

Follow-up Meeting 2 with Participant 2

CH: Okay. So, the session has now been recorded. Cool. Um, so [Janet], I really want to thank you for letting me observe your two classes. Um, and I know they were two separate ones. It was your [Communication module] and your, what's it? [Verification of another module code].

P2: Yes. [a module linked with Media Studies].

CH: Okay. Ya, all these new acronyms. <laugh>.

P2: Yes. <laugh>.

CH: And it's the same group of students?

P2: Yes. It's, it's the same group. I take them for two modules.

CH: Okay. Um, and I know that we went through quite a few questions in the first follow-up. Um, what I have done is I have navigated within the [Communication] module and just had a look to see how you had set up your resources, um, what type of activities the students had engaged on [that] module, and, um, just looked at what tools you are using within [the institution's online platform]. Just I think maybe that could be a starting point as we have spoken comprehensively about, um, the design elements within the synchronous sessions. So, we have looked at, um, making the students feel comfortable by establishing a safe environment in which they can engage. You have looked at opportunities for them to also, um, engage as much as possible. So, including activities, building activities in that requires them to work through those type of activities and that feedback that you are giving back to them. So, I know we, we spoke a fair amount on the design elements. Um, if you look at your asynchronous and how you have, um, set up your [Communication] module and maybe your other modules, is there a particular way that you feel you, you create things for your students? And if so, if you can unpack it a little bit?

P2: Sure. Um, so my starting point on [the online platform], I always, when I am preparing for, you know, whichever module I am lecturing, I always like to look at that learning unit section and kind of look at those activities as, as a starting point, um, just to, to, to guide, you know, the kind of activities that I can create for myself. So sometimes I do embed those activities, you know, into their actual, you know, into my actual preparation and into their actual, you know, content that they need to learn. Um, but then sometimes I just use those activities as inspiration. So, um, there may be a few questions that those activities pose that inspire me to create an activity around that question. So, it's, it's quite a, um, it is not a very like, cutthroat process. It's, it is a kind of a process that I use at my own discretion. Um, and then also that, that Bloom's digital taxonomy. Um, that really helps me and really, you know, especially if I'm stuck, like I'm not sure on what type of online activity to, to set for my students and online, you know, engagement with them. Um, Blooms digital taxonomy also assists me with that process because it kind of guides you into which tools and techniques you can use even outside of, um, [the institution's online

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platform] itself. So that is usually the, the process that I, that I follow when, you know, creating activities, but also, um, the uploading of content on [the online platform] too.

CH: Okay. And then your, the way you have uploaded resources, um, is there a particular way you have done it? Um, so if I go into your resources, I can see a category called lecturer slides, ICE activities, worksheets, um, workbooks, assignment referencing. So, you have kind of separated them out. And then when I have clicked in say, your lecturer slides, you have also separated them out into the particular learning units. Um, is there a particular reason you have done it like that? Was it intentional? Unintentional?

P2: Okay. So, I, I'm quite, um, like orderly in, in everything that I do. So, I'm quite, the, the structure that I follow is always quite organized, but also I find that it can help the student themselves. Um, [the online platform], especially for, you know, first year students who are using it maybe for the first time, um, can be quite challenging. So, I just want to make it as, as easy as possible for them. So, I find by, you know, chunking the content into those separate, uh, divisions, um, helps with that process too. Um, it also helps me to refer to it. So, if I ever have to guide students, um, if they need to download the slides, for example, then I can tell them, "Okay, guys, go into more resources and then click on lecturer slides and then you will find all the slides, um, for each learning unit, um, for the semester." So, it helps with that guiding process too.

CH: Okay. And then in your submission, so where students submit, have you ever created additional submission links for activities to be sent through? So, when you are designing activities, do you generally do them in a synchronous manner, or do you get students to complete additional activities outside of your synchronous sessions and your face-to-face classes?

P2: So, um, so to answer the first part of your question, I, I do sometimes create submission links, but that is only for ICE task submissions. So, um, I kind of create the link, almost like an assignment that they would upload, and then it allows me to assess it much easier, because I often create a rubric to, to assess those ICE tasks. So, I usually do it for assessment purposes. And then yes, I do, I, I like to give my students additional activities, especially if they are struggling with their specific section. And I notice the section seems to be something that they are battling to grasp, um, then I will create additional activities and post it on [the online platform] for them to, to complete in their own time. Um, that's, that is what I usually do.

CH: And [Janet], just within that particular module, so remember I have only looked in that module, um, ...

P2: Yes.

CH: ...do you feel you have a certain preference to the type of, um, activities within [the online platform]? So, in other words, if you look, there are journals, there are blogs, there are discussion boards. Do you feel that you have a preference for a particular tool? Or do you feel that you, you have a mix?

