



How to support and engage tertiary learners in an online environment (with a focus on pastoral care)

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Aotearoa whenua.

Aotearoa atua.

Aotearoa pukenga.

Aotearoa tangata.

Tena koutou.

Ko Sara Williams toko ingoa.

E mahi ana ahau, ki Te Amorangi, Mātauranga Matua.

Te wahanga Oritetanga.

Hello, and warm greetings to you all. My name is Sara Williams and I work in the Learner Success team at the Tertiary Education Commission.

Welcome to our session, how to support and engage tertiary learners in an online environment. We are very glad you could join us today.

A couple of housekeeping points. Your audio and your video are disabled but you can communicate with us via the chat and the Q&A functions. Please make sure that you put any of your questions in the Q&A box. It's at the bottom of the screen. You can up vote questions you would like to know the answer to.

If you have general comments or any issues, you can use the chat function to let us know. There are 208 of you with us already today. So we have a great team of people assisting us to run this webinar. Ravi is monitoring chat for IT issues and will respond to you directly if you have any problems. Pat is also monitoring chat for themes that might emerge and to redirect any misplaced questions and Lisale is looking after our Q&A function.

Closed captioning is running for the session. So if you need that, you can enable it via your zoom window as per the instructions on the screen.

So I would like to hand over now to our presenters.

We have two wonderful presenters with us today.

Dr Cathy Stone, who is the Conjoint Associate Professor at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and adjunct fellow at the NCSEHE at Curtin University.

And Dr Teri McClelland who will be joining us as our second presenter. Teri is the head of faculty at SIT2LRN at the Southern Institute of Technology.

Following that we will open up for the Q&As.

Without further delay I will hand over to Cathy to get us underway.

Welcome.

Dr Cathy Stone, Conjoint Associate Professor at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and adjunct fellow at the NCSEHE at Curtin University

Hello. Welcome everybody. Thanks for coming and it's an absolute pleasure to be invited to do this. I'm based in New South Wales. My research has been Australian based but I have had the pleasure of spending time in New Zealand and meeting Sara and some others at the Tertiary Education Commission and Massey University. So I'm very much looking forward to speaking with you all today.

I'm just going to give a short presentation about supporting and engaging students in an online environment and talking a bit about some of the evidence from some research that I've been involved in.

As I say, this is largely in the Australian environment but I do think it's very relevant for New Zealand as well.

So first of all, if we think a little bit about prior to the current incredible situation, unprecedented, as the word is, prior to COVID 19 online students were more likely than those on campus to be a bit like this. They tended to be older, more women studying in the online environment, many of them first in their families and amongst their friends to go to university.

Working primarily working part time or full time employment, studying part time. And in Australia, from one or more of the equity categories that are the government identified equity categories of low socio economic circumstances, regional remote, indigenous or students with a disability.

Likely to be very time poor with multiple other commitments, being older, tending to have responsibilities for home, work, family. And as I say, from a government identified group, particularly the low SES group.

So before COVID 19 we know that about 25 per cent of the student cohort in Australia was studying online choosing to study online, enrolled in an online mode. Now, of course, we've got potentially all students studying online because of COVID 19 including those above. So we have a very diverse cohort, indeed.

At the bottom of each of the slides I've put some sources for the research that I'm talking about, and there is also a slide at the end which provides references in more detail.

What we know about online education, people who choose online, is that traditionally it's provided an opportunity for those who have been historically under represented in higher education.

So as I said before, those who are older, those who are first in family, low socio economic, regional, indigenous with disability. And here is a quote that I particularly like from some research that I've been involved in. It's from a female student who is 36. And she says, "It's very strange for me because during the day I'm just a mother, and I'm just a cleaning lady, and so in the world of the work chain I'm down the bottom. And then here I am at night studying psychology. So I have moments like I'm wow, hey, no one would pick that."

But there are also challenges associated with this mode of study. And certainly in Australia, pre COVID 19 and we don't have stats, obviously, since the COVID 19 situation distance students have been about two and a half times more likely than on campus students to withdraw without a qualification. So we need to find a way to make it

work for all students and ensure that all students are sufficiently supported, prepared to help them meet these challenges of online education.

