

This is the unedited auto-generated transcript of the DigiEd Dilemmas podcast recording Season 1 Episode 1 on the topic of Hyflex.

Simon Thomson: So the first question

Simon Thomson: I want to ask each of you is, what do you call it? So? In the context of this we're calling high flex. This idea of simultaneously running something in person physically, but also offering some kind of access virtually as well. So I suppose the first thing I always come across is, what do we call this thing?

Simon Thomson: So what I'd like to do is probably just introduce your name, so people know and connect your name to your voice. And then, if you could just give me a quick kind of they, whatever you know it as, and whatever you would describe it as

Simon Thomson: So I wonder if Phil Will arrived first? Phil, would you like to start.

Philip Moffitt: Nice to meet you all on film office. I'm: a chartered engineer user Experience and I've been on my facilities manager. I'm actually a teaching. I'm in a teacher focused position as a senior lecture at the Royal School military, and even in count. So we would conventionally call what we're going to talk about hybrid. Learning this notion that you know you either invite online presence into a Physically co-present teaching and learning interaction or vice versa. We're not quite at the point where we've got that perfect balance we would tend to favour on over the other, and then invite the other mode. And if that makes any sense whatsoever.

Philip Moffitt: But yeah, that's what we tend to do. We tend to call it a hybrid learning for a quite an early stage of developing it.

Simon Thomson: We'll we'll probably touch on that. You know how how well set up are we for these experiences? And really good question, James.

James Rutherford: Yes, thank you very much. Good afternoon everyone, James Rutherford, I'm. At City University of London. My job title is Senior Educational Technologist, which about things to do with age. But I've been working in a educational technology in Hg. For a long time, and it felt to me to react to the pandemic with some kind of hybrid teaching solution at city so we don't call it high flex. I'm. Aware there are various other terms like multimodal and dual delivery and we call it hybrid as a that. That's what it is, but a city when we came up with a project name because we thought it would get a bit more traction with academics, so we call it Isla, I. S. L. A, which stands for inclusive, synchronous learning activities and the key word there is inclusive, because that's the AIM for this activity, so i'll talk more later as as we we get on time.

Simon Thomson: That's interesting that you've kind of come up with a an acronym kind of make it a real thing

Paul Shore: Thank you, Simon. Hi, everyone. I'm Paul Shore associate Dean for flexible and digital learning and faculty, biology, medicine, Health at the University of Manchester. I'm. I'm. A molecular biologist by my research. Is it molecular biology, but have a a real interest and enthusiasm for technology. Enhanced learning, that is, is, is long standing, and during Covid my my experience was called upon to support staff. One of those areas was in in what we call dual delivery, but what I like to call what what I turned flex during, or or a flexure which really emphasizes the flexible nature of the of the lecture. Again, it's it's to mode with students on campus, and and remotely, but also, I think, importantly, being able to engage with the lecturer, regardless of which in environment. But they're in. So that's my primary experience. And for this form of fuel delivery. But we have done some small group teaching as well, which I'd be interested to to see what others experience of that is as well.

Simon Thomson: Yeah, I think we'll probably touch on teaching types of teaching that, you know. When does it work best? When does it? When does it not work best. So that's brilliant. So just kind of a list. This point of view we may use all of those terms throughout this kind of discussion, but we're meaning has a choice, really, whether they join teaching session physically in in the physical location, or whether they join that remotely some way and we'll touch on the experience. So the next question really is, i'd like to have us have a think about from my experiences the benefits that we have seen for high flex, and I want to put that benefit into 2 camps. One is students and staff. So what benefits are there for students? And you've already touched on things like accessibility, and also so might be that. But also i'd like us to think what benefits might be there for Staff, who wants to kick off with that.

James Rutherford: I don't mind talking about students to start with It's It's a fascinating area to be involved in, and a a quite a challenging area to be involved in and I don't think many people have managed to crack it 100%. I think it's very new in some respects, although high flex was coined by Brian Beatty back in 2,006 San Francisco, and actually we we enjoyed the company of Brian on our teaching here in their podcast, and we got him to talk about the story of High Flex where he named it gave it a capital H, as we call hybrid teaching lowercase. But when you're explaining this to students, the most important thing is that communication with students, and how that's maintained, and what I've learned through practice and through your research and through the Podcast series which has been external to city is how important the student voices. and I mean that in 2 terms I mean in terms of engagement, motivation, inclusivity, communication, but also the practical side of actually hearing the student and one of the key issues that's come up time and again we've we've done research at City, so we'll be publishing a paper later this year I know other universities have done this as well, but the most important thing is that students online can hear the students in the room and see them. But hearing them is the most important thing and that's one of the issues. The technology is not fantastic at and planning where you put your microphones. Planning on the configuration of the digital signal processing is one thing, but it's that's a lot of wrangling to do, and and the Academics challenges providing flexible options for students is one thing, but there are many other things to think about, not just in the room at the time of the class, but in preparation for that session and and how that's communicated, and and talking to students. How is this going for you? Can you hear what's missing from this? What do we need to do more and and that then this is a big summary. But once you've got that process and technology and course management, if you like, establish then it's developing a pedagogy And that's something that we're beginning to be involved in at City now is looking at the

pedagogy of the hybrid space. I've been involved with the colleague who run the podcast with called Don Pates in pedagogy. It workshops with academics, and which is called the Pedagogy of Space, which is kind of inspired by AI. Calls some years ago. and students. Certainly, that we've spoken to have said how much they appreciate the flexibility the options that they have and particularly students who have got caring responsibilities, health issues. They commute to students, you know. They don't want to come in just for 1 h lecture so why not stay at home or wherever they are. You know there's all sorts of opportunities there for growth as well for different types of student areas. You know, different marketing of courses for other areas, but always bearing in mind the time difference. If you're doing something, live. you've got time. Difference between the States or the Far East or whatever. So there's an awful lot to think about. But certainly from the student point of view, I think that's where we should. Our focus should be whilst working on the pedagogy of hybrid teaching

Simon Thomson: in terms of how you you design for that. So I wonder, from your point of view, in your context, which is probably slightly different to both James and Paul. This is why I, in your experience, Why are people using well? Why are students joining high flex sessions? What what decision are they making about whether they come physically or join in remotely?

