

Dr. Katie Twomey, HCDI30531

Transcript

00:00

I'm Katie Twomey. I'm a Lecturer in Language and Communicative Development and I teach on the BSc Speech and Language Therapy program in the Division of Human Communication Development and Hearing. The course unit I lead is Clinical Research 3 and it functions kind of like a final year project for our students. They have to write a research proposal about a topic that they're interested in, and it was the first year that I've led this unit this year. So it was an interesting experience suddenly having to change everything to online.

Tip one: Create a clear course structure

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The thing that occurred to me initially was that in student feedback, we've been told that they needed a bit more structure, so I was planning on doing that anyway, but particularly because of the pandemic I thought it was really important to make it crystal clear what they should be doing and when. So the first thing I did was go into Blackboard and restructure the way everything was laid out. So they have one folder for each week and everything they need in that week is in that folder. This sometimes means that there's duplication. So you might have one set of materials in two folders, but feedback from students has said that they don't mind that; they just really like being able to click on Week 1 and do what's in there. I also included a 'Start here' folder where they could access their timetable, various other resources that they'll need to kind of orientate themselves to the course unit. Before the course unit began, I emailed them a kind of a "Welcome to Clinical Research 3, this is what it's about. This is what you're going to learn. This is how it's going to be structured" so that they weren't kind of wandering around in Blackboard not knowing what was what.

1:40

And then actually as a course, as a program, we've all made sure that all of the Zoom links are at the very top of our Blackboard pages so that when they're scrambling around trying to find the link, it's easy to find. I did a week-by-week guide of what they have to be doing and also a week-by-week guide of optional extras which I tried to tailor to the level of progress they would be at at that point, so information about referencing the resources, the My Learning Essentials resources from the library, you know, essay writing, literature review and that kind of thing. Because I knew that some students would want an awful lot of guidance and other students would want less, and they should at this stage in the third year have the freedom to be independent learners and to

decide what they're doing when. So they had the option of the support but it wasn't compulsory and I got a lot of good feedback about that actually.

2:35

I think they like just being able to go "Ooh gah, what am I doing this week? Okay that – tick!" So yeah, but I think they found that really helpful and we've had similar kind of feedback for other course units on our program as well.

Tip two: Ensure interaction with and between your students

2:46

I think with the online teaching, the interactivity has been very important to our students. So I really upped the amount of feedback that they could get from me and they're in small groups and they have facilitators. So I increased the amount of feedback that they could get from staff members. What's worked really well is having a Padlet – which I think most people are aware of you can get a University license for that now – where students can just go and stick up a question like you stick a Post-It on a notice board and it's anonymous, which is really nice because it means that they're not being shy and thinking "Oh this is a silly question". And then based on the Padlet, I introduced question and answer sessions. So during those sessions, I would answer the questions that are on the Padlet. So I'm not just sitting awkwardly in silence and then obviously I said that students can ask questions in the chat function or live as well. And that seems to have worked quite well.

3:48

One thing I found in the last session is that they all started adding questions to the Padlet rather than the Zoom session which made like flipping between screens a bit complicated. So in future I will specify that they should put questions in the chat in the live sessions, but they've really appreciated the kind of ability to get feedback on that basis. So I think it's upping the interactivity.

4:12

In terms of actual delivery of content, when it was a face-to-face module, they'd have a series of three-hour lectures. So they'd have three kind of split – laid out – during the semester. But I decided that doing a three-hour lecture on Zoom is insanity.

Tip three: What you do face-to-face might not work online

4:32

So what I did was pre-record the materials in 20-minute blocks and then uploaded them to the relevant folders for the relevant week in Blackboard and asked the students to watch them prior to the question and answer session. So that way you get the live interaction face-to-face, you sometimes even get to see them if they keep their cameras on, but it means all of the core material is accessible for students who might be in different time zones or might not be able to access the live session for whatever reason and it means they're not just kind of sitting there staring at a screen as you go through your slides.

5:08

We've had really nice feedback from students. This course unit scares the living daylights out of them historically and I really spent a lot of time trying to make it as friendly as possible. So obviously our students have to learn to be clinical professionals, but for this course unit, I felt that it was important to reduce the level of formality, and they said that they've appreciated that. I want research to be fun because I think it's fun. And I think that's rubbing off on the students. Other feedback is that I've made myself accessible which is more work and we've all got too much work so it's difficult, but I really think it's important because especially while we're doing, you know, the first few years of doing online learning – who knows how much more is going to stay online forever – they're not really of how it works. And so I've kind of impressed upon them, you know, it's okay to ask questions. There is no such thing as a silly question. Please ask me and let them know that I'm learning too. So I've kind of tried to break down the hierarchy between, you know, scary lecturer and frightened student and try and impress upon them that this is a process that we're learning through together. And I think that's really worked in terms of making them feel kind of reassured.