So some research I've been involved in over the past five years or so has been qualitative research with online students, hearing from them to find out what it is that they most appreciate, what it is they most want and need from online education. So I'm just going to give you a brief summary of some of this in terms of the key findings.

Engagement and a sense of connection to their online lecturer or tutor tends to be very, very important for these online students. So as one online student, a male student aged 41 says here, "If the tutor is very active and engaging with the students, then generally the students are more willing to engage with each other." So one thing leads to the other. An active tutor, engaged lecturer in the online environment will encourage that interaction between students. They're also looking for well-designed materials. They know themselves what works in person is not the same as online. And as this female online student in her 50s says, "I thought it would be more tailor made for it than what it is." They want relevant and timely support.

So here is a female student saying I got an email telling me that we're here to help. Give us a call if you ever want to chat. And then I thought I'm going to call these guys. It was really helpful.

I had a chat to a woman over the phone who was really great." This was a university that was doing outreach contact to online students to help them feel connected. Flexibility is something I think that all online students are looking for. They sign up for online because they expect it to be flexible.

And as this woman said she's in her 40s. She said you're working, you've got after school sports and things like that. You're forced to do really late nights. And so many students spend their entire weekend on their study time.

Through 2016 2017 I was involved in some research through the national centre For Student Equity in Higher Education in Australia. With 15 Australian universities and the Open University in the UK looking at ways in which institutions engage and support online students. And how they can do this most effectively. The findings from this research helped to develop a set of National Guidelines in Australia for improving student outcomes in online learning.

What I'm going to do over this next couple of slides is just run you through some of the key findings from this research. One of the most important things that came out of it was the importance of the institution and the staff within it really knowing who these students are, understanding their diversity, their needs and their strengths, because they have a lot of strengths, this cohort, in terms of their work experience, their life experience. So that teaching and support interventions can be tailored accordingly, needing to be flexible, inclusive, accessible. And as one lecturer put it, these are people who are struggling with other things. So actually picking up the phone and saying you're having trouble with your studying is pretty low on the old agenda.

So the importance of understanding that and knowing that they won't necessarily ask or tell us when they're needing help or support.

Institutions also need to very much recognise online education as core business. It shouldn't be seen as an afterthought, which I think in the past it has been at times with the attitude of, "Oh, this course is going well. Let's put it online as well." Without really thinking about how differently it needs to operate. To ensure quality and consistency of delivery, and that includes timely and embedded support, which I will talk about a bit more. In the words of one program coordinator, it's not secondary education. And you know until the whole university thinks like that and its core business, then we're always pushing things.

Many people talked to me about the importance of early intervention, of what people referred to it often as that front loading, providing that early personal contact to inform students, reduce their anxiety, providing orientation aimed at off campus students. We put a lot of energy into off campus, we need to put a lot of energy into this distance orientation.

Some of the regional universities in Australia are doing this very well by literally jumping in their cars and going out to regional communities and running in person orientation sessions for students in that area. And that includes embedded academic support in the beginning units and courses because many of these students are academically inexperienced. So to provide them with some embedded support with some of the basics can make a huge difference to these students.

Of course, all of this requires a collaborative approach, and universities can traditionally be quite siloed, as we know. So if we have academic and professional staff working together, then we can achieve a better coordinated institution wide support and engagement strategy, teacher presence, terribly important. That strong teacher presence, that regular feedback and communication. That helps to build a sense of community amongst students as a group, as exemplified by that quote I gave you earlier, designed for online, so that it is appropriately designed to be interactive, engaging, varied, design that encourages class discussion, but not overly high tech. So relatively easy to navigate, remembering that not everyone has fantastic internet at home or up to date computers, and so on.

And as an online curriculum manager describes it, it is important this allows opportunities for students to engage with the content online, teacher presence in the blogs and the discussion boards. Universities need to implement coordinated intervention strategies. And that can be through outreach but informed by data about student behaviour.

