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Student perceptions of, and engagement with, a pandemic enforced blended approach to learning

The benefits of a blended approach to learning are widely documented, where improvements in either student outcomes, understanding or engagement have been identified. In response to the current pandemic, most educators and students have had to adapt to an online blended learning approach. This presentation investigates the student experience and engagement observed by the academics facilitating the learning for two chemistry modules, one at foundation level and one at year 1 undergraduate level, in response to the pandemic. The foundation module structure is based on a flipped learning methodology involving online activities for students to access independently followed by online workshops structured around the challenge activities set and questions raised by the students. The undergraduate module applied a similar flipped learning approach incorporating several types of activities to promote active learning alongside video lecture content. The results of student performance in these activities were evaluated alongside the opportunity for students to ask questions anonymously, and these formed the structure of the live interactive workshops. For the foundation chemistry module, module feedback for particular activities will be presented along with an analysis of the interaction of the students with the independent activities, with a specific focus on engagement with lecture content versus application activities to test understanding of the content. The first-year experience of the undergraduate chemistry module forms part of a final-year student project focusing on the blended/flipped approach to learning. As part of this project, the cohort of students was surveyed regarding the activities they preferred/enjoyed, the ones they thought supported their learning, and the ones they thought improved their confidence in the concepts met. Interestingly, the initial findings suggest that the students are very aware of the difference between enjoying an activity and one that supports their learning best.

Key words

blended learning; flipped learning; student engagement; active learning; remote learning

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