated better because it was like bang, bang, bang, bang. It was constant, whereas the first one was two hours and we had a break in the middle, which is fine cos obviously it was longer, but it was very sort of spread out… there was no real rush, like we were having lots of conversations and obviously, for someone who doesn’t get involved in the chatter very much, it was quite long.

I hold back from the chatter because of my spelling. I’ve always feared putting stuff out there without it being checked. Obviously, I know they’re not going to be sitting there going, ‘Oh look at that person’, but it’s that, and I prefer being the ‘silent listening to the tutor’ kind of…. I don’t really go into tutorials with too much questions. It’s more I need like facts and I need just someone to literally guide me into like what I’m already thinking is right, just that sort of backup and just going over like different tips on when we’re looking at case studies.

One activity that we did in the second tutorial was the tutor had a table and we group watched a video, which I thought was really nice. It was only like four minutes, the first video and there was a table and one half was the wider social factors and then the other side was effects on the young person and that exercise really sort of gave me a tip that when I watch videos, I should sort of make a table and link it to my assignment. We watched a second video about practice and there were some questions on the side and I’d never thought to ask: ‘what limits the effectiveness of their work?’ And the tutor said, ‘If you add that into your assignment and if you actually ask that specific question, it can build up your critical thinking’, which was really, really helpful. And so they’re the two main things that I took from that tutorial. To go back and re-watch videos with a group and then go back through that, I thought was really, really helpful. Then there was an activity afterwards that sort of… we were able to add anonymously into the slide, to the table, and really get involved and to see how other people…their perspective of it which I found really helpful.

The first tutorial was very, very sort of study skills orientated. I did find the referencing bit really interesting though because… I struggle with references [laughter]. It was nice to have that, just going over. But even the second one had a little bit about referencing in it, but it was… the right amount of referencing. Just like give us a really good link which I actually still have up on my laptop to go over… so yeah… It was really helpful. For my other module, I just use the big Harvard guide but in this one’s just a referencing guide for the module, which is nice.

I think in the chat box it’s more questions, isn’t it? It’s more personal and you can ask any questions that you might have, whereas on the screen, it’s more interactive, it’s more to do with the topic. It’s not so much someone asking a question. You get more involved.

I do definitely feel that I would personally benefit from having more tutorials just because sometimes I can get into my head a little bit too much and then I sort of panic. I know it but it’s literally just trying to get it out, and especially with this second tutorial, I found it very useful to sort of just get out of my own head and just sort of see what was expected and things like that. Maybe we should have one tutorial every two weeks to go over what we’ve learnt, maybe talk to other students… I don’t know whether other students would benefit from that, but I personally know I would.

I did get an email before, which was really nice, just sort of reminding us that we had a tutorial that evening and then with both, they both emailed afterwards, with the slides and the recording, which I thought was really, really lovely and helpful.

The first tutorial was half my tutor speaking, then we had a break and the other tutor would come in and do the other half, while the other one looked at the chat box and then with the second tutorial, one tutor ran the whole tutorial, while the other one did the chat box. It does not really make a difference whether it is my own tutor. I just think it was just the stuff they went over that made a difference.

I struggle. I’ve got dyslexia. It does not affect me in tutorials too much. I haven’t noticed it. Having activities and being engaged…, that was where I enjoyed the second one a bit more, whereas the first one was a lot of sort of talking to us if you know what I mean? But the second one, I enjoyed how short it was and how informative it was.

I’d really, really love to go to a face-to-face tutorial. I really do sort of engage better in that sort of environment and talking to people about the work and having a professional sort of go over it on a screen and things like that, so I really would love that. Having more videos throughout the course would be better. I normally use YouTube more often than not to help me understand research or words, anything really. Even if there is no way of having more tutorials, maybe creating videos might be helpful for some people.

# **Melissa**

## **Learning network table completed during the interview**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of contact** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Occasionally** |
| Personal contacts e.g. family, friends |  | X1 X2 X3 |  |
| Work colleagues | X1 X2 X3 X4 |  |  |
| Open University staff |  |  | X1 |
| Other OU students |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

## **Vignette**

**Melissa\* works full-time in a school and plans to qualify as a teacher. She did not complete the diary sheet for the research study, as she did not attend any online tutorials during the module, but she was happy to be interviewed about her decision-making around tutorial attendance. Melissa is well supported by colleagues at work, some of whom have also studied with the same university. She also sometimes discusses what she is learning with her sister and her own children, as she finds it helpful to get their perspective. She occasionally contacts her tutor. She does not have contact with any other students.**

\* Melissa chose her own pseudonym.

I attended one online tutorial at the very beginning of my studies, and I didn’t get a lot out of it. I found it just as helpful and useful to go through the Power Points and the recordings after. I mean, it wasn’t that it was awful. It just wasn’t for me. I was just sat there. I had my headset on, and you go through the PowerPoint and there’s a little… like a box where people that are attending can comment and address anything. It slowed the process down doing it like that. There wasn’t any videos. I think there was a breakout room when we got put into a group to discuss things. It’s kind of weird to talk to somebody through just typing and you’ve not actually met them. I found that it’s hard to make a connection.

I actually found it more beneficial to go through a PowerPoint in my own time, look at the notes and then, if I did have any queries, to contact my tutor. I can just email them. So it’s been like Power Points and recordings and I’ll just go through them cos there’s notes at the bottom as well. From the recording, I would just go through, pick out any particular bits that I need. I look for certain tips. Sometimes they push you in the right direction of where to use good information. It gives you examples of how to write certain things. If I need to find something out, there’s the forum where people post questions, so something where I think, ‘Someone else might have posted it’, I’ll have a look on there but I generally go through the stuff myself first. So sometimes, you have a question for your assignment, and you sort of think, ‘How am I actually going to tackle that? How would a paragraph of that look?’ And sometimes, you just need to see a rough example of something similar.

I haven’t been to any of the face-to-face tutorials because of the times that they were, distance, childcare, things like that, so I haven’t attended any of those.

I’ve worked in education for a long time. I’ve got lots of people that I can speak to at work and I’ve worked in three different schools. I think that’s probably why I don’t do the tutorials as much because I’m in the education sector and I would imagine for somebody who isn’t, they would get a lot more out of it. So maybe for somebody who hasn’t actually worked in schools, then they actually find that they need that communication with other students and to take part in those tutorials.

I might think about attending a tutorial if they were helping us look at it from a tutor’s perspective of what they’re looking for. They’ve got like a mark scheme and we have our assessment criteria, but I suppose it would be helpful to delve deeper into that. Some of the Power Points have been copied and pasted from the assessment criteria and it’s, ‘Okay, I’ve already got that information but how do…’ I would like more examples of how to pull it apart and put it back together again. It’s also important to keep it at a good pace and straight to the point. To say, ‘This is what you would need to do.’ Normally, I’m looking for information for the assignment, if I’m honest [laughter].

I think it’s always better face-to-face anyway when you’re in groups cos you can pick up more on what people are saying. I’ve never actually done a university tutorial with webcams. That would make more of a difference and you could actually see people’s faces and see their reactions. Recently, I have had a session with webcams because I’m currently retaking my English GCSE. So, for the college, we had to have one of those to discuss what’s happening cos all of that’s had to change now and that session was actually really good. I suppose that was different because I already know all of the other students, cos we see each other every Tuesday. It felt a bit more natural. With the university, no one actually sees each other… I mean it’s good because it’s flexible and everything, but you don’t have that connection as much.

# **Sophia**

## **Learning network table and diary sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of contact** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Occasionally** |
| Personal contacts e.g. family, friends  Daughter and sister | X1 X2 |  |  |
| Work colleagues |  |  |  |
| Open University staff |  |  | X1 |
| Other OU students |  |  | X1 |
|  |  |  |  |

1. **Your experiences of [module code] online tutorial(s)**

**Tutorial 1**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: Success with assignments |
| Date of session: [exact date redacted] Oct 2019 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  I was at home and had privacy in my room |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  Tutorials had slides and were engaging with students to write ideas on white boards or they could contribute verbally, or chatbox. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  It was very easy to contribute. I can’t say I experienced building relationships with others. All the tutors were incredibly approachable and helpful |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  Attending the tutorials helped to understand some of the concepts better, eg. Bronfenbrenner model. They also helped me to prepare for the TMAs. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  I felt confident. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  I could plan my essay better. |
| Any other comments? This year I am doing two modules for the first time and it just so happened that some other things are also demanding my attention, so it has been a bit of challenge and I seem to be having some difficulty in processing the information, and I have to read everything over and over. Even doing the activities it takes me much longer than guided, so attending tutorial is a must for me and has been incredibly helpful. I also really appreciate that I can go back and listen to the recorded ones, as I have listened to all the recorded tutorials. |

**Tutorial 2**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: Society and Health |
| Date of session: [exact date redacted] Nov 2019 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  In my room at home. Nothing was going on around me. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  There were slides and interactive white board activities and chat box activities. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  It was very easy to contribute. I can’t say I experienced building relationships with others. All the tutors were incredibly approachable and helpful |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  How to improve on writing skills and TMAs using the reflections from TMA1. How to prepare for TMA2. As a group we collectively went over some of the ideas covered in Topic 3 and 4. Reviewed the guidance for TMA2, referencing etc. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  I felt very good. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  I went over my feedback from TMA1. I have had to ask for an extension for this second one, so I am still working on it. |
| Any other comments? I am incredibly happy I signed up for this module. It is making a difference for me. |

## **Vignette**

**Sophia\* is a childminder. She often discusses what she is learning with her daughter and her sister and occasionally talks with her tutor. She also occasionally talks with other students at face-to-face tutorials for her other module. She completed a diary and was interviewed about the second and third tutorials in the module. Here are her thoughts about them in her own words.**

\* Sophia chose her own pseudonym.

Tutorial 2 was a very good one, first explaining the level of study and the subject material, what to expect, what was going to be covered and then it went into preparing for assignments and also, it talked about the subjects that we covered in topics one and two. They did cover the Bronfenbrenner model quite a lot because that was quite an important part about the whole topic. It was a really good introduction to help me to prepare for my assignment. And they did a lot of brainstorming with the students to get them to think, even down to how to write and what sort of ideas to put in there and the importance of being careful when taking notes not to replicate the material in our essays because it could be plagiarising, and we could do it unknowingly.

We were invited to talk if we wanted to and also they had whiteboards so people can write on it and we can say our opinions in the chat box as well. Everybody could contribute at the same time, the whole group. I think in one of the tutorials, I don’t remember which one, they did separate and make small groups. That was good. They just divided us into two groups to get our perspectives on things, you know? Perhaps it was during my previous module.