So here is an example from a student services area in one university talking about reaching out to students. When we think they may be sort of falling by the wayside, having some difficulties. And that's based on the data in terms of who is handing in assessments late, who is perhaps logging in late, who is not spending much time on the learning management system, and so on. And through that, through that intervention, appropriate academic and personal support services can be offered. And these need to be easy to access remotely, to offer extended hours because as we know online students are studying at all hours day and night. And if the hours of support are extended, then it makes it much easier for them to access them. And above all they need to be well promoted, to both students and staff. Many staff are unaware of the range of services offered to students at their own universities, and where possible, to have support services embedded in the curriculum, at least information about the services that are available, perhaps at times of high stress when assignments and exams are due.

There can be information within the course content about where to go if you need some extra help, as well as embedding actually embedding academic support within the curriculum. And as a teaching and learning manager describes it, so rather than it's over here outside of the discipline base, it's actually embedded. Many of these students will only ever look at their course content. They won't go searching around the university website for help.

I'm just going to finish this presentation by looking at a way of bringing it altogether. And this is just one model. And it's a comprehensive way of providing that engagement and support. And it's based on a student engagement cycle that some colleagues of mine and I developed when I was working at Open Universities Australia. I will just run you through this. As I say, it's just an example of how this can be brought together. So students begin by thinking about study. Is this right for me? And that's when they're brand new and they're enrolling for the first time. But also at each point of enrolling in new subjects semester by semester. So they rethink it: is this right for me, this constant re-evaluation. Then they enrol. When they're first enrolling they're making that commitment. I'm going to do this qualification. When they come back the following semester the following year they're consolidating that commitment.

Then they're waiting to start. And at the beginning it can be quite a long wait if they decide to enrol the previous year for a course that starts next year, they're waiting quite a long time. And all that time they're reviewing their decision. Even if they're re-enrolling, then they've still got the semester break usually to wait until they start again. And then they begin.

And we all know that's a difficult challenging time of transition of beginning, even when they're continuing students starting in a new subject can be a transition as well. Then, of course, during the semester, during the time of their studies, they have assessments, they have life challenges, they have various hurdles to overcome.

So they're questioning, "Will I keep going?" At all these points we can lose these students if we don't provide them with enough contact and support.

And, of course, when they're complete, the study period or semester, what's the impact of their results. That's going to impact on the decision about whether they keep going. Again, that question: is this right for me. So it's very much a circular approach in terms of the particular points at which students are at risk of attrition and at which they need particular support.

If we think about the type of support we could be offering based on the results of research and to begin with. Sorry, I should have mentioned this before. This is, of course online, students juggling multiple responsibilities, life events, work, family. They're operating largely in isolation from staff and other students. So in this beginning phase, this thinking about study, this enrolling, this making or consolidating a commitment. We can be offering accurate and timely information. Student advisers can be on the other end of the phone taking an individual approach rather than a one size fits all approach, talking about their circumstances, their commitments, their priorities, so that they're not encouraged to take a full time load, for instance, when they're not working because they may have two or three children they're looking after at home. So very much that individual approach.

Preparatory courses could be offered if it's a student who is academically inexperienced what preparatory courses might they want to do when they're getting ready for study. In the next phase the institution can be providing outreach contact, through phone calls or emails or SMS messages. A mixture of all. Preparatory courses again could be offered or they could be referred to where they could go to get some preliminary academic experience. At that beginning stage the transition phase, the waiting to start through to transition. Again, just that regular contact, phone contact, email, SMS updates, social media, to keep them connected and to feel that sense of belonging to this institution. And of course orientation, that online orientation I talked about before, possibly even looking at ways to deliver it face to face.

Then throughout the semester there can be an intervention strategy just checking in through outreach calls, inbound calls, a number that they can phone where they can get help if they need it. Live chat, webinars, peer mentoring can be very, very important for online students. Linking them up with a student who is academically more experienced than they are, teaching and learning support, absolutely vital throughout this throughout the study period, throughout the whole time of their studying, that strong teacher presence. Embedded support such as learning support embedded in the early units within the curriculum.