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P2: I like to, I, I always strive to, to have a mix of it, but what I find, um, students are more inclined to complete discussion-based activities than the journal or the blogs. So a lot of my, you know, design of activities usually lends itself more to discussion-based activities because I just find that students are more engaged, um, and they are more likely to complete such activity than like a blog or a journal. But I always try to incorporate a mix. I don't want to just be dependent on, on one tool when there's so much available.

CH: Okay. So, so I smiled there because out of all the tools used in your [Communication module], the one that you did use were, was the blog and the discussion tool in that particular module, you hadn't, so that is why it was important I ask that question because I am only going in one module.

P2: Yes.

CH: Um, so obviously the material lends itself to the activities that you liked using the blogs. Whereas if I had to look perhaps in your other modules, there probably is a good mix of, of, um, tools. So, so it was an important question. I am glad I asked it <laugh>.

P2: Yes.

CH: Because the material lends itself to the type of activities.

P2: Yes. It's, it's, the material itself lends itself to that specific tool that would be suitable.

CH: Is there anything else that you want to share from a design perspective, um, in your synchron, in your asynchronous? So, I saw you did make use of announcements. Um, ...

P2: Yes.

CH: ...is there anything else that you want to share from a design element that you think is important in creating that environment that is supporting the development of graduate attributes that we haven't perhaps unpacked?

P2: So, what I usually like to, to use, and I haven't really used it to its full potential this semester. But what I usually like to use is that, you know, that contact lecturer information panel that is on [the online platform], um, because this semester I have kind of just provided my students with, with my email and I have pretty much have had the same classes since the first semester. I didn't have any new classes this semester. They already had my contact information. But what I usually like to use, especially in the first semester for my, my first semester modules is utilize that, that contact lecture information, um, feature. Because I find, you know, sometimes students, you know, they write down your email, then they lose it, then they have no way of contacting you. At least they can go into that section, and they can contact me if they need me. And I find that was quite useful. Um, especially in the first semester. A lot of my students did utilize that. They did send me messages and it's quite nice because the messages come up [within the online platform] itself instead of, you know, bombarding my, my outlook emails. So, I actually

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prefer using that, that feature. Um, and also the calendar feature. So [the institution's online platform] also has that calendar feature, which I find quite useful. Um, sometimes I will post announcements within that calendar, um, reminding students to complete an activity or to complete an ICE task. Um, just remind them of, of the dates of submission for assignments, um, instead of, you know, like kind of using that announcement tool all the time. There is that calendar tool as well that is useful. Um, so those are the other two, uh, features that I thought of that I also have utilized previously.

CH: Um, thanks. Thanks [Janet]. Um, okay, so I am going to now revert back to the questions. Um, and we had started to unpack question six, which were the challenges, um, that you have experienced in preparing for the online learning experience. And you spoke to students who don't have a stable internet connection.

P2: Yes.

CH: Um, so I am going to pick up on that because, um, I, I think that challenges are important in helping other lecturers in navigating the space, you know, in the online space. So hopefully, you know, one of the benefits, um, from this research will be to provide some guidance to lecturers who are creating online learning experiences for the first time and the type of things they need to consider, um, in designing elements. And, and challenges definitely, um, is something that one should take into account. So do you want to just unpack that, that, uh, question in a little bit more detail. Um, so what challenges have you experienced in preparing for these online experiences? So, we have got the unstable internet connection.

P2: Um, the second one that I have noticed is also the engagement online. You know, student engagement. Um, oftentimes due to the fact that the connection for some of these students can be quite unstable, um, students often will, will end up, you know, joining the session and they have missed out on a whole chunk of information. So, then they feel lost and then that leads them, it's kind of like a ripple effect, that leads them to not engaging effectively. But then we also have those students that are within the session the entire time. Um, but they are very passive. They don't engage. Um, they, they don't have that willingness to learn. Um, you know, sometimes I will leave the session and I'll still, I will say "Goodbye everyone", and I will leave. And I will still see a few students just sitting there, you know, lurking. Um, so I often find that to be, to be an issue from the student's perspective. But the challenge from my perspective that I have witnessed myself, um, is having to learn a lot of new online tools. And, you know, although they are not difficult to learn, they can be very overwhelming. So, I remember in, in 2020 when I was thinking of all these methods to try and improve student engagement, um, and learning all these tools, it was quite an overwhelming experience for me. Um, although now I am quite good at using them and I, I've, you know, I have overcome that fear. Initially, um, it was a quite an overwhelming experience. So, I would say, you know, the, the learning of those new, new tools and, and when I say new tools, I mean like, Mindmeister, Flipgrid, Padlet. Um, it took me a while to really, you know, get the hang of them and try to incorporate them in within a synchronous session. So, for me, that was a major challenge from my side. Um, but from the student side, it is definitely their technical issue and also their, their

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engagement, um, their active engagement within the synchronous session that becomes an issue.