I think the tutors were very good and they explained things clearly and they were very engaging with everyone. They shared it, half and half. I think it was very well-managed. One tutor managed the chat box and then one tutor was giving the lecture and then they swapped. So they talked. One talked about the information and the other talked about the assignment and sometimes, they would engage together, if the other tutor wanted to add something. They were tutors from other tutor groups. The difference having different tutors makes is everybody has their own style of teaching, so in that way it’s different, but the material is all the same that they covered, because I think they have set slides that they have to talk about as far as the topic goes.

I contributed on the chat box, but I didn’t add too much because I’m feeling a bit shy to say things. I don’t always contribute. I’m just worried about saying the wrong thing really. I prefer the chat box, rather than the microphone. It’s even more anonymous. It’s not really anonymous because everyone can see your name. I tried writing on the whiteboard, but I couldn’t figure it out actually.

Tutorial 3 was a bit different because they started with subject material, whereas some tutors will start with preparing for the assignment. It was good. It went straight into the material and went into depth and then went into depth with preparing for the assignment as well. They covered a lot of things. It was mainly chat box. I don’t remember doing any whiteboard activity. I think the tutor did go into a lot of detail and there wasn’t time for whiteboard activity. Everybody was chatting in the chat box. It was presentation and discussion. I think the videos didn’t work that day.

I’ve found the tutorials so helpful that I do go back and listen to them, the recorded ones and I listen to other recorded ones as well, not just the ones I’ve attended. I think it’s helping me a lot to understand and because I work alone. I do childminding, and so it’s nice for me to listen to other students because I also feel like I’m talking to somebody about the subject [laughter]. So that’s my way of keeping in touch with the subject with other people. I know the forums are a good way to do it, but I think that everybody on the forum is so busy with work and studying. I don’t think they’re chatting on the forum as perhaps they were expecting to.

Most tutorials are about sharing the information and then preparing for the assignments and reminding us to plan and prepare but different tutors emphasise different things, so I think that’s why it’s helped me to listen to different tutors as well because one might spend more time on planning, another tutor might spend more time on the actual material.

It’s helpful to learn in a group, you know, to share and discuss. It gets me to think around the topic more when we’re talking about it. It’s nice to have colleagues [laughter]. If you’re the same…studying the same topic…you have something in common. In the live session, we can chat more, but it’s not really building the relationship. We’re just talking about… We are responding to the tutors’ questions.

Sometimes, there’s only one tutor, I think. Then it must be hard for them, but it doesn’t make any difference at all. It’s still good. It’s nice that the tutors share their slides afterwards. Some of them do.

I think the tutorials I’ve attended are so helpful and good. I would definitely stick with the same format, introducing the materials and having parts of it to be interactive, getting everybody engaged and getting people to think and share their ideas and then preparing for assignments. There is a lot of things to share in one and a half to two hours, so I can see why sometimes, not everything gets covered. I’m actually just very happy with the tutorials so far.

# **Tilly**

## **Learning network table and diary sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of contact** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Occasionally** |
| Personal contacts e.g. family, friends | xx |  |  |
| Work colleagues | xxxxx |  |  |
| Open University staff |  |  |  |
| Other OU students |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Tutorial 1**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session:  Everything you need to know about [module code] |
| Date of session:  [exact date redacted] Oct 2019 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  In kitchen/diner on laptop. Family had just had dinner so was quiet for once! |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  None |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  Easy, during and after the tutorial there were some interactions on the tutor group forum between me and some of the tutor group present at the tutorial. Encouraged to ask questions in the comments box during the tutorial. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  How to get in contact with tutor if I needed to. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Enthusiastic towards the module content, impressed with the tutors – very welcoming and approachable. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  I commented on the forum to interact with some of the people on the tutorial. |
| Any other comments?  - |

**Tutorial 2**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session:  Success with assignments |
| Date of session:  [exact date redacted] Nov 2019 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  At home on laptop in kitchen/diner. Family getting and eating dinner around me. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  No activities. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  Was able to talk in comments box but there were 32 attendees. Session was quite rushed. Everyone seemed to be quite restrained – maybe because for some it was their first tutorial for this module. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  To use tables. 5% leeway on word count rather than 10% on my other modules. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Didn’t feel very engaged. A lot of it was about how to write essays – intros, conclusions, referencing etc; all things that I have done for the last 3 modules! |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  The tutor introduced an idea of using tables to fill in whilst working through the weeks to help with notes and talked through a planner which I found quite useful. |
| Any other comments?  Was expecting the tutorial to last for two hours but it was 1 hour and 15 minutes. It felt a bit rushed. The main tutor didn’t always appear to value the input the second tutor gave. |

**Tutorial 3**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session:  Success with assignments |
| Date of session:  [exact date redacted] November 2019 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  At home on laptop in kitchen/diner. No interruptions from family! |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  Give idea on activities on defining wellbeing, what makes a good assignment, leaving comments anonymously on the slide or identifiable in the chat box. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  Easy to write in the chat box without feeling judged. Not afraid to write a wrong answer or one that not to sure on. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  The need to think of the pro’s and con’s for each point, that there is a library course on critical thought and writing available on the OU site which they recommended doing. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Confident, encouraged, valued, listened to. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  Print off the marking grid to see if I have answered each area. Use linking sentences to add cohesion to my paragraphs |
| Any other comments?  The tutors suggested goggling linking words to add a variety, having a word bank and making a word file contain all the references so far on this module which can be used in further essays. |

**Tutorial 4**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session:  Society and Health |
| Date of session:  [exact date redacted] December 2019 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  At home on laptop in kitchen/diner. No interruptions from family! |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  We anonymously wrote what we would do differently for the next tma and an activity concerning a video we watched. The tutor talked about some of the things we wrote and gave tips and examples. (there were 11 students so they were able to comment on each) |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  We were encouraged to write in the chat box and join in with the activities. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  More information about the online activity that needs to be completed for the tma and how it should be attached to the file. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Encouraged. Confident that I can do the next tma well. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  Try to plan by making notes about arguments and go with the two better arguments that grab me and try to provide a clear link with part one to part two. |
| Any other comments?  This tutorial had the main tutor talking through the slides, with the co-tutor manning the chat box and when they did pass a comment it was respected. |

**Tutorial 5**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session:  Society and Health |
| Date of session:  [exact date redacted] January 2020 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  At home on laptop in kitchen/diner. Family having dinner around me |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  Same as previous tutorial (same slides) |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  Really easy. The tutors commented on almost all the messages in the chat box and activities so made it feel like our comments were appreciated. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  How to choose which areas I will focus on in my TMA by making mind map style notes on a few issues and then focus on the one with the most. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Encouraged – I do like both these tutors as they work well together and are both friendly and understanding of the challenges OU students face due to other commitments. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  Try to write critically in the TMA and focus on a couple of points rather than try to cover everything I have learnt in the module so far. |
| Any other comments?  Having the slides from the previous tutorial helped make my note taking easier. I like to be able to have a print out of the slides while the tutorial takes places which makes my notes easier to understand. The tutor on this tutorial sent the link for the slides just before the tutorial had started. It would be handy for the slides to be sent before tutorials so all students can make notes next to the relevant slide. |

**Tutorial 6**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session:  Writing your report |
| Date of session:  [exact date redacted] Feb 2020 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  Initially on my mobile whilst collecting my daughter from her club (internet kept cutting out and the sound stopped when my phone went into ‘sleep’ mode) and then at home on laptop in kitchen/diner. |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  We shared our ideas on our understanding of key phrases like formal/informal learning, inclusive practice etc. The tutors encouraged us to take part in the activities and in the chat box. |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  Both tutors were very friendly and positive about all the comments/contributions in the chat box. They asked us to vote on whether we wanted our comments visible in the recording. |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  The difference between writing a report and |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Encouraged by what the tutors were saying and their responses I posted in the chat box to their questions. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  Stick to the module materials rather than trying to back up my ideas with outside sources. |
| Any other comments?  I like how the two tutors work together, that they frequently asked for our opinions and for us to interact with them rather than just talking at us.  They always check that us students are ready for them to move on to a new slide. |

## **Vignette**

**Tilly\* works in education. She frequently discusses her studies with colleagues at work, where she says the knowledge gained through her studies has given her more confidence, and with her brother who is the only other member of her family to have studied beyond GCSE level. She does not contact her tutor outside of tutorials; she says she is unsure how much interaction is expected. Last year she joined several WhatsApp groups, but these made her anxious that she might be doing something wrong, so she stopped using them. She completed a diary and was interviewed about six tutorials: tutorial 1, tutorial 2 (x2), tutorial 3 (x2) and tutorial 4. Tilly was interviewed by email. Here are her thoughts about tutorials in her own words.**

\* Tilly chose her own pseudonym.

I don’t remember much about the first tutorial. I took notes but only a few sentences, which is unusual for me. I’m pretty sure the tutor did have slides, but these weren’t sent out to us, so I think there were only a few. I can remember taking part in the conversation in the chat box – none of us wanted to use our microphones! We were asked to introduce ourselves and say how far we were in our studies. There weren’t activities to take part in. The tutor would ask us questions and we would respond by writing in the chat box which they would respond to, waiting for everyone to finish typing and checking everyone was alright to move on to the next slide before moving on. This made it easy to ask questions.

This session was run by just my tutor. They were able to present information and monitor the chat box at the same time. There wasn’t as much content and it was over within the hour. This was more of a ‘housekeeping’ tutorial – providing details about how and when to contact the tutor, computer helpline and student support; what the module consisted of; checking we all had received the book; providing details of when each assignment was due. This tutorial wasn’t recorded, which they usually are. It was good to have this tutorial that wasn’t connected to an assignment to introduce us to the module. It made me feel enthusiastic about starting the module. The tutor came across as being really friendly, so I felt comfortable that I could ask/answer any questions without worrying about getting it wrong. The tutor spoke about having set up the forum and that we should all pop by and have a look. One of the students commented that they had already started a thread introducing themselves, so some of us commented on their post introducing ourselves.

I don’t like using a headset because I’m not very articulate and stumble on my words when speaking to a group of people. I’m also quite a shy person who feels uncomfortable in social situations, which is why distance learning is perfect for me. There’s also the fact that we haven’t built relationships, despite there being a forum. I don’t have the time or energy to use the forum.

For the first tutorial 2, I was at home, the family getting and eating dinner around me. There were no activities. I was able to talk in the comments box but there were 32 attendees. The session was quite rushed. Everyone seemed to be quite restrained – maybe because for some it was their first tutorial for this module. I didn’t feel very engaged. A lot of it was about how to write essays – intros, conclusions, referencing etc; all things that I have done for the last 3 modules! Many of the attendees had said that this was their second module at this level, but the content of the tutorial appeared to be aimed at students doing this level of study for the first time. The tutor didn’t try to tailor the tutorial for the audience. The main tutor talked over the co-tutor and dismissed their tip about writing introductions.

The second tutorial 2 was given by my tutor who got on really well with the co-tutor. The content of the second tutorial was more than just about the essay. We were asked what we struggled with and were then given appropriate advice and tips from both tutors. The previous tutorial felt like it was delivered to us, whereas the second tutorial felt more like we were working together. I felt confident, encouraged, valued and listened to.

