

“A lecture is more than its slides”

Teachers and students came together June 2nd in an educational expedition organised by the BMS Teaching Academy. Mixed groups came up with action plans to tackle the issue of low student attendance on-campus, with sparkling discussions and various perspectives. Throughout this article we look back on this session.

Robin van Emmerloot and Marloes Luttikhuis of the TELT team hosted these discussions, to bring these mixed groups together and search for solutions to the issue teachers face: students staying away from campus. ([Large numbers of students stay away from campus - U-Today \(utoday.nl\)](#))

Lack of added value

“Why is student attendance low?” was the main question asked to the multi-perspective groups. This sparked some discussion amongst the students and teachers present. What works in engaging students and what doesn’t? And how do we get students moving?

The students are clever enough to decide for themselves: if there’s no added value of being on-campus in comparison to learning from home, the assets and liabilities to this don’t add up for them. The timely and monetary expense of commuting can be too much for those living further away, but even those closer to or living on campus would make these decisions. Sometimes it can even just be an issue of logistics: if there’s only one physical lecture, why would they travel all the way?

“If I can read and understand the slides without being present and still fully understand the lecture: there wouldn’t have been added value of me being there.” – student participant

Students generally appreciate the options of online and recorded (micro)lectures. They offer flexibility and inclusiveness, but do bring the current situation of students staying away physically. That means that students would come to campus for more than just the theoretical instructions.

The Campus Experience

One of the groups referred to the importance of a somewhat magic kingdom -esque concept: the *Campus Experience*. What’s defined by this concept? Online lecturing has proven for many that education isn’t limited to a physical presence. If students are expected to be on campus, more actions from them are expected than just being present. Just being present is exactly what they can do while being online. It’s when interaction, in various interpretations, comes into play where students get to contribute to their own campus experience.

The campus experience goes beyond just didactical instructions. Engaging students means for instance quizzing them, having interesting guest speakers and interactive workshops/projects that involve physical awareness. But besides the educational activities the campus can also facilitate students even more for blended learning on-campus: think of environmental stimulants like personal cubicles where students can easily collaborate.

To promote this campus experience, some ideas were brought up such as a buddy system or creating smaller learning communities within programmes to stimulate social cohesion. Student activism also stimulates this by organising and promoting symposia and lunch-lectures together with educational staff.

Some groups have gone beyond and suggest to fully optimise the use of the campus for interactive sessions only, where theoretical instructions are (mostly) recorded with a focus on tutorial sessions in physical form. This would reshape many educational spaces beyond traditional lecture halls.

Tell me why

In the end however, education also comes down to responsibilities of students. Teachers and the UT can facilitate to their hearts content, but it boils down to the responsibility of a student to do their part. This isn't different from the pre-covid era, even though the conditions and options have changed. None of the groups suggested completely cancelling online/hybrid education as options for or enforcing mandatory attendance, as added value is clearly perceived by many.

Transparency is key according to the groups: students gain from hearing directly *why* they are expected at campus. It's important to realise the type of students you're working with and what you expect of them. This expectation management can be done by for instance just clearly stating why and how you expect students to participate in your education, especially with students new in university but also newly getting used to being back on campus.

I want it that way

The BMS Teaching Academy and the hosts were greatly informed by the many perspectives shared during this session. Rightfully so the concluding question is: what's the next step to take? The 7th of July, 11:00 -13:00, we will organise a follow-up session on this topic.

In the meanwhile you can always consult with one of the [faculty's educational consultants at CELT](#), or if you would specifically like to consult on using digital tools to engage students you can contact [the TELT-team](#).