Philip Moffitt: Yeah, I should should probably point out early that I suspect very few of us where we work and learn would first consider the direct at the cultural benefits, at least at this point. In time the drivers would be about things like convenience, reduced physical risk, compressing time and distance, taking care of all the commitments, I think, from a quick stroll poll in the last few days, when you mentioned this that'd be similar for Learners and for Colleagues as well. For most of us. The Benefits are more about systemic Convenience, the pastoral Aspects engaging with those who'd otherwise be excluded some broader aspects of differentiation. And then in turn in turn, that hybrid, the hybrid is the freeze of our thinking to focus on pedagogical concerns of teaching and learning. because we're kind of not frustrated with perhaps annoying modes of interaction. Those sub optimal for whatever specific thing we've got going on. So while hybrid modes would suit us for different primary reasons we're teaching and learning in ways that aren't so distracting as a kind of secondary benefits, I suppose, in ways which are sensitive to all of those other things that we've got going on in busy lives, whether we're teaching or learning. We're all busy people. Most of us have actually got a lot going on stuff, and students appreciate being considered at least on it's appropriate for them to have a choice, I have to say. Sometimes the choice of our students will surprise us as well, like work, and learn with a lot of Commonwealth soldiers, queen to her engineers who are from the pollen. A lot of those have historically attended on site, irrespective of how beneficial we think online modes might be Some would claim that the families just don't buy it, that there's disbelief. They're actually working while they're at home. So they won't get privacy or discretion. On the other hand, some learners just Haven't spent much time with families at all before they come on this education program. So any opportunity they've thought they'll travel back to the families. If they know we're going hybrid for a few days, even if they settled the families a few 100 miles away rather than in married course here they'll still travel back, and both a and their families will feel settled, which, of course, freeze up pedagogical benefits. But that wouldn't necessarily be the driver for them to choose either on site or online. So there are loads and loads of benefits for the very diverse benefits, and they not. I pass

rate benefits if it makes sense to not direct teaching and learning instruction benefits that would fall out. Yeah. So I think we're hearing a lot here about convenience and choice

Simon Thomson: for students, because you know of their own circumstances, I suppose, which we've never been able to really do before. As a consideration, Paul, I was just wonder in terms of your experience at Manchester. And obviously it's a campus based University as many of our organizations are. What reasons our students kind of making a choice not to come to the campus, which ultimately is where they ever should be kind of set out to be. Yeah up.

Paul Shore: I think primarily in in my experience of conversations that I've had with students it really is that the convenience factor for those students who make that choice because there are students who like the structure that being on campus timetable, let's just bring it, brings them, and there are other students that but actually that isn't benefit for them. It's it's not a good way for them necessarily to learn, or a good use of the time, and it also, as as we've touched on the the convenience for some students who are fitting it these days more so than ever around a part. Time, jobs and family as well. We're seeing more and more older students, of course, with with other commitments, and as we become more accessible we we have to be providing that flexibility. And I think what is happening there is we're opening. We're opening up. We're becoming that flexibility also means that when we're more accessible to what a wider group of students as well that that seems to be what's happening. But we do have some students, many students that that, like the that sense of space, have been on campus and being together. But we also have some that wake up on, you know a wet Wednesday morning, and all that it's got is the opportunity option to go in for that one lecture that's on campus, or you know, maybe pick up the the laptop, or even roll over and go back to sleep and watch it as a as a podcast later. So there is that those different opportunities.

Simon Thomson: I think that's a really interesting point, for because I you know. I've spoken to some students that said they probably wouldn't have even attended an on campus thing because of that Wake up in the morning where the looks of Victoria is the only session they've got. There's not enough motivation for me to get there, but they've been able to join in.

Paul Shore: I think I an additional issue. The is the cost of living. Now, the the price of commuting, if it it can be, you know, 10 or it depends, obviously where you live, but it'd be quite expensive to travel in for one lecture. I'm: back again.

James Rutherford: Yeah, that that's a really good point, Paul. At City University we have a large percentage of students that are commuter students. They're not living in Hall's residence around cities based in a sort of Ec. One area of London. I think it's almost it's like nearly 70% a commute to students. So, although they want to be on campus, so they say they don't necessarily want to come in for a 1 h lecture so I I think things have have significantly changed, and I can't see them going back to pre-pandemic. We hear a lot that students want to be back on campus. They want to be part of a vibrant community, and I think that's where the job free comes in. As you mentioned, Simon, you know a lot of. There are some particularly great university campus sites, but cities, like many others in London, I guess

Manchester is in central of the city as well. It's not just the campus, you know, in that bubble as much and reaching out to other student groups, potential student groups, I mean I'm. I'm. Aware of a colleague who who does that again? Does our podcast. He works at University of West London, doing a masters in aviation and one of his students is in Finland. But the time difference allows him to join synchronously online. and then occasionally they'll have a session face to face like a lot of Mba courses for our business school. They do the same thing. They'll They'll have an intensive face to face, and the rest of it's done in a hybrid method, because that suits their work. As you said, Paul, you know a lot of students are working because they have to absolutely.

Philip Moffitt: There's another side to that. Actually, I'm mentoring a few people. All right, scholars in a small piece Trust. They were told they were told for years that they couldn't possibly do a B and genres because they were on site components to that that they'd have to attend, and they physically couldn't get on to site for various reasons and then certainly when it mattered for everyone you didn't have to be on site, if that makes sense, and that's incredibly frustrating, for those people. Don't get me wrong. They appreciate now that they're in a good place, but it kind of took it to be a necessity for the majority, so that the minority could benefit, and it was a little bit harder. You can say on the back of this success and increased choice, and all that great stuff, you know. Yeah, I think you're right. It will come back to a little bit about design in a minute with a lot about students.