CH: And [Janet], then the question is, you know, how have you, how have you dealt with some of those challenges? So, if we look firstly at the engagement issue, because your students were engaging in the, the obs, you know, the, the two sessions that I observed. So, there is obviously something that you have been doing that has worked, um, in overcoming some of the challenges. And yes, I'm fully aware that there will still be students who will never engage. Um, so you are not going to win the battle with all. But just, um, how did you overcome some of the, the engagement challenges?

P2: So, one of the main things that I did with my students was that constant encouragement but also reminder that, you know, the, the online lecture is not daunting and it is a safe space for them to express their ideas. So, what I did with my classes, because I noticed towards the end of the first semester, I noticed that the, the engagement was not so great anymore. Um, so in a face-to-face session, I actually, you know, kind of had like a heart-to-heart conversation with them. And I said to them, I was like, you know, "Guys, I understand sometimes online lectures can be very daunting and you can be scared to express your viewpoints because everyone is listening to you. But you know, it is a safe space and you must feel free to share whatever you want to share and ask me questions. Don't just sit there." And I, and I, I really have this heart-to-heart with all of my classes. And I found that after that, a lot of the engagement picked up. So, I think that heart-to-heart somehow helps them. Um, I, I believe it to be true. Um, but then even in the session itself, the type of activities that I have designed for them are ones that are relatable. You know, it's not like something that is out of reach that they are like, "Oh my goodness, now I need to try and think of what is the right answer." And like, you know, they are more opinion-based activities. They are more, you know, students reflecting on their own personal experiences. They are more, you know, related to pop culture topics that they can relate to, um, and like social media. So that that helps them, um, to engage more because they, as I have said, they don't feel like something is out of reach. So, for student engagement, um, that's pretty much what I have done. And I have also utilized the poll feature. I find students like to, you know, participate in those polls. And I also encourage them. If they don't want to talk with their mic, then they can at least, you know, type in the chat box or, you know, just voice their viewpoints and and opinions. If they don't want to talk, you know, if they are shy, um, for us to hear their voice or whatever it may be. Um, so that's usually how I encourage engagement.

CH: Okay. And then the technical issues. How have you worked around the technical issues? Which is not so easy?

P2: Yes, so the technical issues, um, you know, we are having to compete with load shedding as well. So, you know, that that also was a major challenge for a lot of the, the students. So, what I have with all my classes is, is I have a WhatsApp group, um, for each class. So, um, if I do find that, "Oh no", you know, out of 21, now there's only two students that are actually within the online session and engaging, then I will, you know, pick up my phone and just send them, you know, a WhatsApp message and just, you know, remind

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them. "Okay, guys, class is in session. Um, please try and join if, if you can. You know, I understand there is loading shedding because in that encounter there was load shedding in some areas. Um, but then I also have the class rep's email as well as their phone number. So, if there's any, you know, major announcements or any activities that students need to complete, then I often relay that message to the class rep who then informs the class about it. Just, just so that everyone is kind of, you know, on the same page and that no student is left behind. Um, because that is always a fear that I have that students are like left in the dark. Um, so I find like using other, you know, technical platforms such as WhatsApp does help because although students may not be able to connect online, maybe they still have access, you know, to the internet on their phones, um, and on WhatsApp. So that is usually how I encounter those. But it is such a difficult, um, challenge to, to, to, to, to deal with. It really is. Um, I am still trying to think of other ways and in going into the new year, I am trying to think of other methods that I could use.

CH: Look, I think connectivity is always going to be a challenge, particularly in South Africa with load shedding. Um, you know some lecturers are uncomfortable with being on WhatsApp groups. Um,

P2: Yes.

CH: ...do you find that the students are respectful, um, in your WhatsApp groups because that's a fear that some lecturers have?

P2: Yes. So, uh, that for me, I was like, when I first started lecturing, I was completely against it. You know, I was like no, I am not doing that. That's very strange. And I am also very young, so they may take advantage of me. So, I was like, no, they may not do any of that. But then going into 2020 and when it was Covid, then I realized, "Oh my goodness, okay, now I need to find a way to communicate with them." And in general, I would say they are very respectful. Although, you know, some of them will like post memes or like strange type of messages sometimes on the group. And then I will just, you know, stand my ground, and say, "You know, this is inappropriate, please remove it." Um, so I, I always, before I create the group, I always tell my students, I always say to them, "Guys, this is a, you know, this is a professional type of group, you know, no memes, no, you know, inappropriate content and messages should be posted on here. It is strictly just for, um, you know, college communication, nothing else." Um, so I always set that boundary with them from the start. But in general, they are very respectful. Um, but you know, of course we will always have those, the clowns, <laugh>, who want to pose some strange things. Um, but yes, I was very reluctant at first, but it, it has actually helped me a lot. Um, especially when, when dealing with technical issues. So ya.