And, of course, online tutorial and learning support that could be outside of the curriculum but clearly highlighted or mention made of it in their course content so they know where to go to get that extra support. Similarly, other personal support and equity services which are offered out of hours and via remote access, to make it easy for them to reach out to that help when they need it, live chat, phone video conferencing.

Now, many universities in Australia, and I am sure in New Zealand, are already doing a lot of these sorts of things. This is a kind of idealistic model of how to bring it altogether. So I hope this presentation has been of some interest to you and some help to you in terms of ideas. It's just trying to I was just really trying to bring the results of research together into a practical way in which we can support and engage students, because by doing these kinds of things where the evidence is very clear that students are much more likely to stay and succeed where they feel that sense of connection with a university engagement and support. So thank you very much for that.

There will be an opportunity at the end to ask questions. But I am going to hand over now to Teri McClelland for her presentation. So thank you, Teri.

Dr Teri McClelland, SIT2LRN, Southern Institute of Technology

Thank you for that, Cathy. I will just get my screen up and say hello to everyone. And thank you very much for this opportunity. So what I'm going to do is give a bit of an oversight or rom through some of the things we do at the coalface and supporting students. A bit of an overview of what SIT2LRN is. It is the faculty of Southern Institute of Technology. It's based in Invercargill. We started in 2003 with one qualification and 22 students. And

from that SIT2LRN has grown over the past 17 years to be the third largest provider of flexible delivery in New Zealand.

With over 5,000 students each year studying in over 60 qualifications from foundation through to masters level. Also in addition to the tertiary study that we offer, we also offer star courses or secondary tertiary alignment of resources with around 1,000 secondary school student enrolments each year. So supporting online students has several challenges, and Cathy has covered some of these as well, in that there are things you have to think about right from the start. For example, your students can be anywhere in the world, studying any time in any time zone. So you need to think outside the normal work week box. You may have multiple cohorts running at the same time. I give an example there. Within SIT2LRN we run overlapping intakes. We will have some students starting while others are finishes and some in the middle of their studies.

You need to be able to accommodate the differing support needs of students at differing periods or positions in their study. Student support is also very individual matter. And you need to be able to enable and support an individual within a cohort of hundreds of students all of whom you never actually see. And while supporting and recognising the individuality, you also need to maintain consistency. So you have to consider how you provide support which avoids the one size fits all box, whilst still providing consistency in your provision. So what do we do? We look at student support in a before, during, after scenarios.

So just like the online delivery, online support is most effective when it's flexible and includes different approaches. It's also an ongoing process.

So looking at the before.

In SIT2LRN we try to start supporting students prior to their first enrolment.

As Cathy has noted, online students come from all walks of life. And for many of them online study is full of unknowns. So to support student decision making right at the start when they're in that first phase that Cathy mentioned we asked students what they wished they had known prior to enrolment. And then we looked to provide this on our website.

So in addition to the usual questions, when does this course run, or how much does this course cost, we found students really wanted information about the actual courses. Like what are the assessments for this look like? What is the workload like? So in our course information we include those. That type of specific information to help them plan out will this fit for me or not.

We also have an FAQ area of the questions that are commonly asked: What happens if I withdraw? Can I put studies on leave? Can I start early? All those sorts of things. And that FAQ section keeps growing as more questions come through. One of the biggest issues with our students is the time required for study, and being realistic about the time that they're going to have to study. So what we do is in addition to talking about the workload on the general course site, when a prospective student is filling in an online application form we have an automatic calculator in it. And the calculator actually totals up the credits they've applied for in the specific intake period, and presents them with the guideline number of hours they can expect to set aside for study each week. So this helps the students right at that first application period to consider their work, study, life balance, and setting realistic study loads and goals.

So at that period they can the study calculator might come up and say you will need 33 hours a week in general as a guideline for your study. And they might look and say well I'm working 40 hours a week. Maybe I need to reduce I will look at reducing this down to 10 hours a week study, whatever they feel will be more realistic for them.

And then once a student has completed their enrolment and they've been accepted into a course, they will receive an important information magazine style booklet. And this booklet is complete with a study planning calendar, and it's sent to them in hardcopy, to their home address, because that's the first stage of making that physical connection between the institute and the student. And we do that as early as we can to sort of set the scene for them, and provide them with more information. So that's the before.