Simon Thomson: I wondered if any of you have experienced any benefits for Staff in either using high flex as a as an approach themselves or an a positive experience of them running a high flex session.

Paul Shore: I can comment on on that. We've had the whole spectrum of experiences from our staff, and I think it largely depends upon the the skill level of the staff on their own expectations, and the preparation that they've made in their understanding of the approach. Those that have embrace it unchanged the contents and the way they deliver, and also prepared and been aware of the issues around audio and the light. They found that very exhilarating experience actually, and I suspect primarily not because it's a a dual delivery of a high flats. I I suspect it's, because of the change in in the pedagogy, and that it's more interactive. Otherwise you you might as well just put a video on what for everybody but the nature of it is to interact with the audience in my experience staff, for how I've done it shall we say properly they have had they? They? They found the exhilarating and personally very satisfying as well. And and the students to you, you know, when you've had a good sessions to this slide and both Stephan students that that on the other side, of course, staff that that turn up with very limited preparation. I'm. An already a little skeptical about this. They They will deliver their lecture. As it was any technical issues that there's a rise as seen as a barrier immediately, and and they'd have quite a negative experience, and they say, when can we go back to normal lecturing on so? But I I think those the the embrace it. It does take more efforts to it is more, there's more skill required, and more more training and develop staff development required, but when they do do it they find it personally very satisfying, and I think the students learning experience is is improved unanimously.

Simon Thomson: That's good. I think it's really nice to hear stories like that, because there's a lot of like negativity, I think, associated with the experience, and perhaps it is to do with that kind of how much of

you plan for it which I think we will. And again I keep saying we will touch on that design for but Philip or James, what's kind of generally been your staff's experience of trying high flex.

Philip Moffitt: I think there's if I'll just go first. That's all right. Change the

Philip Moffitt: I mean. I'm conscious I'm spoiled with small groups typically 8 people in an 8 8 learners in a group, you know. So

Philip Moffitt: oh, Christ, yeah, we would. That is a kind of blush place to be just some of our stuff and dating with like hundreds. So yeah, that's I. I mean, I am spoiled with those small groups and small groups of relatively experienced and motivated people as well. So

Philip Moffitt: these observations might not be typical, but for us the most significant challenges alluded to that it takes a lot of preparation for stuff and for students. It necessitates people to think ahead.

Philip Moffitt: You can't do that sort of opportunistic. I will try this. It takes preparation, and we also need to make sure that we don't

Philip Moffitt: privilege or neglect one mode over the other. And I, you know you shouldn't have favorites, but almost everybody. I love a favorite mode. So we'll need to prepare teaching and learning interactions and outcomes to be balanced for

Philip Moffitt: kind of online co-present mixed modes, hybrid modes, and as

Philip Moffitt: as much as you know, I'd like to pretend it's easy to do it. Probably isn't with all the different constellations of technologies that we use. It probably isn't possible to make

Philip Moffitt: teaching, learning and assessment completely agnostic to a preferred mode, and I think, if you pretend not, it will probably be a peril. You've probably got to accept that some things are better suits. It's one mode or another, and you have to put the effort where the efforts needed so

Philip Moffitt: kind of fight smart rather than fight hard. I suppose all those are all perito 80, 20 thing isn't that. So you almost have to game out the activities and prepare resources to deliberately get a critical friend and say if there's anyone tried this before it, it kind of engenders

Philip Moffitt: spin off things as well, so

we'll do sort of tools for teachers where somebody will say I tried this at work. All productive failures import as well. I tried this, and it didn't work, and that's fine.

Philip Moffitt: And here's what we might try Instead, as we move forward a bit. So

Philip Moffitt: we need to give things a lot of thought, I suppose, preparing digital media and platforms, thinking about the physical things that we're using built infrastructure.

Philip Moffitt: but also it's a Pre. Per who is very diverse living, breathing people, not just things if that makes sense to them, I suppose, to make them as confident as they can be

Philip Moffitt: with the mediating technologies, but also so that they can understand how people might interact differently, not just the teaching and learning interactions, but the social stuff, and maybe having a few low stakes things and the

Philip Moffitt: just to get them used to sharing resources and question and each other, and not having those so a stulted bit, you know, that are inevitable or not worrying about them because these things do happen, you know, so they're not insurmountable or more complex. And

you know I do my heart to you, Simon, for

Philip Moffitt: you know, one of the strands you've got is making us all feel that actually problems with this all legitimate problems. With this all completely normal. It's a great thing that you do inside.

Philip Moffitt: We'll typically build in low stakes interruptions before those really important ones that kind of get you sell them park as opposed. Yeah, thanks, Bill. Thanks for the hat dog. I think my observation was always being the pressure to kind of always

Simon Thomson: provide a perfect teaching experience, and there isn't such a thing. There is a there is good, and there is, but there's never a perfect, and I think one of the things that you you touch on. There is this kind of

Simon Thomson: If we have a preference for particular mode, it's most likely that when we're teaching, or maybe that's just based on our experience might focus our attention on a certain group of students, which is one of the challenges

Philip Moffitt: Whether that's something.

Simon Thomson: James, that you've seen city, this kind of when you're running these events, the extent to which the in person students get most of the attention. How kind of stuff

James Rutherford: manage that! And I think that's inevitable. That's a human

James Rutherford: condition, a human experience. We do

James Rutherford: week because we're there's some sort of psychological body language behavioral things going on with interaction. You you know we did a recording of a podcast the other day in a room, but normally we do it like this on zoom.

James Rutherford: and it was easier to have that conversation because we took visual clues from each other, body, language, face, and we didn't interrupt each other, or it's quite often with this type of online. It's easier to interrupt because you're missing on those clues.

