Ultrasound Education during Covid-19
Perspectives from two UK Universities

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Educators - Professional Perspectives

- **Rapid change** toward online delivery of learning and teaching. Challenge of actually learning how to use new technologies; with the lack of usual planning and preparation time.
- **Changes to University regulations**, assessment boards and academic processes, including assessments and examination format at very short notice (Difficult managing the pressures of this and student expectations).
- **Assessment timescales** for student qualification were affected - pressures for some to complete earlier, and for some to delay assessments.
- **Professional and Regulatory body requirements** (CASE) became **more flexible** (but standards still need to be met).
- **Cancellation and moving** of module delivery, including finding time to repeat delivery on some occasions.
- Challenges of looking at the **longer term clinical placement availability** and recruitment for 2020-21
- **Virtual environment** - less feedback (verbal and non-verbal) from learners during online sessions (compared to classroom learning) - engaging learners is more difficult.

Educators - Personal Perspectives

- **Remote working** and feelings of isolation, leading to anxiety.
- **Personal concerns** about COVID-19 and health of family, friend and colleagues.
- **Missing social interactions** with students and colleagues face to face. As social beings, this felt unsettling.
- **Disruption of home life** in trying to create a new work-life balance. It was challenging defining the new boundaries.
- **Personal Challenges** such as home schooling, managing teaching and family/personal commitments.
- **Ideological dilemma:** Feelings of 'conflict' between clinical and academic roles, including the desire to contribute to the NHS as a clinical practitioner alongside continued pressure to fulfil academic responsibilities. (Billig et al, 1989).

Challenges:

- **Rapid move to online teaching**, learning to use communications technology quickly.
- **IT platforms developing faster than educators** can learn how to use them.
- **Poor internet connections** / connectivity for learners beyond our control but it can lead to frustration.
- Lack of initial knowledge or scientific information about COVID-19 made **decision making challenging**.
- **Changes in recommendations** required quickly adapting plans and communicating these to students and clinical staff.
- **Challenge of learning (and teaching)** multiple new platforms/software packages.
- Lack of access to **clinical placements**, social distancing measures. Clinical assessment methods had to change.
- **Professional demands** on ultrasound students to return to their primary professional role.
- **Cancellation of usual conferences** and networking events.
- Practical sessions at university were not initially possible.
- **Increased administration/ bureaucracy** in recording programme changes and performing necessary risk assessments.

Opportunities:

- Increased often free **online professional educational opportunities and support systems**
- **Collaboration and networking** with professional colleagues from other institutions.
- **Development of new digital support resources** and improved confidence in using them.
- **Online assessments** allowing more flexibility for students, academics and placements.
- Online **tutor support** for research.
- **Flexibility:** Feedback from current students was positive as they could access scheduled learning and teaching from a location of their choice.
- **Online conferences** can open up further opportunities for student, academic and clinical collaboration.
- **Simulation suites,** on campus, can still be used to develop clinical skills through practical sessions (subject to adequate risk assessment).
- **New funding opportunities** for developing ultrasound education.
- Opportunities to develop and monitor **more inclusive pedagogies**.

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