

Transcript

Becki Bennett (BB): Welcome to the first podcast in our podcast series Good Practice in Teaching. In this first episode I'll be talking to Miriam Firth from the School of Education, Environment and Development. Miriam will be talking to me about her experience of dual delivery of Teaching. This is where we use extra cameras and microphones to allow students who are not on campus to join in campus-based teaching. There's understandably some concern about the introduction of this way of teaching for this coming semester, so we thought it would be useful to talk to somebody who's already used it to see how they got on.

Hi Miriam, thanks for joining me today. I understand you've been using dual delivery equipment, over the summer. I wondered if this was your first experience of using this kind of equipment?

Miriam Firth (MF): Hi Becki. Thanks so much for asking me to contribute to this podcast today. And yes, you're absolutely right, this was the first time that I have been using the dual technology. Although obviously we've been using a lot of new technology over the last year, it was this summer that was the first opportunity I had to be able to utilize it.

BB: That's great, and it would be really useful for people, I guess, who maybe in your position, that've never used this equipment before, to find out a little bit more. So I wondered, just generally, if you could tell us a little bit about how you found using the equipment.

MF: I attended a training session run by eLearning back in July, and I attended that online training session to understand what the kit looked like and to see how it works in different setups. And then this summer, I actually then used it in a room on campus to have a play with ultimately, and to see how it worked in the different functions that are available within one of our central timetabling rooms.

The setup was really straightforward, and it's pretty much like a classroom with a web camera. It uses Zoom - and we've all been, I think we're all now experts at Zoom after the last year that we've all had - and it was very much about just integrating that addition within a usual classroom experience. I really enjoyed the ease at which the setup was able to be completed and also setting up the breakout rooms was really easy. And it was really enjoyable to see in practice how we can make the move back onto campus using the technology. But in a lot of ways, once I was then in the room and using that, it isn't new technology, it's technology we've all been using for the last year and I found it a really successful and effective way to teach on campus.

BB: What would you say to anybody who was worried about using this dual delivery equipment?

MF: Well, I think it's perfectly natural for all of us to feel, you know, worried or a little bit apprehensive, in not only coming back onto campus, but using new technology. But I think, as I said before, when you realize, through the training and through then being in a room, that it is a webcam addition to our classrooms, and it's using Zoom which all of us have been frequently using over the last year. Those anxieties and apprehensions go away very quickly. And, you know, we're all very much looking forward to being back on campus and being back with our students, and it becomes something that you get used to.

And I think that it will - once we're back on campus, and in those rooms, once you've got that technology with you, it is very straightforward, and it is using technology that we have all been using in the last year. So I think it will be fine once you're back on. But I think everybody is usually apprehensive after a, perhaps a summer of research or supervision as well, you know, when you've had a break from teaching and you go back into teaching those large cohorts again, it's completely natural. But it isn't the large change that we've gone through in a number of different circumstances in the last 18 months. It's a much smoother transition and the change is minimal, comparatively.

BB: Well, if I could just ask another kind of follow up on that: I think people are worried about not being able to move around in the classroom as they would normally do. I wondered if you could tell us about how that felt - whether you felt that you kind of had to stand on one spot and couldn't do what you would normally do when you're talking in a classroom?

MF: I have to say, I don't think my own movement and teaching within the room felt affected. I mean maybe that's me, but when you're back in the classroom it just felt completely natural. And I just talked the same as usual. I know that the learners were able to hear me. They were able to see the slides and the information I was delivering. So I was able to move around very freely and the remote students could see me and could hear me clearly. And I could also see when questions were asked and posed. So I didn't feel as though I was stuck to a specific spot. I didn't feel as though I had to do that, or I was constantly being aware of that, because the technology was an add-on, and it integrates so well, that you can do that very effectively. The sound in particular picks up brilliantly - so I didn't feel that that was an issue that needed to be overcome or needed particular attention.

BB: I wondered if you've got any kind of tips from your experience to share with people who maybe haven't used this equipment yet?

MF: Yeah. I think it's the same tips or very similar tips for when we are going into a new room on campus. You know, before we go into that room; getting there a little bit early, checking that everything's up and on and ready to go.

The usual tips in making sure Blackboard has the clear information so that there's the Zoom link for everyone who's working remotely, and that there is the clear room for people attending on campus. And making sure that students are aware that the technology is added into the room and that this will mean that there might need to be some pauses - but that's exactly the same as when you have questions within the room when within the group.

I think also some flexibility in terms of your plans for the delivery as well. And again, I'm not saying that there's anything new in this, in terms of the tips; because we all know when we go into a room to teach a group of students there might not be the same number as there is on the register. Some of the students who you've asked to do the pre-session task, might not have completed that. So there is a lot of usual tips required when we're going back onto campus.

And I think being open and honest with students you have, you know, if it's the first class that you're delivering with the dual delivery technology simply informing that class that group that this is the first time. 'It's the first time I'm using this, please bear with me if I have to pause or if I have to sort something out and there will be tasks where you will be able to participate and support me as we continue through this'.

And I think another thing that will be really useful for colleagues to utilize, similarly to previous experiences of teaching, is asking the students to be champions within that classroom as well. So, when you set out a breakout discussion - usually in a breakout, there is one person who is nominated or self-nominated to then feedback, the same can happen with our remote students.

So if you have one person who is looking out for the online remote learners and feeding back through the chat, you're then very aware of any questions arising, any pauses, anything that isn't getting through and then you're able to manage that class effectively. But I wouldn't say that those tips are specific at all to dual delivery. And again, as I've said Becki, I do think that once we are all back in those rooms, after a week or so, it will just become usual again. And isn't as big a change from my experience as the change from going from on campus teaching to online.

And I don't know if I mentioned this earlier, but the last year was my first experience delivering and teaching courses online. And that was, I feel a much larger change and larger learning curve to go through, you know ... we're now all experts on Zoom use. We can all use the breakout rooms. The pedagogy behind it is always our own choice, always flexible for us. And I'm sure that once our colleagues have also gone through the training and then been in these classrooms they will, like me, find it, you know, just normal, and they will really enjoy. And I know everyone is just so looking forward to being back in those rooms with our students.

BB: Thanks so much Miriam for sharing your experiences with us today. If you'd like more information about dual teaching and training available. You can find a link where you found this podcast today or contact me, Becki Bennett, for more information.