James Rutherford: And one thing is that the sort of psychology is is to perhaps step away from the camera so people can see your body language and your gesticulating hands.

James Rutherford: You know that's that's one thing. Another thing is cameras on cameras off.

James Rutherford: You know. That's that's that. Could be a whole podcast. Just talking about that. I think so.

James Rutherford: You know it's it's a motive, but we want to know what it's like when you're presenting to a whole gallery of avatars on little initials. People's is quite highly alienating, and I think, from Academics point of view, I've seen a lot and heard a lot of that

James Rutherford: initial research that we've done. We did a survey for staff, and we did some focus groups.

James Rutherford: and there's Paul said earlier, we've got quite a broad spectrum

James Rutherford: of experience and enthusiasm and negative responses to it. Some stuff were told to teach that way.

James Rutherford: It was a. F. To complete some visiting tutors

James Rutherford: just turned up and expected to do a hybrid class. They didn't have the training

James Rutherford: that communication failed there.

James Rutherford: Others.

James Rutherford: who are more interested in the pedagogy of what they're doing. They're more clued up to active engaged learning flipped classrooms, you know, and it fits quite well into blended learning

James Rutherford: this approach. So there's a lot of front end time in in creating that content planning, as as Philip was saying.

James Rutherford: but also once you're in the class. You're sort of doing this.

James Rutherford: you know. You're doing 2

James Rutherford: not intuitive things at the same time. So the podcast, James I will explain, because but James is topping his head and robin this to me at the same time.

James Rutherford: So, but they usually in black and white. Yeah, man united, playing and red

James Rutherford: it's that's the real challenge. And the technology is one thing. And

James Rutherford: you know, i'm sure we'd all love to mandate training.

James Rutherford: You can't teach in hybrid style unless you've had the training. It's it's impossible.

James Rutherford: But we would like to do that. One of the successes we've had is employing what we call co-pilot.

James Rutherford: who literally sitting

James Rutherford: or standing, sometimes with the academic dealing with the tech sort of dealing with the chat.

James Rutherford: helping the engagement with the students, not as a technical support, but as a facilitator keeping on the chat. If someone's got a problem logging in or whatever they can

James Rutherford: deal with that in the chat, they can

James Rutherford: work almost as a team with with the academic.

James Rutherford: and when it works it works really well. And we learned a lot about that from Imperial College, from their business school

James Rutherford: that they even shared the job description.

James Rutherford: We pay students quite a decent rate per out, much better than working in a supermarket.

James Rutherford: But the challenge for that is the amount of hours available for the students to make it worth their while.

James Rutherford: And

James Rutherford: you know lots of aspirations about trying to embed students who may be a Gta, or.

James Rutherford: you know, maybe a. G. Today, but they tend to be students who are part of the course.

James Rutherford: So you know we'd like to get law students supporting the law academics.

James Rutherford: and we we've got a new masters of law which is completely hybrid, and that started in September.

James Rutherford: and there's been some real challenges, but they see the opportunities here.

James Rutherford: So sometimes it's a when it's done at a a program level.

James Rutherford: We think that's the way it should be

James Rutherford: planned and and supported and developed those skills rather than AD hoc, which is a lot harder.

James Rutherford: And also Philip was talking about the the luxury of having 8 students, and whereas i'm sure you, Simon, and

James Rutherford: that's the city we've got people delivering hybrid lectures. And we think well, that's really

James Rutherford: that's that actually shouldn't be happening. I mean, if you look at the research, the literature view we did a year and a half ago. Now

James Rutherford: the suggestion and the consensus was really you shouldn't be dealing with more than seminar group size up to 40 students. It's much harder to engage, because what you end up with is a live stream.

James Rutherford: Yeah, that's an and it's difficult to engage with that. So why do it? And sometimes it's been a financial necessity

James Rutherford: to keep the students on.

Simon Thomson: but in terms of pedagogy it's much better to keep those groups smaller. Yeah, so that's probably a good time to go on to design, because I think you're right. When it's a lecture it becomes a broadcast

Simon Thomson: doesn't it? The stream often becomes a broadcast. I wondered if

Simon Thomson: it'd be nice to talk about it. Any experiences of designing for dual delivery high flex in a seminar kind of size. Groups, let's say 25 is is that kind of

Simon Thomson: size is, is anyone you know designing for that? And what difference does it make when we design for high flex, as opposed to say something that we originally designed for something else, and try and

Simon Thomson: turn into high flex. So i'm not sure if you want to. Just

Simon Thomson: i'm James, that kind of point you were talking about, which is not about lectures, but seminars is anyone

James Rutherford: they are. And so the the masters of law that I mentioned we we've got a minority of hybrid teaching going on at the moment from the the initial reaction to the pandemic

James Rutherford: where there was a lot of online and delivery synchronous, live, synchronous delivery questionable. How

James Rutherford: interactive that was.

James Rutherford: So it was a reaction. We had to react to that in terms of setting it up. But now the pressures off

James Rutherford: that side. So we're trying to encourage much more planning and consideration a program level as certainly module level.

James Rutherford: And so there's a an Msc. And food policy.

James Rutherford: and that is planned. They have regular hybrid sessions, and they do a lot of group work.

James Rutherford: And I think when group work is planned and set up, it's proven to be very effective in terms of hybrid teaching.

James Rutherford: because it's what's the point of it?

James Rutherford: Apart from the convenience of the students having a choice and having options not to have to attend.

James Rutherford: there has to be a grades to impetus for for teaching and hybrid style, and that interaction and the group work breaks down certain barriers. It's easier to have a discussion in smaller groups and integrate for 25, so you may have 5 groups of 5, or whatever.

James Rutherford: Oh, you

James Rutherford: it it also People are planning whether to have their group work all online

James Rutherford: or or have a hybrid mix of groups, and that's a technical challenge, and often an acoustic challenge in the space.