For the first tutorial 3, I was at home on my laptop. There were no interruptions from family! We anonymously wrote what we would do differently for the next assignment and there was an activity concerning a video we watched. The tutor talked about some of the things we wrote and gave tips and examples. There were 11 students, so the tutor could comment on each person’s contribution. I felt encouraged, confident that I can do the next assignment well.

For the second tutorial 3, the family were having dinner around me. It was the same as the previous tutorial (same slides). The tutors commented on almost all the messages in the chat box and activities, so they made it feel like our comments were appreciated. I do like both of these tutors as they work well together and are both friendly and understanding of the challenges distance learning students face due to other commitments. I decided to try to write critically in the assignment and focus on a couple of points rather than try to cover everything. Having the slides from the previous tutorial helped make my note taking easier. The tutor on this tutorial sent the link for the slides before the tutorial started.

For tutorial 4, I was initially on my mobile whilst collecting my daughter from her club (the internet kept cutting out and the sound stopped when my phone went into ‘sleep’ mode) and then at home. We shared our ideas on our understanding of key phrases like formal/informal learning, inclusive practice etc. The tutors encouraged us to take part in the activities and in the chat box. Both tutors were very friendly and positive about all the comments/contributions. They always check that students are ready for them to move on to a new slide. They asked us to vote on whether we wanted our comments visible in the recording. I was encouraged by what the tutors were saying and their responses to what I posted in the chat box. I like how the two tutors work together, that they frequently asked for our opinions and for us to interact with them, rather than just talking at us.

My favourite tutor was trying out using a poll, which I thought was a good idea. Breaking out into smaller groups was also tried but there wasn’t enough time allowed for us to do the activity (around 5 minutes), answering four questions about one of the case studies. It was awkward because no-one took charge and none of us used headsets. I’ve done a few tutorials over the last three years where breakout rooms have been used. There isn’t enough time to do all the activity before it goes back to the main room. Maybe the tutor should give each group just one or two questions to answer. Could the tutor pop into each breakout room to see how things are going (like a teacher would in the classroom), then gauge how much time is needed?

The variation of tutorials is the reason why I attend two each time. I always take part in the tutorial by my tutor, so I know what they’re looking for in an assignment, but then I find another tutor who gives lots of advice and try to attend their tutorials too. Each tutorial experience is different, despite all having the same slides to work from.

I think the tutorials work better with a smaller number of students – maybe around 15 would be ideal, otherwise you are all vying for attention, asking so many questions and responding to questions asked that the tutor doesn’t get time to answer them all. Also, with lots of students you can be lazy and not have to participate as much as you do when there are less students – you can wait for someone else to ask/answer the questions!

My ideal tutorial would include using the whiteboard, chat box, polls, slides and watching videos but having access to the chat box whilst the video plays so you can ask questions. It would also be really useful to have the slides accessible BEFORE the tutorial so you can print them and take notes on them – then the notes make much more sense! I think all tutorials should be recorded so they can be revisited anytime – I like to redo a tutorial whilst I’m writing my essays, as it helps me to ‘get in the zone’!

# **Vicky**

## **Learning network table and diary sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of contact** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Occasionally** |
| Personal contacts e.g. family, friends | X1 |  | G1 |
| Work colleagues | X |  |  |
| Open University staff |  | X |  |
| Other OU students |  | X |  |
|  |  |  |  |

1. **Your experiences of [module code] online tutorial(s)**

**Tutorial 1**

|  |
| --- |
| Title of session: Health and Society |
| Date of session:  [exact date redacted] January 2020 |
| Where were you when you joined the tutorial and what was going on around you?  At home in a bedroom, son downstairs being looked after by his grandparents |
| What sort of activities happened during the tutorial and what did the tutor(s) do?  Worked through the slides,  Answered questions in chat box  Activity relating to one of the module videos – we worked through this together in relation to the TMA question  TMA guidance  Referencing guidance |
| How easy or hard was it to contribute your ideas and build relationships with others?  Fairly easy – mic/chat box |
| What did you learn or understand better as a result of the tutorial?  More context to the TMA - which I felt was a very broad question that could be answered in different ways. |
| How did you feel during the tutorial?  Fine, I prefer the face-to-face tutorials and only choose the online ones if a face to face isn’t an option. |
| What did/will you do differently as a result of attending the tutorial?  TMA structure |
| Any other comments?  Some guidance given in the tutorial I followed, which was negatively commented on in TMA feedback… |

## **Vignette**

**Vicky\* works in education. She often discusses what she is learning with a family member and her work colleagues. She sometimes talks with her tutor and with other students. She is a member of a module Facebook group, but only reads messages, rather than posting. She completed a diary and was interviewed about tutorial 3 but also mentions tutorial 1 during her interview. She did not mention this on her diary sheet because it ‘didn’t seem like a tutorial, as it was not about an assignment’. Here are her thoughts about tutorials in her own words.**

\* Vicky chose her own pseudonym.

We came in and the tutors thanked everyone for being there. Everyone checked the microphones. They signposted where to raise your hand for a question and how to test your mic. One tutor was leading it and going through the presentation and the other tutor was in control of the chat box and answering any questions that didn’t get picked up.

They had an overview of the tutorial and they checked what everybody was expecting and then we worked through each slide and we did a few activities. We watched a video all together and then the tutor asked us questions. Most people just used the text box on the side, rather than talking. I think people are a lot more comfortable with that, rather than talking in front of load of people without being in front of them [laughter]. Videos should be included because listening to how the tutors and how the students in the chat box were tackling it made me think about it in a slightly different way. I think the more ideas you get on the same subject helps you build that sort of opposing argument in your head and in your essay. In our tutorial, it threw up a conversation about the fact that the child’s mum was relying on the benefits and that’s never going to be the child’s fault.

We worked through an overview of the assignment and they broke down part one. We looked at different wider social factors that would affect a child’s well-being and we revised Bronfenbrenner’s model and then similar for part two. We looked at several services and practitioners and looked at different ways that they link with the social factors that we’d already spoken about. I think a lot of people in that tutorial are looking to go into teaching, so the conversation did go on to talking about how the practitioners within a school would pick up on these things.

We did a very quick referencing activity right at the end with a few simple examples of different ways people have referenced and we picked which we thought was the right one. The referencing activities are useful, and I know a lot of people do struggle with the referencing, but I wouldn’t put it in every tutorial. I don’t know if there could be referencing specific tutorials. I do know that people find it tricky and different modules want different ways of referencing. I almost sort of switch off when it gets to that point in the tutorial because I’m okay with referencing. My ideal tutorial would have more time focused on the actual essay question, I think, as some of the essay questions from the university are, as a rule, quite broad.

I’ve no idea of the ideal number of students for an online tutorial but the text box on the side goes quite quickly the more people are typing. I just spend a bit longer scrolling back to see what the questions are because sometimes, you can miss what someone’s written and the tutor’s answering a question that you’ve not read. But I did notice, the tutor was reading out questions before they answered them, and they’d say the person’s name who’d asked the question. So that worked quite well.

The person leading the tutorial, they don’t always get to answer all of the chat box questions because obviously, as it goes up and up and up, some questions get missed but the tutor who was looking after the chat box is my tutor and they were answering the questions that weren’t necessarily being answered vocally. I only used the text box for this one because I was slightly behind on the reading. I didn’t feel overly comfortable putting myself forward to answer questions because it wasn’t necessarily on things that I’d read yet.

It can be quite tricky to follow what is going on in the tutorial when one tutor is talking and the other is writing because I’m focusing on the text box waiting for an answer, but the two conversations are normally surrounding the same sort of topic or part of the essay.

I did use the microphone at the first tutorial. We introduced ourselves in the chat box and the tutor asked me to explain to everyone what my job role is. It was only a brief chat about myself and that was it. I normally would stick to a text box. The first tutorial was just the initial ‘Welcome to the module’ type, ‘This is what you can expect’ sort of thing. I think there were only 10 or 11 people.

With face-to-face tutorials, it’s a lot more personal. You can just get more into a conversation, rather than just listen to someone talking at you. Sometimes it’s slow online as well compared to face-to-face. I’ve only done one face-to-face one this year and in some way, and in the first online tutorial as well, they tailor it a bit more to the group that are there.

Tutorial 3 was fine because one of the hosts was my tutor. I’m a member of the Facebook group and advice on that the essay structure for the second assignment was so different from different tutors. My ideal tutorial would be with my own tutor, laying out exactly what they were expecting. Obviously, they can’t tell us exactly what to write, but just guide us down the right path. I think if the tutorials were more focused on the essay and what the tutors were expecting, then I think more people would feel a lot more confident when they were submitting because the general consensus on the Facebook group from this module isn’t very confident [slight laughter]. I wouldn’t choose to do one with any other tutors. If they give me advice and it’s the opposite of what my tutor wants, that would be quite a struggle.

I haven’t had any experience of small group work in online tutorials. In previous years, we did loads of small group work in the face-to-face but nothing ever online. If I’m sat with other people that are going into education or already work in education or even the tutor is from a social care background and I get the different experiences from different people, then yes, I enjoy group work. Some people don’t get as involved as others, which makes it awkward because you feel like you’re doing it all or you’re not getting as much out of it as you might if you worked with other people.

It would be helpful for a lot of people to see an example of what the higher-level writing is. Just an example of what they’re trying to teach you would be a lot clearer than just all of these different acronyms, like PEEL and PIE. Something that we did in another module was critiquing a bit of work, but it was only like a paragraph. We had to pick out whether the references were right or how else they could have worded certain parts. To do that activity in an online tutorial, there could be an excerpt of an essay up on the screen, so you’ve got like a visual of how it’s set out. Get the students to mark the screen and highlight a bit that was the right way of doing something. There’s lots of tools you can use in online rooms, isn’t there?

# **Tutor data**

## Module tutor forum conversation

Kathy Chandler Post 1

• 4 Feb 2020, 12:04

Students' experiences of online tutorials

Dear colleagues

You may remember that I am researching [module code] students’ experiences of online tutorials this year. Interviews with the participants are ongoing and may take most of the presentation to complete, but I would like to share students’ narratives with you as the study goes along, so that your responses can feed into the analysis. It would be great to hear from tutors, cluster managers and the module team.

I am preparing a vignette for each student, giving brief background information about them and their learning network, followed by the main points they have shared with me about online tutorials in their own words. Great care is being taken to protect the identity of both the students and the tutors.

I am going to share them one at a time. Because the study uses a narrative approach, it is important to consider our response to each individual story before looking for any common themes. You will probably spot contradictions, even within single stories. Lisa’s vignette is attached. If you have time, please share your thoughts about it, either by replying in this forum or by email to [email address].