Then we have during. During their online study, SIT2LRN students are entitled and the Southern Institute of Technology made the call that all online students are entitled to the same student support that on site students receive. But it may be done a bit differently. But they are all SIT students, they all get supported the same. So the earlier a student we know that the earlier a student engages in study, the higher the likelihood of them successfully completing the study. So at SIT2LRN we frontload our student support and include a significant amount of the outreach support. So what happens? On day one, first day an intake starts each student will receive a personal email message. That introduces our student liaison person and gives each student an 0800 contact number. And overview of the information important for their engagement and study. Each student also receives at the same time a text message, SMS message to let them know to check their student emails.

Okay, we work through all of our students must engage through the SIT student email system. But we do remind the students through a text message that they do have to go there and check that. And they also receive a welcome email from their course facilitator and a letter from our admin area saying, "It's time to get started". So they've received emails, text messages and letters in addition to the stuff they've had beforehand on the day they start. When they log in we use Blackboard as our learning management system.

When they log in, in addition to their study materials which are all there, they will also receive photos. And biographic information of their facilitator. There will be video introductions, and the contact details for the various student support areas, and also multimedia resources that cover APA referencing, tips for software applications, things about learning to learn, time management. All of these resources are provided in a variety of formats and cover a wide range of things because different students like to take up information in different ways. And different students will need different things. And this material is available for them all the time. We just front end load to make sure they know it's there right from the start.

In the third week of study, every student who is new to SIT2LRN study.

So these aren't returning students, these are the new ones in. They're called and asked about their first impressions, so how did they find the enrolment process, did they have enough information to organise and plan their study, is the course so far what they expected, and if they know who to contact should they have a problem.

And we do this in week three of every start we get the results in terms of the analytics by program, we get them right away so we can look at do we have an issue, particularly with a program area or overall and how we're tracking. And we do trend analyses of these over the years. So we've also found when these phone calls go out that students tend to maybe ask that quick question they haven't put up or contacted their facilitator about. Like I know there's a 24 hour help desk, how do I contact it? Or I've just I've really enjoyed this course, what course do you think I should do next.

Now, our people doing the surveys can't actually answer. They answer what they can but they can't answer everything. What they can do is if they can't answer something on the spot they say to the student I think the best person to help you here with your next course is the program manager. I will ask the program manager to get in contact with you. And so most times these calls are happening at night.

The next morning the manager will get a note saying, "Will you please contact student X, Y, Z. They're interested in what course to do next." The program manager can get the information of where the student is at and put in a call and discuss it with them.

Now, also during study, if the student doesn't respond to a facilitator's email or they miss a submission due date. They will receive a text message reminder to contact their facilitator or the SIT2LRN administration area.

So through the analysis of various feedbacks and surveys undertaken over the years, one thing we've found is that students of Maori ethnicity tend to be reticent coming forward if they have questions or issues regarding their study.

As a result of these findings, our student liaison officer actually calls all students of Maori ethnicity throughout the year, just to ask if there's anything she can help them with. We've also found that in doing these, the phraseology is very important here. And so she avoids saying, "Hi, it's Polly, do you have any issues we can help

with?" Instead she says, "Hi, how is it going? Is there anything we can do to help?" And that has been really well received. And we've seen a direct increase in engagement and completion with our Maori students since doing these outreach calls.

And probably for us, one of the biggest game changers that we started last year was supporting the student learning has been our work with Studiosity which supports areas in math, science but also has a writing assistance area and live chats for the students. It is provided free of charge to our students. They get like the writing assistance, they get 10 submissions a semester. They would have to pay after the 10 but we haven't had anybody hit that at this stage. And our students are giving it rave reviews because they see it as timely help right when they need it. As you can see from the graph, it's all the biggest spike is between 10 and 11 9 and 10 o'clock at night.