James Rutherford: But I think that's that's where we're going with with emphasis on group work. And maybe you don't do the hybrid teaching every week. Maybe you do it in weeks 2, 4, 6, 8,

James Rutherford: and the alternative weeks you do. Maybe you do an asynchronous session.

James Rutherford: or

James Rutherford: or or a straightforward stream.

Simon Thomson: Yeah, okay, Cool it's. It's just in your experience in Manchester is. Is anybody kind of embedding by blacks as a model? And into spursing it with other types of teaching that as Paul just kind of is James into that, then, or of any people really designing high flex experiences.

Paul Shore: Yeah. So it's just a a couple of comments, some, some some interesting things come up, but I think well designed in terms of delivery and keeping it simple being able to interact with students.

Paul Shore: It is possible in in my experience to to deliver a a lecture that is interactive with hundreds of students. If it's. If you make use of the chat box, never underestimate the the value of the chat box to students, they absolutely love it, and in my experience. It's a much, much better way to engage with a large audience, whether those students are on campus or or remote.

Paul Shore: particularly those students that are reluctant to speak up in a large group as well. So those students who are

Paul Shore: on campus they also have access.

Paul Shore: so the so it's a sort of hybrid hybrid, so they have access to the the chat box as well, so they can answer the questions physically and online. And I found the the level of engagement is a another level in for for large groups like that, but for for small groups

Paul Shore: we sort of take the view of.

Paul Shore: if it's a if it's small enough to be on campus, then it should be on campus. So tutorials problem based. Learning groups of 12 on the light we we don't see much apart from the flexibility issue for the students, we don't see

Paul Shore: a pedagogic advantage of it being a ha high flex in in that sense, and and what we have done is

Paul Shore: with those small groups with we've had groups online groups on campus, and what we found is it sort of degrades the experience for both groups of students in those different environments, because, as as James said earlier, sometimes, they can't hear what's going on. It's, particularly if you with what you want to do is.

Paul Shore: have your groups

Paul Shore: focus on an activity and then come together and then exchange and add on into groups

Paul Shore: activity as well. They they can't hear, and they they're all sorts of technical issues like that. What what we found is that some, some, some colleagues in Singapore. What they found during the pandemic is if they asked this groups of students to go when we were doing team based learning. Groups of students would meet at somebody's house.

Paul Shore: and so they would physically be together. But online on that way they can benefit from all those

Paul Shore: the nuanced interactions that happen in a group that you don't that as again as Jam said that you lose on this on the on online Forum. But yeah, we we found in in general small group work.

Paul Shore: If it's a large group and you want to break them up. If you've got 200 students take it online

Paul Shore: because they can go in breakout rooms, and it's very, very effective. They can interact, and that everybody has the same environment and the same experience, and that works well

Paul Shore: or bring them all in on, separate them into the groups, as you would do on campus. Yeah, our experiences that hybrid with small group

Paul Shore: it's, tends to degrade the activities for on a large scale. So we we're often dealing with. You know, 500 students that we're breaking up into small groups as well.

James Rutherford: Yeah, just just really interesting. Sorry, Phil, but just what something Paul was saying was very interesting. That chimed with some experiences we've had is initially. When we started with our technical response to this, we said, all students have to come in on to campus with a laptop or a device

James Rutherford: to improve the engagement, even though they might be talking with other people in the room that are on their device.

James Rutherford: and the other thing that just to chime with what you were saying, Paul, was that the this Msc. And food policy. They deliberately split the groups into online and on campus.

James Rutherford: So, rather than have that slightly isolating experience, they have a group of students in the space talk to students online in one group

Simon Thomson: which I think is quite a challenge. But somehow they manage

Simon Thomson: activities to engage with online students and in room students is interesting. It's also really interesting that suppose as a kind of curriculum design model, there has been a decision made about when to use high flex.

Simon Thomson: and when not to use high flex. So you're using high flex to kind of large scale

Simon Thomson: teaching the smaller scale. Not so. I just want to now a good time to come to feel because we know that fit is already using high, flexing, small scale, and it would just be interesting to kind of think about. Why, it is a decision being maybe one institution.

Simon Thomson: perhaps not to focus on that. But in your case feel you're saying that high flex is really quite valuable even in small scale experiences. Yeah, it's not the risk of infuriating people. It's large. So i'm quite conscious of that. And I'll apologize, and they don't.

Philip Moffitt: We definitely do that. We break small groups across modes, otherwise we might risk

Philip Moffitt: splitting the camps into 2 in favor of one mode over another. But we tend to involve people who are on site with people who are online just to avoid polarizing the breeds. Sometimes it feels like we're being perhaps unnecessarily

Philip Moffitt: cruel and inconvenient to ourselves or whoever is convenient or lecturing. But it does pay off. We need to prepare for that. We need to think a bit harder about kind of pan mode, resource and as well as pan mode, social interruptions as well as time, mode, teacher and learning interactions. I mean.

Philip Moffitt: we need to consider resources, not just things like hard resources and soft resources. So not just things like a physical book on a Pdf. But different ways of socially interacting different ways of building relationships and trust even different representations of things that are on site. So.

Philip Moffitt: without kind of elevating more mode over another. We'll look at the technical aspects of teaching and learning, but we'll also look at.

Philip Moffitt: say, the arrangements for everyone to interact with an engine or a pump. People of skewomorphous online representations of real things on site, the people on site to tinkering with, but also people online at tinkering with over IP. So there's true collaboration. Well, as close as you can get.

Philip Moffitt: You know all you measure it, but they they enjoy it. They collaborate

Philip Moffitt: interestingly, and the programs i'm doing. I'd i'd say about a quarter of what I personally design, and but if I now at level 4 to 6 is hybrid, that's it's going to grow to about 3 quarters in the next few years.

Philip Moffitt: Now there are some things that we need to do on site, or some things we need to know what mine, but the rest of me is for a game. Now I'm going to know this of what I currently deliver.

