

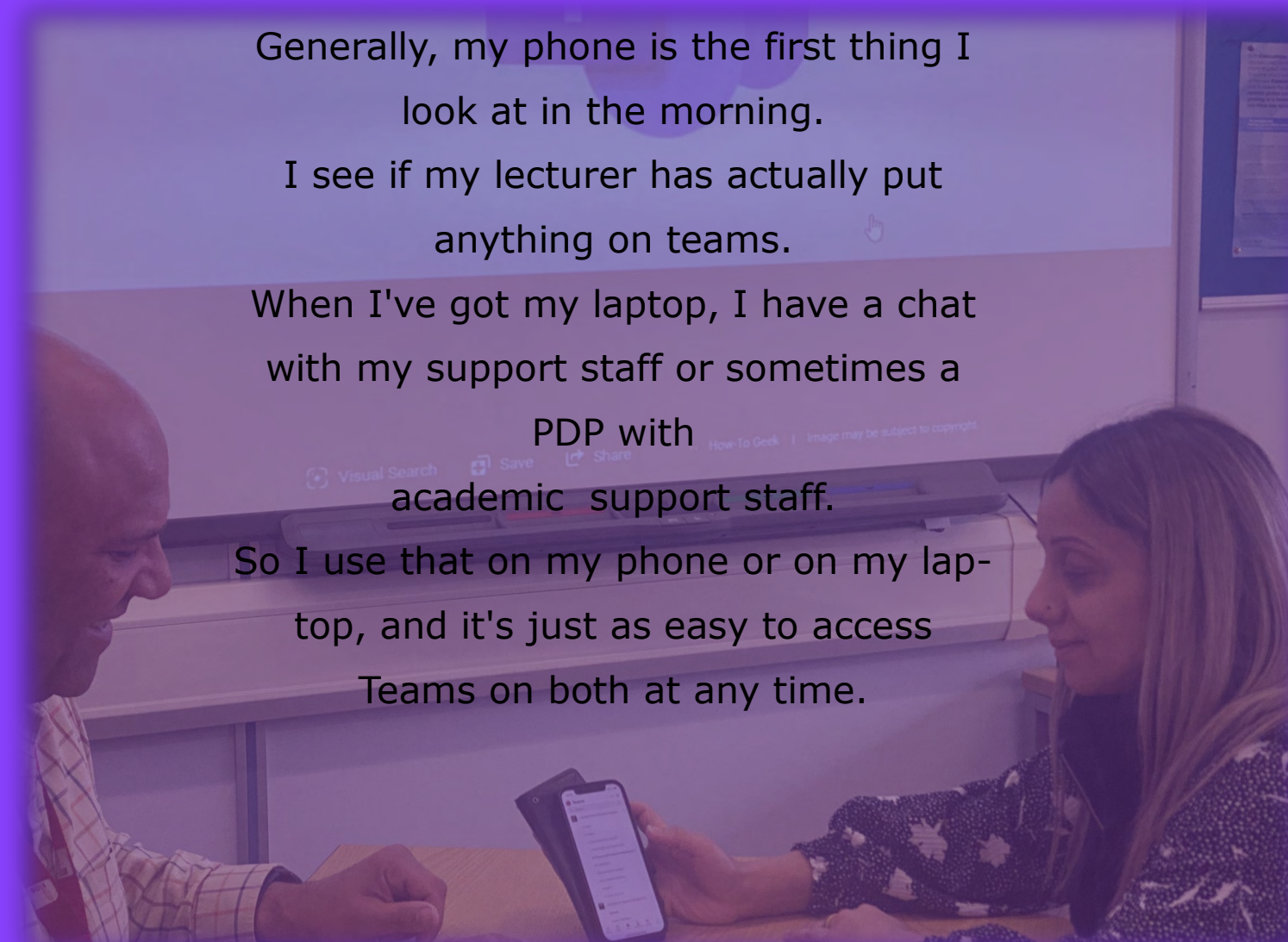
# The Use of Microsoft Teams to Provide Learner Support, Mentoring, and Feedback on Mobile Devices

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020 to 2021 and the isolation requirements prompted the emergence in the literature of research exploring the use of Microsoft Teams for teaching, collaborative purposes, and its use as a VLE in higher education (Henderson *et al.*, 2020) This research was concerned with the use of Teams to provide pastoral care, mentoring, and support of students with disabilities, and wellbeing issues.

The author had previously taught law modules using Microsoft Teams as the main VLE on LLB and criminology courses at undergraduate level prior to the first Lockdown (Martin and Tapp, 2019). The author subsequently used Microsoft Teams to provide support for the duration of the Pandemic and subsequently to provide support to students during extreme weather conditions and transportation disruptions

- ### KEY CONCEPTS
- ⇒ Research moving on from the provision of teaching and learning to the provision of pastoral support.
  - ⇒ The use of instant messaging on Teams in a secure setting
  - ⇒ Using video conferencing and voice messaging on mobile devices.
  - ⇒ Supporting personal tutor / academic mentoring meeting
  - ⇒ Microsoft Teams' privacy and security for sensitive interactions with vulnerable learners.
  - ⇒ The apps on mobile devices and notifications facilitate active engagement and reduce feelings of isolation.



Generally, my phone is the first thing I look at in the morning.

I see if my lecturer has actually put anything on teams.

When I've got my laptop, I have a chat with my support staff or sometimes a PDP with academic support staff.

So I use that on my phone or on my laptop, and it's just as easy to access Teams on both at any time.



## METHODOLOGY

The author carried out qualitative interviews with learners on an undergraduate criminology degree. The participants had disabilities and sought additional support from the institution. The learners accessed some of their modules on Teams and some on an institution VLE.

The study involved the thematic analysis of interviews with four undergraduate students from a post 92 University in the West-Midlands.

The author conducted semi-structured interviews and used a qualitative paradigm. The interviews were recorded and analysed to consider the themes that emerged. The participants were very keen to describe their experiences around the use of Teams on their mobile devices to access support and engage with their personal tutors during periods of restricted access to the university.

McVey, Edmond, and Montgomery (2019) established the advantages using informal conversations in Teams allowed staff to meet the varying needs of students. The findings from this small scale piece of research confirmed and built on this earlier work and sets the stage for more extensive research about how the functionality of Teams can support students.



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## DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The participants reported that they preferred the functionality of Teams to access support from tutors and support workers. Learners could use instant message conversations - chat, video call and meetings, and voice notes to keep in contact during difficult periods of their study.

The participants reported that they found emojis, GIFs, and threaded conversations enabled them to keep in contact and engaged when 'Lockdowns', extreme weather, and travel disruptions kept them away from campus. Moreover, the participants felt that tutors responded more effectively on Teams chat than email.

Participant B reports:

*'yes, I've used voice note in teams. It's very easy to press the voice note. Send the message and it's sent straight to the lecturer you want. You can search a lecturer by putting their name in and it searches the bar for them.'*

*'obviously I had contact with my supporters during my time at the University during the Covid Lockdowns, so I've got a Teams app. I can just message on teams and then they reply back.'*

Participants explained how they had meetings and chatted with tutors and support workers and this had a significantly positive impact on their student experience and learning through extended periods of isolation. The participants expressed a desire for consistency, as the use of traditional VLE seemed limited after the ease of use of Teams.

## REFERENCE LIST

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