The other thing that's happened is our facilitators are telling us that they're seeing the quality of student work and submissions lifting. And getting increasingly better. So we did it as a pilot and have been carrying on it. And we're looking at increasing what we do there as part of our enduring support for students. Now, afterwards when the student is done being a student, and as Cathy has noted there thinking about, well, what does this all mean to me. Do I want to carry on or what do I want to do. Even after they've finished studying we do our best to stay in contact and provide information and support. So we do the usual everybody would be familiar with how did we do surveys. And we survey graduates in terms of what are you doing now, and how relevant was your study and everything, but also within every current year we provide all of the students with our SIT2LRN magazine. It's called Situation, whether they are actively studying or completed. It comes out once a year. It focuses on graduate profiles, who are they and what are they doing, and showcases all the different things people can do with different qualifications. And students and graduates have both told us that getting the magazine has encouraged them to keep studying. But it has also given them some ideas of, "Oh, I didn't know I could go there with this", and they find it really useful. And, of course, when you're supporting, the unexpected will always happen. And it doesn't matter how planned you are, how organised you are with your student support services. The unexpected will happen. And you may have to rethink what your students need to help them during these unexpected events.

And part of this is remembering, too, that your students may be affected by events that are remote from you and your institution. For example, you may be in Invercargill and your students may be up in the north island in Hamilton dealing with a flood. Or your students in Nepal may be trying to cope with the aftermath of an earthquake. You your ability being able to respond with support efforts in these instances quickly and effectively really comes down to your systems. Being able to identify those who may be affected and reaching out to them and offering that support and having it ready to provide.

In some cases it can be very simple. It can be working with like we would work with our facilitators and potentially offer extensions. In some cases it could be more involved. You might need to defer studies, or whatever. It's just each one is different. But it's having those systems and processes in place to enable you to identify and move quickly.

As an example, during the recent COVID 19 lockdown responses. SIT2LRN found that for our students the biggest support they could get would be to be able to increase their study load and have the ability for those in lockdown with them to take on study as well. Almost a study buddy group within their lockdown area. So we quickly put together and remembering we had what was it I think 48 hours. We went from level to level. We put the initiatives in place for our current students, and we coupled that we joined it with the ability for students to take leaves of absence, which for us put study on hold for up to a year. And we put in place the ability to get a leave of absence easily and quickly. It was all about the quick response here.

Student feedback that we've received during lockdown and since coming out of lockdown has been totally positive to these initiatives. And students have let us know how much they've appreciated and felt supported by these initiatives.

So that's a quick look through what we do at the coalface, down here in Invercargill. With that I think I hand back over to Sara for if there's any questions or anything.

Sara: Thank you so much, Teri. Cathy will rejoin us as well in a moment. And we will move to a question and answer session. So thank you for everyone who has been popping your questions into here is Cathy hello Cathy. Thank you for everyone who has been popping questions into the Q&A section. Do keep adding those. We won't probably have time to cover all of them. But what we will do is we will send the questions through to Teri and Cathy, and they will respond to them in writing and we will post those responses with all of our materials from this webinar. If you don't get your question answered today, rest assured it will be answered.

Now, I'm going to drop off because no one needs to see me asking questions, and Teri and Cathy will stay with you. My voice will stay with you and we will fire some questions their way. So our first question is from Adrian. And he has asked, what ideas can you share with us that are there for engaging with students online, who might be studying programs that are extremely hands on. So anything that's trades or land surveying and that kind of thing.

Teri: I can I will jump in, Cathy. So Adrian, one of the areas that we do a lot of hands on programs, two that pop to my mind right away are horticulture and animal care. The engagement is slightly different. We use a lot of video assessment. So if a student has to, say, feed a dog a pill. What they will do is they will have a friend it's usually cell phone or whatever but they will video the student who will say here is who I am. Here is what I've got to give the dog, and they will give it to the dog in one shot and that gets uploaded.

The other thing in our horticulture area, one of the areas is plant identification. So students have to it's like the old fashioned plant books that you used to have with all the pressed plants in it. That has been replaced in the digital age with doing photographs of the plants, but to know that that student has done that photograph, the first thing they have to have is an identifier. First they will do a photo of their identifier, whatever it is. And then they will put the identifier on each plant that they photographed, and then give the description of it. Sometimes for the assessors and the facilitators it's sometimes like playing Where's Wally with the identifier. But those are a couple of ways you can do that very hands on replicate that in the online environment. I am sure Cathy will have more.