Philip Moffitt: The last few sessions. I've done have a complete choice. They've had a split of about 50, 50,

Philip Moffitt: so on a course of a 3 to 5 would physically come on site. 3 to 5 will join online from somewhere.

Philip Moffitt: But interestingly, that's about the same split. If I choose to deliver online, so say something like computerated engineering building information modeling. It's easier for me to do from a home studio here, because I've got, you know, all this stuff, and

Philip Moffitt: i'm kind of comfortable myself, and I've got colleagues who would be more comfortable in certain circumstances delivering from home will still have the same split in those small groups. Some will travel in

Philip Moffitt: because it just looping it back to the earlier conversations. They

Philip Moffitt: They might appreciate that psychological a gap between home and work. Some join online because they might just, wanna you know, look after family commitments, or

Philip Moffitt: looking after children and all, or just because

so those drivers.

Philip Moffitt: whether they're kind of pedagogical or past, or or or perhaps something more agnostic. That's something we're currently research in, Brother myth.

Philip Moffitt: We're not really sure, and it might change day to day. So I suspect that's going to be quite complex, to find out what truly

Philip Moffitt: motivate staff and students to to choose one mode over the other, and to sustain it, or to try something different, you know.

Philip Moffitt: And that's again. It's a lovely problem to have.

Paul Shore: Sorry, Simon. Yeah, I was just some very interesting, interesting points that that.

Paul Shore: Phil. It makes it about the drivers as well, and I think that is fundamental. Isn't it because of

Paul Shore: for for one course one subject, the the drivers are likely to be different in in medicine in Manchester, where we teach in small groups.

Paul Shore: one of the drivers for that is, for this is for the students to develop so many interpersonal skills.

Paul Shore: the they need to be presence, and in the groups together, so that they can appropriately challenge and listen and be respectful, and in many, many ways engage personally, because, of course, that's relevant to their profession.

Paul Shore: But in in other cases, of course, where that small group skilled development doesn't necessarily onto the the skills that they might need beyond that. And that said you could argue for those. There are generic skills that we, as a as a

Paul Shore: in in higher education. We we need to be ensuring that our students come out with one of my concerns is that we end up. We could end up with students coming out of some of the programs that are lacking what

Paul Shore: employers might expect to be a standard set of skills that you would gain through small group work seminars and tutorials on on in a sort of traditional campus education, and I think we need to be mindful of of that Certainly in those programs where those skills are essential and expected.

Simon Thomson: Yeah, I think that you know what's resonated in this conversation is, we probably need to know much more about our student demographic

Simon Thomson: than we ever have done before. I think we've often made a lot of assumptions. Haven't we about that, and perhaps in high flex.

Simon Thomson: Her rationale behind my flex is to really more deeply understand our student demographics.

Simon Thomson: underlining that with this you say for the the expectations of the discipline

Simon Thomson: and the skill sets involved in that discipline, and the extent to which we can marry up. So I, if I know you touched on this. Feel a little bit. Is there any body, any of your institutions doing work around

Simon Thomson: more clearly understanding demographics of students to kind of inform pedagogic design.

Simon Thomson: It's a big question, I know, but I just

Philip Moffitt: we we will be but

Philip Moffitt: you You might remember you and I so years ago, about almost like transplants in your own cultural preconceptions onto different groups and thinking they might favor online modes, or they might favor on site modes. Some of the

Philip Moffitt: commonwealth soldiers we work with Some of the queen's go to engineers. So just you work with the some of them live in a very matriarchal

Philip Moffitt: environment at home, and the mothers, their elder sisters. They simply will not believe that the work, and if they are at home

Philip Moffitt: so for them it's on it's not a pedagogical choice. It's an absolute necessity to get on site, you know; and even if the

Philip Moffitt: engage in as we are now, if they're engaging with headphones on looking at a laptop you can see behind the roughly on site.

Philip Moffitt: and they

Philip Moffitt: I I might be at home delivering compute, rated Engineer, and they will will come to site and do it. They have more code for the

Paul Shore: It is something that we are researching, but

Philip Moffitt: it it's a kind of problematic area to research.

Philip Moffitt: Partially, ethically, i'm, partially just pragmatically, because by the time you've researched the group the next group is so diverse that you find in might not be generalizable, and all that kind of stuff, you know.

James Rutherford: Sorry when we started at city on this project before we coined the acronym is we were a working title, was the equitable model.

James Rutherford: because we were thinking about equity as as an ambition

James Rutherford: and almost as an ideal. Because I don't think it's possible to achieve

James Rutherford: absolute parity between the 2

James Rutherford: spaces, if you like.

James Rutherford: and I I had to draw it out

James Rutherford: someone in a room with a laptop, and then someone in a class, and to try and explain what it meant. And there's still a mystification about what hybrid is, and I think if academics are a bit confused, and students might well be.

Simon Thomson: but there was a point I was going to make. It was just completely gone up my head. It's it is it equity of access, because it's not sure the equity of experience. I think those 2 might be different things.

James Rutherford: I just wondered what thought about equity. Yeah, what what point were you thinking? Equitable? I think Initially, it was the the practical side of things. It was the environment that people were in.

James Rutherford: I mean, One of my colleagues was sitting on a bed with a laptop trying to work. Someone else might be in a, in a much more well appointed home studio, and Phil's place looks great with all the books behind and the the dog and the headset.

James Rutherford: You know it's

James Rutherford: that equity is almost is very difficult, and some universities provided through hardship, funds, wireless dongles.

James Rutherford: Some people had laptop loans to try and

James Rutherford: alleviate that gap.

James Rutherford: but in equitable gap.

James Rutherford: But I think the the experience and the diversity that Paul was talking about is really interesting as well, and you know whether it's a demographic or whether it's a the structure of the course,

because it's city. We have journalism department of journalism, and they're very gung. Ho about this methodology.