Many thanks,

Kathy

Attachment

Lisa vignette Feb 2020.pdf

Louise Post 2 in reply to 1

• 7 Feb 2020, 10:32

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy, Thank you for posting this I really enjoyed reading it and gained a lot from the content. We often get a big group of students who say Thank you and that it was helpful in the chat box at the end of a session however we don't understand what was helpful about it.

I have often had a tendency to stick to my slides as I want to give breadth to all the issues and make sure I cover issues student's may have. Prior to reading this today I did think I was going to use my marking of assignments more to inform my tutorials. It was interesting that your student mentioned this as one of the most useful parts of the tutorial. This is my second year working on this module and I am very much noticing patterns of what student's find challenging. I give very detailed feedback of ways to enhance their marks but the same issues sometimes come up on the next piece of work. I think feedback in the assignments is one way and it doesn't give a student an opportunity to come back and say - I don't know what you mean by that can you give me another example. I get the odd student who will contact me for more detailed advice but  find in a cohort there are only one or two like this.

I liked that your student said that she wanted the tutorials to be more 'honest' , I presume she meant  rather than formulaic and following the slides. I  think this is great feedback and I will endeavour to link the tutorials to work student's have done and offer examples of ways to change this to enhance marks further. Having read comments on the module wide forum it highlights how worried students do get about answering the question in the right way and I think this approach offers more reassurance.

I'm wondering whether the tutorial is less about highlighting what the module has covered and how it relates to the assignment question and more about how our responses show we understand what the question is asking of us.

Thanks Kathy, I think your research has benefits for everyone, Kind Regards, Louise

Jess Post 3 in reply to 2

• 7 Feb 2020, 10:57

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks Kathy for sharing your sample of student feedback.

and to Louise, I agreed with your points, I'm also seeing patterns from students but do feel I need to stay on script, just so I don't miss things out and I also find it hard to 'gauge' how things are going. I wondered if this was me missing the F2F instant response I get from being in a classroom, but I am finding this easier as I do more of them. I also appreciate the 'thanks' in the chat at the end and I've had a few nice emails as well. Lastly, (different point!) as a module, I do think our model of two tutors for the AC works well, I find it really supportive.

Looking forward and learning more from your studies Kathy!

best

Jess

Kathy Chandler Post 4 in reply to 2

• 7 Feb 2020, 16:31

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Many thanks for your replies Louise and Jess. I really appreciate you taking the time to do this.

I went back to the interview recording to check what Lisa meant when she said: -

'I'd love more tutorials to be honest'

It was actually just a figure of speech and there probably should have been an extra comma in that sentence! She means: -

'Honestly, I'd love more tutorials'

Thank you Louise for giving me a brilliant example of how written narratives can be interpreted in more than one way . It underlines how careful I need to be when thinking about how best to represent students' stories.

Kathy

Post 5 in reply to 4

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Kathy Chandler Post 6 in reply to 5

• 10 Feb 2020, 11:07

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

That's really encouraging to hear [A]. Thank you for telling me. Some students are incredibly enthusiastic and being very generous with their time. The interview transcript I am working on at the moment has taken more than a day to type up, as the student didn't want to stop talking!

Here's another vignette that ready for sharing. Korina chose to share her thoughts about just one tutorial, 'Success with Assignments'. It would be great to hear any thoughts you have when reading it either via this forum or to [email address].

Many thanks,

Kathy

Attachment

Korina vignette Feb 2020.pdf

Kathy Chandler Post 7 in reply to 6

• 17 Feb 2020, 11:10

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Many thanks for all the comments received so far. These are so helpful to feed into the analysis. Here are two more vignettes that are ready for sharing. Again, it would be great to hear any thoughts you have when reading them either via this forum or to [email address].

I am trying to ensure that I gather the experiences from as diverse range of [module code] students as possible. Although I have plenty of volunteers now, all of those who have responded to the invitation to take part in the study are female and I have been talking with my supervisors about how I might get a few male students involved. Posting a message in the welcome forum helped to get some students interested at the beginning of the module. I am wondering if the moderators of the module wide forum would be happy for me to post a message in the module-wide forum to thank the students who have taken part so far and encourage the male students who have received invitations to respond. Would that be okay with you [moderators names]?

Many thanks,

Kathy

Attachments

Amie vignette Feb 2020.pdf

Vicky vignette Feb 2020.pdf

Sean Post 8 in reply to 7

• 20 Feb 2020, 10:30

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy,

I really like Amie's vignette and it chimes with my experience.

I have long ago moved away on a number of modules from a boring powerpoint.

I use the powerpoint very much in a barebones way and tenmd to operate on the fly much more.

Last night I ran a [module code] (Psychology and Counselling) online tutorial. For the TMA, students had to construct an imaginary case study, then link it to systemic issues in counselling, and then indicate what type of techniques they would use as a therapist.

I knew from previous experience that a number of students struggle with this TMA and do not know how to put together a case study, then instead of looking at the module material in the second part they start adding what is effectively Chapter 2 to the case study and wander off, and they can also come up with all sorts of unrelated ideas as to how to practice as a therapist (and mixing things like CBT which are from different sections and are not being assessed).

So, part of what I did was to put up a slide which had a picture of the Build a Bear Factory and then swap out the word Bear and put in the word case study. The next slide was a whiteboard and I asked the students to type up what effectively could be used for a case study and within two minutes they had all sorts of ideas. We then talked through these and I asked them to use the case study as a vehicle that would make links to the systemic theory (for example circular causality or recursive interaction patterns) and we also look at sociocultural issues.

I also had some slides which gave the directions for the TMA and we worked through these bit by bit and answered any questions and clarifications that the students had. I also used some real life case examples that were anonymized in terms of therapist meeting one person but thinking about working with them from the systemic point of view.

I find that a number of power points really might only need the written TMA guidelines and a number of whiteboards with which to work through the material that students. In actual live presentations I've done in the past, my presentations can sometimes just consist of images with no text at all. I used this is with prompting people to think about things and open discussion, and I have used a whiteboard or a flipchart in tandem. People get terribly bored of seeing PowerPoints full of text.

I think that your research is excellent and it is very good to hear the voices of the students and it certainly is really helpful to inform all of us in terms of our teaching. I like the way that you are so generous and collaborative which are material and that it is so participating and interactive. You do both us as the teachers, as well as the students, a great service and you are very humble about all of this. I'm sure that others feel the same too.

Thank you so much.

Sean

Kathy Chandler Post 9 in reply to 8

• 21 Feb 2020, 10:11

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Many thanks for responding Sean. I am full of admiration for tutors who can operate on the fly as you do! I like to give the impression that I can do the same but in reality, I still find online tutorials quite nerve-wracking and always have the sidebar switched on in the online room so that I can see the notes I have made below each slide, which include questions I want to ask students and reminders of instructions for each activity.

It's great to hear your thoughts about Amie's narrative and about your Build a Case Study activity for [module code] (I studied that module five or six years ago and it was excellent). Most of my tutorial activities have originally belonged to other tutors (especially [module code] tutors - thanks everyone) and I am thinking about how your activity could be adapted for other modules . Those of us still also tutoring on the OU nursing programme in September will have the challenge of incorporating problem-based learning into online tutorials to meet the requirements of the new curriculum, so we need lots of ideas.

Kathy

Jess Post 10 in reply to 9

• 21 Feb 2020, 13:21

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hello Kathy and Sean,

Thanks Sean, your response is really insightful and I recognise this from our tutorials (we are co-working this year) and the response you get from students, who value the reality you bring with your discussions from experiences. I also recognise this from my years of traditional HE tutoring, and see this as the nearest 'match'.

You make a good point Kathy about the introduction of enquiry / problem based learning in nursing and Sean's description of 'build-a bear/ case study' is a good way to describe this approach, bringing to life experiences and learning for students. Maybe we should consider using Kathy's strong forensic approach to exploring student experiences to this and compare?

Jess

Kathy Chandler Post 11 in reply to 10

• 24 Feb 2020, 21:16

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Many thanks for all the comments this week, both those here in the forum and those I have received via email. Here are two more vignettes for you to have a look at when you have time. Please do let me know if either of them resonate with you or make you think of implications for practice.

The [module code] students interviewed so far are representative of a range of cultural backgrounds, ages and programmes of study. I have not included this information in their vignettes, however, as doing so could make them identifiable, particularly to their own tutors. The only group not represented to date are the male students who make up 6% of those invited; I am hoping that a few of them might volunteer before the end of the module.

Kathy

Attachments

Sofia vignette Feb 2020.pdf

Tilly vignette Feb 2020.pdf

Sean Post 13 in reply to 10

• 25 Feb 2020, 19:38

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks Jess,

You're very kind. Sometimes I am sure you are wondering if I am ever going to stop going on, so you can get to your part!!

Sounds like some good ideas brewing!

Thanks,

Sean

Sean Post 12 in reply to 9

• 25 Feb 2020, 18:28

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks Kathy,

That's very kind.

At the start years ago, I would over prepare. I used to run a certified mediator training course years ago and I would even have 2 projectors with me just in case! Belt & braces in overdrive...

I once saw Bill Gates online doing a presentation and Powerpoint did not work for him.... so that was very encouraging!! I took it that if Powerpoint didn't work for bill Gates, then we will all mange somehow. I love the face to face but I really enjoy the online tutorials as well. Adobe Connect is fairly good overall.

I do think that notes can be handy as prompts. I tend to think on my feet too and respond to what the students ask. It helps me learn too. Modify or borrow away whatever is useful. It's a wonderful commiunity of ideas and I am constantrly learning from tutors and students alike. The problem based learning is interesting.

I love [module code] and for years it was my favourite module. It's just superb and thankfully [module code] and [module code] have come along in the meantime too!

The Psychology faculty organises an AL conference - maybe the K modules could organsie one too? To generate ideas and do some cross pollination of ideas and research like yours and others.

All the best,

Sean

Kathy Chandler Post 14 in reply to 1

• 16 Mar 2020, 11:37

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi everyone

Here is another vignette from my research. Deborah's narrative is a bit more challenging to read in places and includes different perspectives on some aspects of tutorials compared to the other students you have heard from so far and compared with what would normally be considered to be good practice e.g. not allowing multiple conversations to happen in the room at the same time. I would be really interested to hear your thoughts about it, either by replying in this forum or by email to [email address].

Many thanks,

Kathy

Attachment

Deborah vignette March 2020.pdf

Kathy Chandler Post 15 in reply to 1

• 22 Mar 2020, 09:18

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi everyone

I hope you are all okay and coping in these strange and worrying times. Everyone is suddenly very interested in how to teach effectively in online rooms and there's been a surge of interest in my research.

Here is vignette number 8 from Joanne. As always, I would be really interested to hear your thoughts about it if you have time, either by replying in this forum or by email to [email address].