Cathy: Look, there is quite a bit of literature around about this. I can give you the link to a particular paper in writing, but there's a great paper that was came out of the University of Tasmania on teaching online, the Bachelor of Dementia Care. This is obviously very hands on work, working with patients with dementia. They had creative ways of caring in that environment. It certainly can be done. The use of video is particularly pertinent. All of us go to YouTube when we want to find out how to do something practical. So, you know, it's not impossible to do it in those sorts of ways. I agree with the sorts of ways that Teri has talked about as well.

Sara: That's great. Thanks, Cathy and Teri. Teri, we had a quick question from Nori. She has asked about the study calculator which I also thought was fascinating. Do you have an example or would it be possible for SIT to share an example about what you're talking about.

Teri: Yes. I can easily get it and send it through to you, Sara, to share with everybody. It's actually the back end base of it is Excel. So

Sara: Simple as that.

Teri: Yeah, very simple Excel background they put into the web form. I don't know how that works, that's the IT magic. But it was very simple to do and it is something that our students and our program managers all really like having.

Sara: Great. Thank you. Our next question has come in from Chris. Chris is asking what real time data are you collecting that can be shared to improve students' online experience and support their learning.

Teri, do you want to answer that from the point of view of your institution?

Teri: Yeah. So the real time data is the one is the first impressions. So that is because that is done so often throughout the year with all the new cohorts, I can tweak or identify any issue that's coming upright away, and get a fix in place. That's sort of that analytic on the overall of the programs at once type thing, because the report I get on it gives me the it's just a nice, simple report with all the program stuff and also the overviews and comparison of intake to intake. And then I can get year to year. So that's real time happening that I can respond to quite quickly. The other one is with the outreach going on. Like when my liaison person is calling the all the Maori ethnicity students, if she sees a question is getting asked of her or an issue has come up more than twice. She will then relay that to me right then and there. So it goes into the analytics but, hey, this needs to be fixed now. And the same with our we have course evaluations and we have program evaluations. So during the course there's an online course evaluation that all students can fill in. And that data goes through to the program managers, who can during the running of a course see there's something that's coming up here that we can respond to right away. We respond to it we analyse it all for the end of the year but we have that quick response. And then at the conclusion of every program or study you know, multiple courses, program or study, they get a how did we do type survey, and we can look at that. So we're collecting that on individual course and programs all the time.

Cathy: I will just add to that in terms of the value of dashboards in learning management systems where online teachers can quite easily see who is logging on when. And, you know, the uploading of assessments and all those sorts of things, and can then have a clue, perhaps, as to who is not engaging as much as other students, and then some sort of coordinator strategy can be used by picking up that online data through the learning management system dashboard.

Teri: That's perfect, Cathy. I had forgotten all about that. Most learning management systems will have a performance dashboard where you can look right away who has logged in and when.

Sara: That's great. Thank you both. We have a question from Jean. And I'm not sure if either of you will have the knowledge in this area, but the question is: can you provide any advice on an optimum class size for advanced language courses. And if you are doing into ESL, EFL or other language classes. I guess that's a really interesting question in an online environment, because maybe it would differ significantly from face to face advanced language. So any thoughts on that.

Cathy: I'm certainly not an expert on that, but I would say the Open University in the UK which teaches, you know, a range of right across all disciplines including languages, their class sizes are generally 20 to 30. And they consider that to be the optimum size pretty much across the board. And whether or not it would need to be less than that for a language class, I don't know. But certainly we certainly in Australia have online classes a lot bigger than 20 to 30. So I just offer that as what the Open University in the UK thinks of as best practice. They've been doing this for a long time.

Teri: Yeah. And I would also say I'm not an expert in that area. I have supported English language classes that were being done offshore with the online component. But that was more the support rather than the actual you know, they were still in the classroom and that.