James Rutherford: It almost because of the the nature of journalism. You know whether it's print TV radio online. They used to bringing me outside in, and we use that term before the pandemic with our business school. We are planning for a new site, and and and I said, Well, we need to bring the outside in. How do we do that? We've just got it for business in those days.

James Rutherford: and the there are. There are other courses, I mean, like law.

James Rutherford: You know people that witnesses that are being beamed in. If you like to this to the courtrooms now, protected witnesses are often off site, not in a special booth, so I think there are certain disciplines where this is more conducive.

James Rutherford: And certainly on the podcast series. We've had guests involved in in engineering and the sciences and the arts

James Rutherford: and medicine as well. And that's where the real challenges are.

James Rutherford: you know? Do you go into scenario based learning, or do you insist? You have to be on campus, and you have to use this scope. You have to use this tool set.

Simon Thomson: Yeah, one size doesn't fiddle. No, it doesn't. And I think you you touch on a really good point, which is so called that society is, as a whole is moving towards this kind of high flex, as you kind of indicate that

Simon Thomson: I think the court room is a really nice prime example where that is really kind of beginning to become more prevalent. Where you have physically present

Simon Thomson: people really, always. The jewelry is physically present. But then you have people coming in.

But we also know

Simon Thomson: from all the kind of means of the Internet of judges that can't take that faces off the You can entirely run some courtrooms entirely online as well, but I think it's a good kind of not in that direction. Isn't it

Paul Shore: around that Sorry, Paul, do you? Gonna? Oh, no, no, it's okay. That was okay, No problem at all. So I'm: Thank you. Yeah, just to comment on the the demographics, really the the students in different environments from from different cultural backgrounds, and more and more now different

Paul Shore: age groups. As we open up with this flexibility traditional universities. As soon as

Paul Shore: an enormous change in all likely to see an enormous change in demographics, I think we we need to be careful. We don't reinvent the wheel here, though. You know there are online universities, you know. I've worked for the open University for many years, and there's a lot of research got into

Paul Shore: what? The the the demographics, because, of course, it's really important that when you design the learning for students, you you're fully aware of of the the differences, the

Paul Shore: the students that are are likely to sign up to that course. And I, One thing I I learned is is very, very useful is the use of of personas something that's been sort of robbed from the marketing world.

Paul Shore: But I think it's important to explain what a person there is in terms of the of of teaching for for benefit of some of our lessons, maybe, and that is a very detailed sort of Cv. If you like of of the of the types of students that that you have. So in including, you know, things that they like, or even down to what call a car, the drive just because it actually creates a

Paul Shore: and and then you can use those

Paul Shore: personas to if you like, stress, test your design. So, for example, you could have a one of your students might be a you know, a 50 year old

Paul Shore: male who lives in the outer Hebrides is a little harder to hear in. Not very tech savvy, and another one would be a a 19 year old mess with, you know, some anxiety issues works nights. Hasn't got much money, but great on social media and and and tech study various things like that.

Paul Shore: And then, if you have a whole ray of your students in in these personas that actually are representative of your students as well of not important, Of course. What we then able to do is when we're designing, we can design with those in mind.

Paul Shore: But also then, once we've designed, we go back to those personas and say so. How would Jim in the out? So he he's, deal with this. What what is this? An activity that he'd be able to be involved in, and engaged in? How how would

Paul Shore: you know? Joined in in London, or or, you know, Mo Mohammed, be able to engage with this on the Friday afternoon. Just take it into account all the different

Paul Shore: cultural issues and on the and physical environments and

Paul Shore: health issues as well. It's it's to my up it's already been done, and we can.

Paul Shore: We could sort of go to that literature and say, how do you?

Paul Shore: What's the best way to design for a wider demographic?

Simon Thomson: So I suppose what we're hearing is, we need to understand our students more and more in order to make this work. I think what's interesting to me is as we've talked about high flex. I flex. We've kind of also moved into talking into hybrid curriculum, as in

Simon Thomson: the curriculum will become a kind of mixed modal experience. Some things will be entirely online. Some things will be entirely on campus, and some things will be high flex.

Simon Thomson: So i'm conscious of time. We've got one last question. The each of you come out, and it comes with the title, which is High Flex. Is it bad, or is it future? So i'd like you to say whether you think it's bad just to bad that way or phase out, or is the future? And it is coming.

Simon Thomson: If it is the future, what we need to do to get there, and if it's a fad in your opinion, why do you think it's going to suddenly die a death, so I will start with Bill.

Philip Moffitt: I do think it's the future. I think it will become

Philip Moffitt: in some Moscow's got this term of powerful banality where the most powerful things are actually quite an all in terms of our daily reality. So I do look forward to the day when

Philip Moffitt: you know we've all these conversations, and it's actually just to take for granted

Philip Moffitt: thing which is being exploited for its power for teaching and learning. But I do think there'll be more of it, or to me something is going wrong. It's a kind of as an analogy. You know the entropy. All this, the second law of thermodynamics can be full to copy, resisted

a sales system tends towards disorder.

Philip Moffitt: so an easy to understand, engineer in terms. You can't when you can't break even, and you can't get out of the game, and to me any decent, inclusive social system will evolve, and there'll be much more difference for us to do with. There'll be much more in terms of diversity and choice for us to just get a custom to

Philip Moffitt: more recordable participation or equitable opportunity, not necessarily outcome, but opportunity for participation, and

Philip Moffitt: much more in terms of concurrent interaction for very different people who might otherwise be excluded in a less fair and ethical social system. If that makes sense sorry about the word salad, but you know it's. It's quite hard to find other words when those words are the right ones, you know. So

Philip Moffitt: I think we all set to keep putting more time and efforts into more hybridity. That's a mercenary level. That means people like us have got many more opportunities to enhance teaching and learning. So

Philip Moffitt: you know, to grow our networks and communities and collaborations, and all learn as well. They love more opportunities to focus on

collaboration and getting the most from the social interactions and learning rather than struggling

Philip Moffitt: with how on earth they're supposed to get on site, or how on earth they're supposed to get online if one mode or the other doesn't suit them, and if they've got that choice, I don't want to live in a world where

Philip Moffitt: it will be.