Many thanks,

Kathy

Attachment

Joanne vignette March 2020.pdf

Kathy Chandler Post 16 in reply to 1

• 15 Apr 2020, 16:42

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi everyone

Here are vignettes numbers 9 & 10 from Melissa and Karen. I nearly didn't interview Melissa when I realised that she hadn't been to any online tutorials, but she was keen to be involved and it occurred to me that it would be valuable to find out why she hadn't attended them. Karen was able to give her perspectives of online tutorials both as a [module code] student and as a tutor at an FE college.

As always, it would be helpful to hear your thoughts about their narratives either by replying in this forum or by email to [email address].

Many thanks,

Kathy

Attachments

Karen vignette April 2020.pdf

Melissa vignette April 2020.pdf

Sean Post 17 in reply to 16

• 27 Apr 2020, 09:47

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy,

Thanks for these. Jess and I have spent some time chatting through your vignettes when we meet up before a tutorial.... we're part of your fan club!

These are fab as well.

I notice a few things

- over the years, the use of mics has really dropped off (I don't know why); there was far more talking when we all started the move to online

- I have been using Zoom for a number of years for online meetings and online client work. I like the video; I know that there is the facility for the tutor to turn on their video in Adobe Connect tutorials but I am not sure about the students. This seems to be a real lack in the current online tutorials - Zoom (for all the criticism) does have a classroom feel with all the video faces. [I just had a look at the Help for Adobe connect and it seems you can have more video for all - https://helpx.adobe.com/adobe-connect/using/video-meetings.html - I might try this].

- I really take the point about 'I know all the guidelines but just break it down and show me how to do it'; I know that students can misread guidelines and it is important to go through them for understanding.... but I think the student has a point about breaking it down with an example.

- it interesting that both students talk about travel and family commitments and the helpfulness of online tutorials... and interesting about the weather man in the back garden..... I think that people will be so used to online working during the current Covid-19 crisis that face to face tutorials could well disappear altogether and maybe for good.

Thanks so much for sharing all of these. I find them fascinating to read and I am grateful for your generosity. Each one of them has certainly given me lots of food for thought.

I hope you will have more!

Thanks,

Sean

Kathy Chandler Post 18 in reply to 17

• 27 Apr 2020, 12:15

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Many thanks for responding Sean. It's really encouraging to see your post and you have given me food for thought too.

It's interesting to hear that you think mic use has dropped off over the years. Does anyone else think this has happened? The students I have interviewed have spontaneously offered a range of reasons for not using their mic: the slight delay; being shy and feeling inarticulate; worrying about getting it wrong; not being confident speaking English; family members in the background; and not being able to see anyone. Two students, Joanne and Deborah, commented that microphone use was not actively encouraged and on reading your post, I wondered if this has changed over time. Have we gradually stopped encouraging students to participate verbally as we have become used to the idea that many prefer to type?

Your post also made me check how a host can enable participant webcams, as I haven't done this. It looks as though the button to enable them for all participants is not available in the OU version of Adobe Connect, but we can hover over the name of a participant in the participants window and see the option to enable their webcam individually. It's much more fiddly than in Zoom! I have been using Zoom for all sorts of non-work things over the past few months, including supporting a youth group (steep learning curve and lots of safety precautions but great sessions) and I agree that it does make such a difference to be able to see everyone's faces. The teenagers enjoy turning their own picture upside down and adding funny backgrounds. I wonder why the broadband connection seems to be able to cope with webcams in Zoom so much more easily than the computing guide suggests is the case in Adobe Connect. (I have asked the technical experts and they can think of no logical explanation.) I would love to be able to see all of the student nurses I tutor who I never have the opportunity to meet face-to-face. I always put my camera on at the beginning of the tutorial, so they can at least see that I am real! I do hope that face-to-face tutorials don't disappear entirely as you predict Sean. I think students would miss them and I would too.

I am hoping that I might get a few more interviews before the end of the module, but with everyone now focused on other things, not least TMA04, I might have to be happy with 10 participants.

Many thanks,

Kathy

Eva Post 19 in reply to 18

• 27 Apr 2020, 12:51

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy

I often find students say they do not have a working mic.

But if I 'push it ' a bit further and suggest that most computers have built in mics . Then go through the mechanics of explaining in the tool bar that if switched on it should change from white to green. Sometimes it will ' miraculously start to work.'

But that is only usually successful if I can encourage this before  the Tutorial begins when there are few people in the room

Regards Eva

Kathy Chandler Post 20 in reply to 19

• 27 Apr 2020, 16:27

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Many thanks for responding Eva. It's really interesting to hear that it's usually only successful if you encourage microphone use before the tutorial starts. If you can get students using their mics, do you find that they will sometimes carry on using them throughout the tutorial or do they usually stop once the room gets busy? I'm also wondering if you find a difference between microphone use in [module code] students and nursing students?

Best wishes,

Kathy

Eva Post 21 in reply to 20

• 27 Apr 2020, 16:59

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy

Some will still speak after it starts

I really meant the ones who say they don't have a working mic

If they come later and you have started the session. There isn't really time to do anything except welcome their presence .

I think by the time the nursing students get to year three they are more likely to use the mic

I also think whatever the group there are sometimes students names you recognise , and you know they will use the mic .

Although that is great I have had a few key students monopolize the tutorial. Almost using the mic to much to the exclusion of others .

I do also find this tricky .As I do not want to quell their enthusiasm but it can put others off

Regards Eva

Kathy Chandler Post 22 in reply to 21

• 28 Apr 2020, 10:31

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks for explaining Eva. I know what you mean about the occasional students who monopolize the mic. It's such a rare event but much trickier to manage than it is in a face to face situation when you're more likely to have built a relationship with the group and can make it obvious that you're looking at someone else to contribute a response. The last time it happened to me was in an observed tutorial! If anyone has any strategies for managing this online, I would love to hear about them.

Best wishes,

Kathy

Eva Post 23 in reply to 22

• 28 Apr 2020, 10:57

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks Kathy .

I mean you can always say has anyone else got a view but it looks a bit pointed .

Sometimes I have put students into two break out rooms and asked them to prepare for a debate. Then suggested ground rules that no-one can speak twice until everyone has spoken once ( assuming mics are available and used )

Regards Eva

Sean Post 24 in reply to 18

• 29 Apr 2020, 10:12

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks Kathy,

I do a mic check and I have a slide; i ask the students to all say 'hello'.... after this a number of them tend to have "technical difficulties" and their mics stop working !!

I think it is fear of making a mistake or not wanting to 'hog' the space - those type of things. Then I find that people who said they don't have mics are chatting away in a breakout room....when I drop in

*the button to enable them for all participants is not available in the OU version of Adobe Connect, but we can hover over the name of a participant in the participants window and see the option to enable their webcam individually.*

- that's interesting; I didn't know that.

I love Zoom for the funny backgrounds; kids love it too. The angel wings one is brilliant. I use a fish tank as people find it relaxing.

What I understand about Zoom video is something called *latency* - it is smoother than skype for example and i know that it doesn't hog as much of the computer's system resources (ongoing back up memory).

I think the cameras on approach is much better - it a wonder that Adobe Connect for the OU cannot enable this facility - could we check it out? It would be great to have this - it might also help with mic inhibition.

Well.... I hope that F2F stays but I wonder, with economics and people now so used to being online.

I hope you have some more to read Kathy - it's like waiting for a new series to drop on Netflix!!

Keep thme coming long

Thanks,

Sean

Kathy Chandler Post 25 in reply to 24

• 30 Apr 2020, 10:30

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Many thanks for your thoughts on mics Eva and Sean. I like your ground rule Eva and I too have had that experience of seeing mics suddenly switch on in breakout rooms .

My supervisors are going to love the Netflix comment Sean and I am definitely going to look for the fish tank background in Zoom. I have mixed feelings about always being visible on camera and I wonder how other tutors feel about it.

Best wishes,

Kathy

Sean Post 26 in reply to 25

• 2 May 2020, 08:34

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks Kathy,

I love forward to more 'episodes'!

Here's a link to the Zoom fishtank moving background :

https://www.canva.com/templates/EAD29kdVwRc-underwater-video-zoom-virtual-background/

Regards,

Sean

Kathy Chandler Post 27 in reply to 26

• 2 May 2020, 16:28

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks Sean. I could watch it all day!

Sean Post 28 in reply to 27

• 15 May 2020, 11:28

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Missed this Kathy!

Kate Post 29 in reply to 28

• 29 May 2020, 10:57

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Love the fish!! I was wondering the other day, with most people having now experienced Zoom etc whether there will be the expectation that they will be able to see us in future!

I belong to a choir and it would be seen as 'unusual' not to have cameras on - the new 'norm' is to be seen, I think.

Anyway have a good summer everyone, and take care.

Kate

Kathy Chandler Post 30 in reply to 29

• 1 Jun 2020, 17:34

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I have been wondering the same thing Kate. I was in an online seminar as a student via Skype for Business this morning and it was interesting to see who used a webcam and at what points in the session they switched it on/off. Those with the webcams enabled definitely did most of the talking!

I hope you have a good summer too.

Kathy

Sean Post 31 in reply to 29

• 2 Jun 2020, 10:33

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

[grin emoji]

## Associate lecturer common room forum conversation

Kathy Chandler Post 1

• 7 May 2020, 11:35

Students' experiences of online tutorials

I have been following the thread about universities struggling to move online with interest, especially the conversations about microphone use and webcams.

I am doing doctoral research for an EdD, gathering students' narratives of their experiences of online tutorials in one health and social care module. I have been sharing vignettes of the narratives with colleagues on the module as I go along, but am also sharing versions of them (further anonymised, so that the university and module are not identified) more widely via my website. My work is generating an unexpected amount of interest; educators suddenly need to know what works well from the student perspective when tutorials take place online.

If anyone has time to read what one or more of the students have shared, I would be really interested to hear about anything that resonated with you or made you think about implications for your own practice, either via this forum or by email.

Many thanks,

Kathy

[email address]

HREC reference number: HREC/2997/Chandler

Angela Post 2 in reply to 1

• 7 May 2020, 12:13

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hello, Kathy

I'm looking through the examples on the site, which are interesting. One thing that I noticed immediately is that all your commentators have female names, which might well be a function of the school/discipline/subject, and of course you had to work with the contributions you had, but makes the data perhaps a bit less useful in a wider context for those of us whose students include a % of men too.

Angela

Kathy Chandler Post 3 in reply to 2

• 7 May 2020, 12:37

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks for having a look Angela. Yes, health and social care students are predominantly female and whilst 6% of the sample I was given to approach was male, sadly, none of them were willing to take part in the study, although I did make extra efforts to encourage them. Strangely, female students registered on the Health and Social Care Degree have been hard to engage as well.

In other ways, the participants are quite varied. They are on a variety of degree programmes, come from different parts of the UK, are from different ethnic backgrounds (not reflected in the pseudonyms they have chosen) and age groups, and have very different levels of previous qualifications. Some have disabilities. Mostly, these details have not been included in the vignettes, as including them might have made it possible for the students to be identified by their own tutors.