Sara: Thank you. Jean, we are getting a number of questions from the sector about online and ESOL and L and N provision as well. We will be looking at pulling some information about that if we can find some expertise out there. So thank you for bringing that up again. A question here from Theresa. This is a good one. So when you have a younger cohort of learners, sort of 17 to 23, they are finding that the engagement for those learners is less than with older learners. They're using videos, anonymous whiteboard options and things like that. Would you have any tips that you could offer to try and get their engagement up amongst the younger learner cohort.

Teri: I can give some ideas. The first thing, I suppose, is finding out where they're going where are they native to. Where are they going to for fun, because if you can engage them through those channels, that's going to keep them through. And if you can imbed them into your learning management system.

So one of the things that we're trialling with different courses now, because it needs synchronous and we're predominantly asynchronous. One of the synchronous ones we're doing is something called cahoots. You can set up quizzes and they compete against each other. It's something that's used in the classrooms. We're looking how

we can bring it into the online environment and we're also looking at how we can make it asynchronous. It's trying to bring the gaming side. I've answered it this quick, they've answered it that quick. Another technique if you have a cohort of students that likes text. So, say, the communications type course potentially, we've done a bit of a discussion board game where the first person you have so many discussion boards all on the same topic. The first discussion board is, say, 500 words.

And then everyone after that has to re state the first one but using half the words. So as you work through the first thing you get is everybody wants to be early on in so they can have more words, because the last person always ends up with one word as they work through. So I suppose it's just trying to find particularly for the younger ones what's the fun component, and if you can get them hooked in early and they get the other thing we found is if you can't find a fun component. For me that would be accounting. I just never have found any fun in that, but that's me personally. It's getting an achievement, getting something they've done real quick run on the board. They think I can do this, and you engage them.

Cathy: I think a comment I would make as well and great ideas, Teri is how are you measuring engagement, because sort of the younger age group may not appear to be very engaged if you're looking at, you know, whether they're posting to discussion boards, and the sort of conventional measures of engagement in online, but they may just be getting on with doing it. They may not be there to make friends, to have contact with other students. They've probably got a busy social life outside of their online class. But they may be getting the work done. And I think that, you know, sometimes we kind of have a funny idea about what engagement should look like online. And we did some I did some research recently with the University of Tasmania. That showed that a lot of students actually didn't really like doing the work that they saw as just ways of keeping them busy. Posting to discussion boards and so on. They just wanted to get on with the work. So I think probably, perhaps, the biggest indicator of engagement is whether or not they're staying, whether you're retaining them, whether they're getting their assessments done, whether they're passing their exams. So I think that sometimes, you know, we need to be a bit wary of making assumptions that they're not engaged just because we're not hearing from them very much. That might be a question you could put to them, saying what sorts of things do you like to do, would you like to be engaged with the class or just get on with the work, and maybe seeking their feedback about that.

Sara: Lovely. Thank you both so much for that. We do have a lot of other really great questions that have come in but I am aware that we're nearly at the end of our time and people will have other obligations. So just to reiterate again, we are collecting all your questions and Teri and Cathy will be providing written responses to those. Which will be up with the webinar. The webinar should be up within about a week. And it will have closed captions on it and it will have a full transcript of the entire process today as well. I would also, looking at the questions, really strongly encourage participants to go to the TEC's web pages on online learning. We've collated really great material from Australia and New Zealand. And the rest of the world. And there are just hours of resources, webinars, guidance documents and advice in there for you to have a look at. So a really great treasure trove to have and explore. Starting with our New Zealand colleagues. And before we close off today, I'm really pleased to let you know that the next webinar in this series will be on July the 24th. Its topic is specific supports for disabled learners in the online environment. And we will be advertising registration for that session in the next week or so. So we really hope to see you there.

Again, thank you so much for joining us today, everybody. And many thanks to our presenters for sharing their knowledge and being with us today. Thank you, Cathy, for coming in from cold Canberra. And Teri from probably slightly warmer in Invercargill. We do have sunshine in Wellington today after being pummelled for a while. Thank you for joining us in this important Mahi. And we hope your week is going well.

Kia ora tatou katoa.

Cathy: Thank you.

Teri: Bye bye.



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