Engaging and enthusing cross disciplinary students of mental health through large informal workshops

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and

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Research background

• The Open University – distance 50 years and largely online (10 years)
• SDK228 mental health 2\textsuperscript{nd} year module (~2000 students) is 30 credits (1/4 FTE)
• Scheduled online tutorials – Tutor group (~20) and cluster group (~150)
• Face to face tutorials 4 x 3 hour day schools – cluster group
Research Question

• Attendance at F2F and tutor group tutorials is poor
• Attendance at cluster tutorials
• Style of presentation at tutorials
• And student engagement at tutorials

Can we engage and enthuse cross disciplinary students of mental health through large informal workshops?
Adobe Connect

- Online room software with students as participants
- Students can access on all types of devices
- Recordings are accessible on all device types (mobile devices became available late 2019)
- Tutors can tailor rooms to their style
- Terminology: pods, share, poll, chat, breakout
Welcome to this module wide workshop

We will begin at half past but some notices / useful information first 😊

Slides to download

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Chat pod

Participant 2: Hi, excited to be here
Participant 1: looking forward to engaging today
Participant 2: engaging even!
Participant 2: oops
Participant 3: like the idea of these
Participant 8: Do I need to use a mic today??
Participant 7: Hoping to find out something

Participants can use this chat pod to answer questions, engage with each other and add general comments. During a live session comments are attached to logged in name but on a recording they can be anonymised.
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The workshops
Workshops

Aimed to engage students
Provide opportunities to look into topics and skills in more depth

1. Interesting extra on biology
2. Plagiarism
3. Positive psychology/How to be happy
4. Biology in your own words
5. Essay/critical writing
6. Dementia care in the 21st century

Run Tuesday evenings and Thursday day time
Analysis

• Interaction and attendance assessed during workshop and through targeted JISC questionnaire after each workshop
• Questionnaire to all SDK288 students towards the end of the module
• Questionnaire for associate lecturers (ALs) involved in workshops

What are we looking for?
attendance, interaction, enjoyment, and overall impressions
Findings - attendance
Findings: Attendance

- Total attendance - 437 (231 different students)
- 13-119 at each session
- Evening > lunchtime (67% / 33%)
If you did not attend one or more ONLINE module wide workshops can you please give any reasons that apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not see the relationship to my study of SDK228</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt I didn’t have the time to engage with more tutorials</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time inconvenient (other study issues eg scheduled tutorial / too close to TMA deadline)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned to attend but forgot about the workshop(s)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time inconvenient (personal issues)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know there were any workshop(s)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)
Findings: Attendance

If you found a future module had informal ONLINE interactive workshops would you? (please select any that apply)

- Plan to attend to help me engage with the module: 118 (83.1%)
- Plan to attend to help me engage with my university overall: 60 (42.3%)
- Plan to attend to help me engage with other students: 49 (34.5%)
- Plan to attend to enable me to ask questions: 48 (33.8%)
- Plan to attend to engage more with tutors: 41 (28.9%)
- Plan to attend for any other reason: 12 (8.5%)
- Not plan to attend: 11 (7.7%)
- Other: 1 (0.7%)

Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question’s respondents chose that option)
Findings - interaction
Findings: Interaction

- Raise Hand
- Agree
- Disagree
- Step Away
- Speak Louder
- Speak Softer
- Speed Up
- Slow Down
- Laughter
- Applause
- Clear Status
Findings: Interaction
Findings - enjoyment
83.9% of those surveyed found the workshops very enjoyable or enjoyable. None of those surveyed said they the events were ‘not enjoyable at all’.

Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)
Findings: What did students enjoy?

Interaction with others

Community building

Content

Interactive tools
Findings: What did students enjoy?

Good to have some fellowship with others on the course

Listening to others' viewpoints
Findings: What did students enjoy?

The friendly way it was presented

Direct instruction makes the topic clearer
Findings: What did students enjoy?

- Seeing the chats between other students
- The interactive nature of it!
Findings: Students did not enjoy

- Too busy
- Lack of time
- Lack of interaction
- Lack of Content
Findings: Students did not enjoy

- Break out rooms were a bit of a waste of time.
- Not enough information about where I am up to now.
- Overcrowded and not enough time to chat individually.
Findings: Students did not enjoy

too much info on the screen at the same time so hard to follow live

relation to course was not clear

Complex technology / inability with technology
Findings – overall impressions
Findings: Students took away

- Confidence
- Improved understanding of module content
- Enhanced skills
- Student community
Initial conclusions
What next at the OU?

- The informal nature increases engagement, community and understanding of both soft skills and content.
- Run alongside traditional tutorials
- Style can be used on other modules
- BUT more in depth analysis is needed
What next?

- COVID 19 impact on HE
- “We’re paying a lot of money to jump on a Zoom call.”
- “Those opportunities for networking are incredibly important, meeting those people is a huge part of the degree,”

https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/may/20/very-very-upsetting-students-face-tough-decisions-over-university

- 13-49% of students won’t enrol if courses are online

https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/may/20/uk-universities-facing-760m-hit-one-in-five-students-plan-defer

- Social distancing and online learning needs interaction
Thank you