Kathy

Eliza Post 4 in reply to 1

• 7 May 2020, 14:46

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy

I'm short of time at the moment and only looked at Deborah's story. I'll try to look at more in due course.

The idea that she could have just read the powerpoint in her own time is key, I think. It's always important to do a tutorial in such a way that students recognise they got something from attending it that they couldn't have got just from reading material. If you use a powerpoint you have to do something with it beyond reading it to the students, so that's an important skill people who aren't used to working in this way need to develop. I don't use the whiteboard for the very reason she gives; I use the chatbox instead for brain-storming which seems to work well. I think the tutorial needs to be very well organised - a certain amount of time for presentation, a certain amount of time for student brainstorming/questions/ feedback, whatever, with the tutor well in control of the timing of each element - not so free-flowing as a f2f tutorial. I used to wish more students used the mic, but now I don't worry about it. I can see that the freedom to type in the chatbox as you think of something is beneficial to students, rather than them having to wait to speak untilthe tutor has finished a bit of presentation. Indeed, when as ALs we now have AC meetings I find myself wanting to type in the chatbox as I think of things, so that's been a useful experience.

I have no idea if that's the kind of thing you want, Kathy, but happy to discuss further via email if that would be useful.

Eliza

Theresa Post 5 in reply to 4

• 7 May 2020, 15:18

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Personally, I generally use PP as an aide memoire, so that I know what is going to be discussed next. Just occasionally, I might include material on the slides, but these are limited, and I talk - or the students and I talk, around them

Eliza Post 6 in reply to 5

• 7 May 2020, 15:23

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Yes me too, Theresa - or, because I am doing literature, I might put quotations on them for discussion, from both literary texts and critics. But it's the discussion that is the key. The PP is just an easy way of having access to them.

Kathy Chandler Post 7 in reply to 4

• 7 May 2020, 15:24

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

That's brilliant Eliza. Thank you for taking the time to respond. It's really helpful to see your thoughts on Deborah's story. If you get chance to look at any others at a later date, I would love to hear your thoughts about those too.

Kathy

Eliza Post 8 in reply to 7

• 7 May 2020, 15:33

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Actually if you email me the link that will remind me to do it ... 😀

Post 9 in reply to 4

[Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Ray Lomas Post 10 in reply to 9

• 8 May 2020, 21:53

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hello Kathy, [tutor who did not consent to take part in the study] and All,

I can think of a number of hypotheses that might offer an explanation of the behaviour you describe [tutor who did not consent to take part in the study], and I'm very interested in this investigation of Kathy's. I'll try to take a look at the vignettes.

Best wishes,

- Ray

[location redacted]

Donald Post 11 in reply to 9

• 9 May 2020, 11:45

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

We used to have a rule about writing the invitation letters and programmes for Social Sciences face-to-face Day Schools in [region], [tutor who did not consent to take part in the study]. They were to play down any suggestions of participation, student activities, and interactions as far as possible, as a couple of experienced tutors had done some informal action research and were convinced that you could half attendance by suggesting in advance that students would have to 'do' things.

But of course such sessions were included, and students seemed to enjoy them on the day, and they always got positive feedback on DS evaluation sheets.

Just as long as everyone went home with some hand-outs

Post 12 in reply to 11

[Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Sinead Post 13 in reply to 1

• 11 May 2020, 21:41

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy,

It was really interesting getting that level of detail about students views.  Tilly's narrative in particular read very clearly to me and her 'ideal' tutorial...*My ideal tutorial would include using the whiteboard, chat box, polls, slides and watching videos but having access to the chat box whilst the video plays so you can ask questions...*certainly is one where interaction is key!

I think it would be quite useful to direct new students to the vingettes, so they could get a sense of the various viewpoints.

Regards,

Sinead

Kathy Chandler Post 14 in reply to 13

• 12 May 2020, 12:01

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Thanks for sharing your thoughts Sinead. I really appreciate you taking the time to have a look.

Best wishes,

Kathy

Post 15 in reply to 14

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Kathy Chandler Post 16 in reply to 15

• 13 May 2020, 11:20

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi [tutor who did not consent to take part in the study]

It's really interesting to see your comment, as the students in my study said a few things about how the chatbox is facilitated when tutorials are co-presented. Whilst one student, Deborah, said that she preferred to have a tutor answering questions via the chat box whilst the other was presenting, as 'it meant then that there wasn’t a build-up of questions' and she had no difficulty following two simultaneous conversations, others struggled with this approach.

Karen said that having one tutor, rather than two 'made it easier to follow what was happening. I’m normally listening, but I’m also reading the chat box the same time cos you’re scared in case you miss anything.'

Vicky said, 'It can be quite tricky to follow what is going on in the tutorial when one tutor is talking and the other is writing because I’m focusing on the text box waiting for an answer.'

Similarly, Joanne said, 'We’ll have a tutor who talks us through the tutorial and we’ll normally have somebody else who monitors the questions and pretty much kind of controls the chat box. So, one tutor is normally talking to you verbally through the system and the second tutor is normally responding through the chat box. Sometimes they might speak, but I think most of the time they’re just trying to keep on top of any questions that come up in the chat box. Whereas in a normal class environment, where you’re face-to-face, you might wait until the end to ask your question, people generally just ask their question as and when they think of it, so I think that’s why you then have that second tutor trying to address those. If you’re paying attention to what is being shared with you on the screen, sometimes, if there is a flurry of questions, you can miss those. I think it could be a bit more structured because there might be a question there that I’d find really useful to know the answer to. I feel like there should only be two or three times when you have times for questions.'

I know what you mean about feeling overwhelmed by questions as a tutor though, especially in large tutorials. Another aspect of tutorials that students frequently mentioned was the number of students present. Tilly said 'I think the tutorials work better with a smaller number of students – maybe around 15 would be ideal, otherwise you are all vying for attention, asking so many questions and responding to questions asked that the tutor doesn’t get time to answer them all. Also, with lots of students you can be lazy and not have to participate as much as you do when there are less students – you can wait for someone else to ask/answer the questions!'

Best wishes,

Kathy

Theresa Post 17 in reply to 16

• 14 May 2020, 07:20

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

In my experience, participation can be dependent on the number of attendees and perhaps their ages, or rather, the mix of ages.

Using webcams can also make a significant difference. My best, most active, and ultimately highest achieving group of learners, were a group from diverse locations globally. Almost all used their webcams, which changed the atmosphere, making it feel more like a normal campus based classroom in some senses, and they became very friendly with each other, remaining in contact with each other today, ten years later. Seeing each other via video enabled the development of a real community of practice.

I'm usually fairly successful in getting learners to participate in tutorials and I'll say more about why I believe this is the case once I've read the vignettes, which I haven't yet had a chance to look at. I will be able to do so over the weekend if it's not too late for feedback.

Kathy Chandler Post 26 in reply to 17

• 14 May 2020, 20:34

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Feedback would be most welcome at any time Theresa. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed their thoughts so far .

Fiona Post 18 in reply to 16

• 14 May 2020, 10:38

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy,

I've only just found this thread & ought to get back to my marking, but will be very interested to read your website later. The discussion of 1 vs 2 tutors is very interesting, as I teach in both situations. I've also this year been a student on a module with just 1 tutor, and found it very frustrating when it's hard to interrupt but the tutor just doesn't see my 'chat' question. I think it's important the back-up tutor be willing to get important or frequent questions answered verbally, and I'll be trying to put this into practice more rigorously.

Fiona

Fiona Post 19 in reply to 18

• 14 May 2020, 12:14

Amie's story

Amie highlighted something that really annoys me too: a session can be called an 'online tutorial' when in fact it's a lecture. The two have completely different purposes. On the module I've just finished studying, there was a series of pre-recorded 'tutorials' which were in fact lectures. Once I appreciated that, they were really useful!

I hate giving online 'tutorials' which deteriorate into lectures because I'm not good enough at planning interactive material, or simply because I cannot assume the students have covered enough material to tackle problem-solving in that area. Many of my tutes are near the ends of the modules so do suffer from that. Real tutorials are my favourite form of teaching: I get answers to the problem sheet handed in before the session, so I know which parts the students need help with. This just isn't part of my OU teaching.

Angela Post 20 in reply to 19

• 14 May 2020, 12:46

Re: Amie's story

But there's decided tension between what I (and, it seems,you) understand a tutorial to be and student reluctance to participate and share/discuss ideas, isn't there?

One thing I thought came out of the vignettes and is often said by the students I encounter is that they like the idea of interaction but they really think it's something others should be doing so they can just watch. That seems to me to be related to the student idea that they want the OU to provide more face to face sessions so they can not attend any

Angela

Fiona Post 21 in reply to 20

• 14 May 2020, 14:21

Re: Amie's story

Sigh. Excellently put.

Post 22 in reply to 15

[Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Post 23 in reply to 22

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Simon Post 24 in reply to 23

• 14 May 2020, 19:46

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Yes me too Ray, if I have someone manning chat I'm afraid I often forget and answer things myself for reasons you describe.

Post 25 in reply to 24

[Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Ishmael Post 27 in reply to 25

• 15 May 2020, 08:41

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I'm happy with Co-tutoring, if there is a bit of planning before hand.  It also helps if those two work together regularly, ideally on the same topic. Then the time/work to establish the relationship is spread over many sessions.

A colleague and I usually share a tutorial with large attendance.  We alternate who talks and who monitors the chat throughout the session.  Ideally aiming for about 10mins of each voice (but it does vary).   It means students hear different voices, and when repeating key items, there is a different voice saying things in different words.   We also have references back to "as Ishmael/[tutor who did not consent to take part in the study] was saying" to emphasise this.

I think that helps students.  It helps me as a tutor.

- Ishmael

Andrea Post 29 in reply to 27

• 15 May 2020, 10:03

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Students hearing two voices.

That's what I prefer. Particularly if the other tutor says things like, 'Jo asked a question about x' - it makes it a three-some for the whole of the group. The other tutor either joins in or leaving me to deal with the question. It's only on reflection that I learned that I should do the same rather than answering chat box questions in the chat box.

As you say, Ishmael, it's something to discuss beforehand. So far the two of us (whoever the other person was) just gave each other our slides beforehand so that we could raise any questions or make suggestions beforehand. Neither I or the other did ever anything different than to express our appreciation of the planned tutorial.

Andrea

Post 30 in reply to 27

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Post 33 in reply to 22

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Fiona Post 28 in reply to 1

• 15 May 2020, 09:35

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I'm not sure how relevant this is here, but I have just had a lightbulb moment.

I've taught for chemistry years in conventional, old-fashioned universities. 'Tutorial' to me means a small-group session, with attempted answers to a problem sheet handed in and marked in advance, so the session is tailored to the questions they had difficulty with, and is all about applying the lecture material to what the subject is all about: in my case, solving problems. As a student, it was sometimes about writing essays, & worked equally well.