Philip Moffitt: There'll be less social advancement, less differentiation, less choice of ways to communicate, communicating and collaborate. So

Philip Moffitt: to me, narrow in that choice of interruption would be going backwards. It'll be on fair to money, and I suspect, intolerable to give them what education is supposed to be for

Simon Thomson: brilliant thanks, Phil, for such an eloquent response. I think you're absolutely right.

James Rutherford: my degree, Phil.

It's the future.

James Rutherford: It already is the future. I think the response to the pandemic is pretty much died down. Some universities could be 100% face to face. But I think people who are embracing this opportunity

for various reasons that we've talked about today.

James Rutherford: I think it will start growing again. I think it will

James Rutherford: diversify into certain areas where it's more effective

James Rutherford: whether that's demographic, or whether it's the type of subject that we're talking about.

James Rutherford: But there are opportunities for greater accessibility, inclusivity, and and, as Phil said, not necessarily in the outcomes, but in the opportunities.

James Rutherford: And I think.

James Rutherford: as you said earlier, Simon, we are living in a hybrid world now.

James Rutherford: and education is part of the hybrid world.

James Rutherford: so it's not going to go away. But I think this: the success to it as a future model is

James Rutherford: not being too hard on ourselves. If it doesn't go well, we said that in the outset

James Rutherford: learning from communities of practice, and that's something we're trying to

James Rutherford: start off in in in the city.

James Rutherford: but also developing it at the

James Rutherford: program a modular level and thinking about the structure of it and making sure the training of academics is embedded

James Rutherford: and the expectations to manage the students.

Simon Thomson: Thank you. And finally, Paul.

Paul Shore: Hmm.

Paul Shore: I concur with all the comments that of of being made absolutely. There's no doubt we're already in the future. It's it's it's here. It's just going to be improved.

Paul Shore: We obviously have

Paul Shore: found there are issues and difficulties. Things have been tried and tested, and they will fall away. But there are many positives and benefits that we've discovered.

Paul Shore: I think, once the

Paul Shore: once the tech melts into the background, that's what

Paul Shore: needs to happen, because at the moment it still presents a barrier both in terms of staff development and and skill level of both staff and students, and understanding of of how to learn online and how to teach it hybrid how to teaching those

Paul Shore: those in environments. So once the tech melts away, it's a bit like what we're doing now? Why, in the clock back 3 years ago, I've been using zoom. It was, you know, not an issue for me. And I ended up training lots of staff on how to use zoom, and

Paul Shore: what we found was initially staff, were saying, oh, I have to. Where's the share button and it it. It was overwhelming for them, you know it was as as as James says you you, you'll have to describe that again. Sign them up.

Paul Shore: or i'll say it, pass me ahead, and I'm I'm probably going to say at the same time. But when when you get used to it, it's like driving this, and it's going to drive a change key in steel. Oh, I I want to have to do this. It melts away.

Paul Shore: and it melts away from students that for the learners, and it helps the way for the for the facilitators as well, and as it gets better and better. I remember these these sorts of things really clunky, you know. And and you say, actually, it's more trouble than it's worth, because the videos jerky, you know it's it's not before we to it. Was

Paul Shore: it just wasn't a an efficient way of of learning. So we're already in the future. I think the the i'd like to see virtual reality. I'd like to see students being able to be

Paul Shore: virtually physically presence together with each other. I've been in some of these virtual seminar rooms, where you know, with a headset on that it's a lovely place to be. It's been a good strain on the eyes at the moment, and the headsets are a bit heavy, but after a while, but

Paul Shore: I I could present slides in it and in the Alps, with the background of the else behind, with with students, or or at least avatars, would you? So I think, as that? I mean that that the rate of development of that

Paul Shore: but virtual space, that that resolves a lot of the issues that we might have on campus as well, and that sense of being able to talk to each other and some of the issues that we don't have, that that this presence or 2D

Paul Shore: environments that that we're using doesn't provide so that that's all virtual reality. The other thing that, I think, is is of enormous benefit, and we've already recognized this in Manchester. The teaching medical students. We're heavy relying on experts, you know. People at the top of the field, and they they're very rare, of course, you know, consultants and surgeons.

Paul Shore: We can now bring them in.

Paul Shore: We can bring that they They're busy in the hospitals, but they can when they they can find half an hour to join your in your your team based learning session and talk to your students. We couldn't

do that before they'd have to travel with. You know it's a day for them or a half a day. Now it's just so much more convenient, so

Paul Shore: hybrid in in that sense where you can bring collaborators in, and you can bring people from industry and and and collaborate between organizations as well, and groups here

Paul Shore: in institutions, I I think. Oh, wow! The future is for for hybrid. There's so many opportunities, so i'm. I'm really excited by it, and I think it's only going to go. It's it's only going to get better and better.

Simon Thomson: Yeah. Well, i'm conscious of time. We have gone over a couple of minutes. I'm going to cut this down somehow. But look, Thank you ever so much for all your contributions, Bill James

Simon Thomson: and Paul, i'm glad that you've all agreed. That is the future. I I agree with you. It's it's it's a direction of travel that we cannot now pull back from. Interestingly at the University of Manchester we're going to be developing a high flex space

Simon Thomson: as part of our flexible learning program, designing a space specifically for high flex. So that is the kind of direction of travel I think we'll see a bit more of.

Simon Thomson: But I love the idea also good opinion, and out of working spaces as well as physical ones.

Simon Thomson: So, thanks to giving up your time, all of you, and hopefully, it's been useful to listeners, our very first Dgf: Dilemma's. Podcast. I'm. Grateful for contributions, thanks to all of you. Thank you. Thank you, Simon.

Philip Moffitt: So you again, James.

James Rutherford: I might just do a quick favor, Simon. Yeah, if.