

### Pharmacy students' perspective on online lectures during the COVID-19 pandemic: A case study from the University of Belgrade

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**Introduction:** Synchronous lectures tend to be used as the prevalent method of online instruction, irrespective of notable differences and obvious limitations when compared to their in-person delivery. Study aim was to assess students' perspective on online lectures held during the emergency remote teaching (ERT) shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Method:** Students were invited to take part in online survey related to their experience with ERT. Survey included 25 items related to: satisfaction (14 items), motivation (three items), interaction with peers and lecturers (four items), and perceived challenges (four items). A 5-point Likert scale was employed. Statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS software.

**Results:** A total of 387 students participated in the survey. The majority of respondents (79.3%) were junior students. Among the respondents, 72.6% reported no previous experience with online learning. Although a relatively high level of satisfaction was reported (mean score  $3.91 \pm 0.75$ ), challenges were also scored relatively high ( $3.05 \pm 0.99$ ), while interaction was scored somewhat lower ( $2.98 \pm 0.73$ ), and the lowest mean score was observed for motivation ( $2.73 \pm 0.58$ ). Students reported having trouble maintaining motivation, concentration and focus during online lectures, which usually took many hours per day. Interaction with peers was reported as unsatisfactory ( $2.48 \pm 1.46$ ), whereas it was more feasible with lecturers ( $3.24 \pm 1.42$ ). Students were quite satisfied with the ability to organise their time flexibly (71.4%), and with the workload (54.5%), while they were less convinced that online sessions provided enough opportunities to reflect on what was learnt (50.1% agree, 25.1% neither agree nor disagree).

**Conclusions:** The results obtained indicate that students are somewhat hesitant with respect to online lectures as the main mode of instruction. Lectures, generally, place students in a passive role, which is further increased in online delivery. In order to support students' engagement and success, online lectures should be combined with more active instructional strategies.

### Moving forward from the COVID-19 pandemic: Do students see eLearning as an integral part of their future learning environment?

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**Introduction:** The COVID-19 pandemic caused a paradigm shift in the way study material was presented and how learning was assessed at the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science in Iceland. The pandemic resulted in an unplanned shift from classical on-site lectures and problem-based learning to online activities through Teams, Zoom, Canvas, and other platforms (hereafter collectively termed eLearning). The way forward, post-pandemic, has been under discussion. Within this context, the aim of this study was to explore the students' view regarding what platform of teaching would benefit their learning environment in the future.

**Method:** A survey was sent to all registered pharmacy students using Google Forms. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

**Results:** The response rate was 25.8% ( $n = 55$ ). Majority of students (96%) either partially or fully agreed that access to lectures (streaming lectures or pre-recordings) improved during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic. Students were asked if they had a good overview of their education when it comprised of both on-site and eLearning (on a scale of 0 - 10, with 10 being a complete overview), 69% of students gave an overview score of 7 or above, showing that this combination was not problematic in terms of oversight. When asked what combination of on-site and eLearning would be most beneficial for their education moving forward, nearly 75% of students preferred to have the main focus on eLearning with some on-site activities. Only 9% of students preferred to have all lectures and learning activities on-site, whilst 14% of students preferred to have all learning via eLearning platforms.

**Conclusions:** It is evident, from the students' point of view, that eLearning will become an integral part of the future learning environment at the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, University of Iceland. Most students appreciate face-to-face discussions and problem-based activities to some extent, so a combination of eLearning and on-site activities will be the way forward beyond the pandemic.