As a tutor I've been deeply unhappy that OU 'tutorials' are usually nothing like this, and as an OU student I've found it frustrating that there are few 'tutorials' at which to correct misunderstandings, so I lose marks at the same time as gaining understanding. OK, I can share problem sheets in advance of the tutorial, but I get very little feedback from doing so, and have to assume that some attendees have not looked at them.

The lightbulb moment came on realising that a recorded lecture (albeit called a tutorial) summarising a quarter of the module material & emphasising important parts of it was exactly what I needed on my latest student module - and allowed me to turn in a better TMA than ever before.

So my personal problem is with what the sessions are called, and whether that relates accurately to their objective and benefit to the students.

Angela Post 31 in reply to 28

• 15 May 2020, 10:27

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Fiona, I've often sent out material in advance of  tutorials, less for [module code] than for my other 2 modules but I *have* done that in previous years. I haven't done it much this year, but the one time I did in on a particular L3 module, I sent the stuff out 5-7 days in advance (it was just a couple of texts that I hoped would form the basis of discussion about key points from a particular block of a module), not a single student of the 9 who attended had even looked at it, though all said they'd received it. This meant that I had to spend tutorial time explaining not just the theoretical material but the texts as well and there was, consequently very little input from the students.

So it seems that even if we distribute tutorial material beforehand, we might still end up lecturing, and we can't even count on student engagement at L3.

Angela

Milly Post 32 in reply to 28

• 15 May 2020, 11:54

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy

There is some interesting feedback here and I noted that personal experience is mirrored in the reluctance of so many to use the microphone, even Karen who teaches child care appears to have felt inhibited. Experiences among tutors have varied and I must admit that co-tutoring with a known colleague must be a more positive arrangement (our team has been together or many years). For those tutors who have attendances in the scores I do question how the sessions can be tutorial, they are lectures, and surely give students an incorrect experience of what a tutorial is. I felt the initial training was insufficient for us, as tutors, to get to grips efficiently with the range of applications that can utilised, particularly as even this was delivered as more lecture than participatory.

Now that we are several weeks into lockdown and many of us have experience of Zoom I wonder whether this might have benefits in terms of enabling us to communicate more effectively with our own tutor group. Just a thought.

Stay safe

Milly

Post 34 in reply to 32

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Post 35 in reply to 34

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Post 36 in reply to 35

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Theresa Post 37 in reply to 1

• 18 May 2020, 09:44

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Amie: timing - for [module code] and for [module code], we tutors used to run two identical tutorials for our respective learner group. I used to do one in the evening and one on a weekend morning, so everyone could attend one. Before GTP, we used to do Doodle polls for our students to decide what times and days were best.

Melissa: we don't know if by only accessing recordings, she missed out in breakout room discussions, as these are not recorded.

Tilly: In my experience, 12 attendees for an online tutorial means that it's possible to discuss things with the students more easily. Breakout rooms of 4 work out well usually.

Karen vignette nicely highlights the importance of headsets and getting learners to use them! In my experience, getting them to speak through their headsets is relatively easy if you have a smallish group and are friendly enough to 'jolly them along'.

Vicky: 'My ideal tutorial would be with my own tutor, laying out exactly what they were expecting.' From my experience, I think most students would prefer this. Also, a smallish group makes it easier for the tutor to follow the chat box and vocally answer questions that are posted there.

Lisa: An email before the tutorial as a reminder always works well in my experience.

Joanne: Early arrival is essential for checking tech such as headsets. This vignette highlights why recordings are so useful - for checking the chat questions and answers, so you can focus of the presenter/activity in the session.

Kathy Chandler Post 38 in reply to 37

• 18 May 2020, 21:02

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Many thanks for having a look at the narratives Theresa and taking the time to share your thoughts. It's really interesting to see what you picked up on.

Kathy

Theresa Post 39 in reply to 38

• 19 May 2020, 11:02

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I should probably add that my students are generally over 25 years old - and most are over 30, so it may be easier to get them to use their microphones than it is with younger students. However age difference is a bit of a double edged sword, as I well remember being a new student at the age of 32 (many years ago) and feeling intimidated by younger students, thinking I would probably do far less well than them because they were fresh from college/school and so recently used to learning. On the other hand, some of the younger learners told us oldies later, that it felt intimidating to be learning alongside us and this inhibited them from speaking in class because we had such a wealth of experience. (It was face to face) So perhaps age and experience may be a factor in learner vocal participation in tutorials. It would be interesting to do a small piece of research about age and participation in online tutorials.

Kathy Chandler Post 40 in reply to 39

• 20 May 2020, 15:34

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

That would be interesting Theresa. I do know the approximate ages of the students in my study, but this information has been omitted from the vignettes along with other information that might make it possible for the students to be identified by their tutors or other students. They range from under 25 to over 56.

Best wishes,

Kathy

Ann Post 41 in reply to 40

• 1 Jun 2020, 09:29

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

HI Kathy, good to see another AL pursuing this area of research. I undertook a mixed methods approach to the issue of the reason for low or no participation in online interaction, the total qualitative response I obtained was around 180 male/female and age range 18 - 70+.  On analysis several things seemed apparent  relating to student preparedeness of online work - digital literacy is quite low in students despite activity on social media.

I questioned the extent to which 'collobative learning' works in all contexts in the way that say Garrison proposes, or that students understand the benefits of collaboration. My thesis should be in the library during the summer. There were many other points, and each discipline has different needs, but module design itself is also important. I have also participated in a scholarship group on [module code] which I would recommend to ALs to examine practice more closely on each module.

Ann

Ann Post 42 in reply to 41

• 1 Jun 2020, 09:33

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

- forgot to add that the qualitive aspects were vignettes, so only a small amount of data form each student with the key thing they wanted to say about online interaction. The total sample for quan was around 600.

Ann

Kathy Chandler Post 43 in reply to 41

• 1 Jun 2020, 17:13

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Ann

Thanks for posting. It's really interesting to hear about your research and I will look forward to reading your thesis, including your thoughts about Garrison's ideas. I agree that module scholarship groups can also be helpful for examining practice.

Best wishes,

Kathy

Post 44 in reply to 41

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Ann Post 45 in reply to 44

• 16 Jun 2020, 11:56

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi [tutor who did not consent to take part in the study], good to hear from you, I will look up your thesis thanks.

Ann

Anne Post 46 in reply to 45

• 27 Jun 2020, 11:51

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hi Kathy and everyone

I enjoyed your talk at the staff development event and have found reading the vignettes very interesting in terms of understanding the student experience of our efforts at online teaching, and I have read everyone else’s comments with interest.

One of the things that  was highlighted in the vignettes for me  was the reluctance  to interact, especially the one student who did not  participate in online tutorials, but  wanted power points and recordings – I think this may represent quite a high proportion of students, however this student likes face-to-face  tutorials.

I think we may feel we need to reproduce that face to face experience on line and it is not really possible, so maybe it needs a new approach from both ALs and students to address what actually can be done best online. From reading the vignettes, expectations are important and students are disappointed if we don’t meet their expectations, but there does seem to be a lack of confidence to take part in some students, despite the desire for activities and interaction. I think the distinction between what is a lecture and what is a tutorial is an important element of this discussion, and possibly we should be offering clear alternatives to students?

In terms of my tutoring, I sometimes work alone, sometimes with colleagues. I have more or less given up encouraging mics in the main room, but I am trying to build more speaking and possibly even webcams, in the breakout rooms, maybe the lockdown effect will help. I like to manage the chat box while I am speaking using Q and A and waiting for responses, and responding to or acknowledging questions as I see them. If I have a colleague they may deal with an ‘off the topic’ question, or if the chat box is getting out of hand, but I feel strongly that the  chat box should be part of what I am doing. I make sure it has a fairly large space on the screen – the whole length, so things don’t disappear too quickly, and I enlarge the text so I can read it more easily. I also have my webcam on – it makes me feel I am ‘in the room’, not just a voice in the ether!

Anne

Post 47 in reply to 46

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Kathy Chandler Post 48 in reply to 47

• 29 Jun 2020, 17:01

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Many thanks for sharing your thoughts Ray and Fiona. The comments of colleagues in this thread have been really interesting and helpful.

Kathy

Hudson Post 49 in reply to 46

• 29 Jun 2020, 17:28

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

In the many years I've been doing OU tutorials I've found it very rare that students want to use their microphones.

I've had a recent revelation though. What I have always done is switched on my webcam so that students can see me. I never thought too much about it, I just thought it would make my tutorials more personable because I'm not just a disembodied voice over the slides. But in my last tutorial, many of the students gushingly thanked me for being visible and said how much more enjoyable they'd found it. What really surprised/shocked me was that they said most other tutors do not switch their webcam on.

Thinking about this it occurs to me that of course so much of face to face communication is body language and when I tutor I am forever using my face, shoulders and my hands to support what I'm saying. I suspect this helps to keep the students' attention. I also have a a non-native English speaker student and it's clear my facial animation helps him follow what I'm saying.

Just my twopennorth!

Hudson

Emily Post 50 in reply to 49

• 29 Jun 2020, 17:57

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

From what I can remember when AC was introduced we were told not to use our webcams if you have a 'dodgy' (or even not a particularly dodgy) internet connection.  I think that guidance has moved on a bit but I can't remember how/when that was communicated to us all, meaning  I am neither surprised or shocked at tutors not using one.  I used to use it all all the time with OU Live but stopped with AC because of what we were told and only  started again relatively recently.  As it is I get anxious about being cut off (barking at everyone in the house to stop using the internet) and do all I can to minimise the risk.

There are other reasons for someone not using a webcam, but for me that 'central message' was the key one

Kind regards

Emily

Francesca Post 51 in reply to 49

• 29 Jun 2020, 17:58

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

*What really surprised/shocked me was that they said most other tutors do not switch their webcam on.*

It would surprise/shock you less if you lived in an area with poor broadband - if anyone has a webcam on (including me) I get pushed out of the room.  On a module that I studied a couple of years ago the tutor insisted on using how webcam *in spite of the fact that he knew that it meant that I was thrown out of the room every couple of minutes*.  Not a nice experience and didn't make me feel welcome as a student.

Emily Post 52 in reply to 51

• 29 Jun 2020, 18:01

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Rethinking its use again now, Francesca.

Post 53 in reply to 49

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Emma Post 54 in reply to 49

• 29 Jun 2020, 18:21

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

If I turned on my webcam my students might be surprised/shocked to find me in my Pyjamas.

Though recently we got off topic in a tutorial and discovered that we were all in our pyjamas or tracksuits and several of us had pets in the room if not actually on top of us.

Emily Post 55 in reply to 54

• 29 Jun 2020, 18:41

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

"If I turned on my webcam my students might be surprised/shocked to find me in my Pyjamas"



Hudson Post 56 in reply to 49

• 29 Jun 2020, 21:34

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Not caught in pyjamas but my shaved head in the middle of the lockdown (courtesy of my son when my hair got too rampant) might have raised an eyebrow.

I can think of several excellent reasons why some tutors might not want to be visible, and so I think it's absolutely right the OU doesn't expect us to use webcams. I was rather taken aback by the strength of feeling from the students about being able to see their tutor though, and so I merely humbly put forward the suggestion (in the interests of pedagogy) that tutors who can or wish to use webcam might find benefit to doing so. If the OU is looking for suggestions as to how to boost tutorial engagement then that's one suggestion: I'm sure there's plenty of other good ideas.

Until last year I was on very flaky broadband (2 Mb downhill with the wind behind it) that cut out every time someone rang our house. So before every tutorial I made sure the few people likely to ring our house in the evening, knew not to. So I know all about poor and dodgy broadband. All my students had to do was tell me if they had problems and I could simply switch the webcam off.

I was merely trying to contribute my experience to the discussion in case others benefited. Clearly my mistake was expressing surprise, but no-one has to justify how they run their tutorials to me.

Hudson

Simon Post 57 in reply to 56

• 29 Jun 2020, 21:37

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

*Not caught in pyjamas but my shaved head in the middle of the lockdown (courtesy of my son when my hair got too rampant) might have raised an eyebrow.*

During the chat before a Zoom meeting my friend's wife started to trim his hair

Emma Post 58 in reply to 56

• 29 Jun 2020, 21:37

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Hudson, you have actually given me something to consider. The next time I am dressed I might put on my webcam for the first few minutes, so thank you for the idea.

Emma (of the pyjamas)

Angela Post 59 in reply to 56

• 29 Jun 2020, 21:42

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I just viewed your post as an interesting observation, Hudson

Angela

Rebecca Post 60 in reply to 56

• 29 Jun 2020, 22:08

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I have been very struck by the difference between zoom (with webcams) and adobeconnect (without). The biggest difference for me is that it's much easier to join in the conversation when you can see whether someone else is about to speak.

I'd understood that the guidance was not to use webcams in AdobeConnect because of bandwidth issues. I'm wondering whether when there are small numbers involved, it would be possible to check whether everyone's bandwidth copes. On the other hand, I did a one-to-one session the other night when the student was getting kicked out every couple of minutes at the start, and that was without webcams. If you wanted to try it, you'd need to tell people that you'll turn it off if anyone disappears.

Simon Post 61 in reply to 60

• 29 Jun 2020, 22:14

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Don't tell but I have recently had two meetings in AC with slides and camera - one was for 10 and the other 5 - no issues at all.  
The meeting of 10 was coordination for [module code] - digital photography so the slides we were viewing were pretty large

Martin Post 62 in reply to 60

• 29 Jun 2020, 22:18

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I do make sure my students have an image that looks like me (not the one you see here).

I have tried video recently with AC, and it caused problems for the students who were seeing me and hearing me at different times, several seconds late.  One of the students had been using a microphone when it was audio only, but when the video was on, her speech was broken and intermittent.  My connection is quiet good, and I was using a fast laptop.

I hope it will be better when we are using the promised html5 (no flash) version, but that seems to be rather elusive.

Martin

Rosie Post 63 in reply to 62

• 30 Jun 2020, 06:15

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

My daughter has been having regular school lessons via Teams and a couple of her teachers have used their cameras.  I've often hovered behind her to listen in (much to her annoyance) and seeing the person teaching the lesson has made a difference.  I can't quite explain it but as an observer I connected more with what was being said, if that makes sense, and it was good to see who was speaking.  Our broadband can be rather patchy, though, and visuals (and vocals) can sometimes freeze, and there are occasional time lags between what my daughter could see/hear.  At numerous times the pupils would have their cameras on too, which helped them as a group in terms of learning and interacting during these difficult times.  I can see the benefits after watching the teaching on Teams and I'm trying to convince myself to give the webcam a go with my students, but for me it's a bigger step than using a mic.

Rosie

Emily Post 64 in reply to 56

• 30 Jun 2020, 07:12

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I think it is a useful point you have made, Hudson and personally I find AC quite a dull and lifeless platform compared to others. It was the advice from the OU that I was highlighting and that I think tutors are possibly following that (from what I remember we were advised repeatedly not to use it - I didn't know my Webcam use affected students connection too).

Kind regards

Emily

Post 65 in reply to 64

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Colette Post 66 in reply to 49

• 30 Jun 2020, 17:34

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I have also been using a webcam this year as I had a student who lipreads.  The other students also liked it, especially when the cat got involved walking over the keyboard etc.  No issue with dropping out, but I do have v reliable broadband.

Colette

Ishmael Post 67 in reply to 66

• 30 Jun 2020, 19:29

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I'm going to try a webcam appearance in my tutorial tomorrow - lets see ...

Post 68 in reply to 67

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Post 72 in reply to 68

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Post 73 in reply to 72

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Ishmael Post 74 in reply to 73

• 1 Jul 2020, 11:19

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

" There was some bizarre online piece about how lecturers should dress for online sessions a while back "

In the lock-down world, is that correct dress: pyjama bottoms, 20 year old tee-shirt, mortar board and gown ?

Or, being the OU, tweed jacket with elbow patches, shirt, and knitted tie ?

Post 75 in reply to 73

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Emma Post 76 in reply to 75

• 1 Jul 2020, 14:36

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

[tutor who did not consent to take part in the study] seems to be saying that she might forget to pop on a T-shirt and with the bar set so low, I think that underwear hanging behind you is really fine

It is important to realise that these underwear issues are not confined to online tutorials. I was at a f2f a while ago and my bra fell off.

Emily Post 78 in reply to 76

• 1 Jul 2020, 15:33

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I remember 'The Bra Incident', Emma

Post 79 in reply to 76

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Rebecca Post 77 in reply to 75

• 1 Jul 2020, 14:48

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

The position of my laptop when connected to my large monitor means that the webcam is pointing at the bookshelves/wall, and not at me at all!

Kathy Chandler Post 69 in reply to 67

• 30 Jun 2020, 20:11

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

It's really interesting to see everyone's thoughts on webcams and I will look forward to hearing the outcome of your experiment Ishmael.

None of the participants in my study had experienced a tutor using a webcam during the tutorials that they attended during the research, but Karen, an FE lecturer, was planning to use them with her own students and Melissa had a good experience of using webcams with her GCSE English class. She says,

'I’ve never actually done a university tutorial with webcams. That would make more of a difference and you could actually see people’s faces and see their reactions.'

There's some recent advice about using webcams in the online room user forum. I usually have my webcam on in my welcome layout for tutorials in Adobe Connect, but then stop using it when I start sharing other content or if any of the students experience connectivity problems. When I did the initial study for my research, I did this with the students in my own tutor groups and had some very positive feedback about being able to see me on the webcam.

Kathy

Emma Post 70 in reply to 69

• 30 Jun 2020, 20:57

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Another concern about using a webcam is the amount of space it takes on the screen. I teach maths and need a large white workspace to write on and it is best not to spread a question onto more than one page if possible.

Post 71 in reply to 70

• [Consent not received to include this post in the study]

Ishmael Post 80 in reply to 69

• 1 Jul 2020, 23:51

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I tried using the AC webcam in tonight's tutorial - technically it worked well with no apparent problems.

The Tutorial itself was typical - 29 booked and 18 participated, no students used a microphone and very few responded (in monosyllables) to my questions in the chat

On the occasions I glanced at my image I noted that I was looking away from the camera (whiteboard, chat, notes, etc.) and not appear to be making "eye contact" with my students while my hand gestures were something of a blur ...

I seemed to get more effusive thanks than usual at the end but this was subjective and unverifiable.

All in all I remain unconvinced as to whether this is worthy of further investigation.

I will be keen to hear of any ways colleagues have found to improve their visual 'performance' ...

Stay safe and keep well,

Angela Post 81 in reply to 80

• 2 Jul 2020, 00:03

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I've wondered about that, Ishmael. When I use Skype with my son in Warsaw, there's a few seconds' delay and I can see from my screen that although I know I'm looking right at him it often looks as if I'm looking elsewhere because of the time-lapse. It's quite disconcerting even for me so I wonder how it looks to students,, and that's when all I'm doing is talking - ie: not typing or reading a chatbox adjusting the microphone etc.

I've had a couple of inadvertent uses of the camera in C meetings (not tutorials) and on both occasions my screen has completely frozen. On each occasion I was a guest rather than a host and I wonder whether that's significant.

I don't particularly want to be on-screen anyway: I just like to know how it all works.

Angela

Tony Post 82 in reply to 81

• 2 Jul 2020, 09:19

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

A technique which ought to have some useful value(\*) is as follows:

Use the live camera to start the session, and talk to camera during your introduction.   Then say you are going to turn the camera off to concentrate on slides,  either turn it off completely, or (if its not difficult) substitute a still of yourself in the same screen.

This gets the "human" introduction, but avoids some of the "not looking at screen" and "time lag" issue discussed by Ishmael and Angela.

Optionally restore the camera from time to time, perhaps towards the end.

(\* it was something the group I worked in at BT showed to improve communication 30 years ago when researching multi-user video conferencing ).

-  Tony

Margaret Post 83 in reply to 82

• 3 Jul 2020, 09:59

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

It was what [name] did in his session at the recent online conference and I am intending to try it out at a tutorial next week.

For a couple of years, I have had a photo in the corner throughout a session and I have a feeling it makes a difference - students (who attend) seem much more friendly in the tutorial and in subsequent communication.

Emily Post 84 in reply to 83

• 3 Jul 2020, 10:12

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Yes, I do the same, Margaret

The photo is the same one I use here and it only  tucked up in the corner  (not centre stage [emoticon] but seems to make a difference, I think

Kind regards

Emily

Simon Post 85 in reply to 84

• 3 Jul 2020, 10:18

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I good "corner" I have seen others used is at the bottom of the "participants list"

Personally I have the narrowest possible list, with the chat to the left of it, also fairly narrow. So I going to experiment next year with two layouts - "with video" which would have a small video pod as described and "with photo" - exactly the same layout but with a small photo instead of the video. I can then switch between the two at will

Emma Post 87 in reply to 85

• 3 Jul 2020, 14:31

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

I have found the picture of myself to use - the reality of giving an online tutorial when you own a cat (This is [cat’s name])

[Image redacted]

Ellen Post 88 in reply to 87

• 3 Jul 2020, 16:52

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

There you are Simon, a thread hijacked by cats at last.

[Cat’s name] looks to be a very attentive participant in the tutorial.

Emily Post 86 in reply to 69

• 3 Jul 2020, 10:45

Re: Students' experiences of online tutorials

Yes, Kathy - that more recent advice is useful though perhaps it has not been given the same 'coverage' to all tutors as the previous advice to not use a webcam, from our initial training. (I wonder what has changed in terms of internet provision which has resulted in this change)

kind regards

Emily