CH: Okay. Ya, I must admit WhatsApp seems to be one platform that has been used by quite a few lecturers. Um, whether they are actually on the WhatsApp group or whether they use the class rep to relay the message through onto the WhatsApp. Um, and then, you know, you spoke about your own challenges that initially there was a fear of technology and, um, that you felt overwhelmed by being introduced to all these additional tools. At the start of Covid, how comfortable were you with the [the institution's online

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platform] space? Or did you also find that space, particularly the [the webinar tool], which we might not have used to the extent we are now using it, what was your feeling towards the actual [online] platform?

P2: So, I, I actually, funny enough, I actually was quite fine with, with [the Learning Management System] because when I was a student, a lot of my lecturers at that time, they would use [that LMS] for like workshops or, you know, additional classes. Um, so I, I was familiar with the program. I wasn't familiar with, you know, all of the features within [the institution's online platform]. Um, but I, I already knew, you know, what it was and how and how to, to actually utilize it. Um, so, so what I did to help me, because whenever I know something is going to be a bit of a, of a challenge for me, I like to, to go into it myself and try and navigate through it. So, before I had my first online class, um, I, I just spent like an hour actually in [the webinar tool] and utilizing all the, kind of like a mock lecture, like utilizing all the different features and just becoming more familiar with it. And I think that helped me a lot. It wasn't like I was just thrown into the deep end and now I had to try and navigate all of these different features. And I wanted to set a good impression for the students because they were also, this was something new to them. And, you know, I want to be a good like, role model. I don't want to be like the one trying to scramble, and they are also scrambling. So, um, I found that helped me a lot, um, going into it initially before having my first online class, uh, during, during Covid, definitely.

CH: And just your experience when you became a little bit, I, I would imagine that there were times where you got a little bit, um, stuck or something didn't work. You may have shared a screen and the video didn't play, or something along those lines. Um, the fear was that the students would get lost in that. Was that your experience? Or did you find that the students actually were quite helpful when they saw you battling?

P2: So, a funny story was, in hindsight, it is quite funny, but at the time it was quite scary. Um, I shared my screen with my students to play a YouTube video, but I think the [LMS] server, especially during Covid was like, um, there were too many people on it. It was, it was really lagging. There were a lot of issues. Students were getting kicked out. Lecturers were, were also getting kicked out. The server was overloaded. And so, the videos just didn't, like, didn't want to play. Um, and, you know, my mic became muted. Um, it said reconnecting and, at that moment I panicked because at that time I didn't have a WhatsApp group of my students, so I had no way of really communicating with them besides email, which you, we know that they take long to read their emails. Um, so then I got kicked out the whole entire session and it took me, I would say at the time, I can't remember exactly, but probably about 15 to 20 minutes just to, to go back into the session. And I found that I had a class, I think of about 15, and there were only three students left. They thought that I had ditched them and like left the, the session completely. Um, so, so that was a big challenge for me. And, you know, I like profusely apologized to that class when I, when I saw them again online and I, you know, I have told them "I'm sorry, you know, these things can happen." Um, but then a lot of them said they had also got kicked out, so they were kind of in the same boat as me. So that was, that was a challenge that I experienced quite early on in utilizing [the webinar] and also the, the actual break-out groups. Um, because I didn't know that you could select students to, you know, place

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them into the groups. I thought it just randomly assigned them. And so, students were quite, um, upset, especially because for my one module, they could actually choose their groups. So, when I wanted them for, for their POE, so when I wanted them to work in those groups, it just like randomly assigned and I wasn't sure on how to do that. But now I know, but I just felt so bad at the time because they were like, "Well ma'am, you know, we are with people who are not even in our, uh, you know, actual groups." Um, so that also was a, was a challenge that I experienced quite early on, um, with [the webinar] as I was becoming more familiar with it.

CH: So, what would you give as advice to somebody who's starting up and designing their own online learning experience based off this? Would, would you have any insights or advice that you would want to share with someone?

P2: I would say my biggest piece of advice is before, and I was actually telling Jenna this because I'm, I'm her buddy. Um, I am doing the buddy program with her. So, I, I told her, you know, the biggest piece of advice is to really familiarize yourself with, you know, not only [the webinar tool] but [the institution's online platform] itself before you have your first class. You know, as soon as you are assigned that module [online], you know, go into it, play around with it, um, start uploading relevant content, you know, just, just being proactive instead of reactive, um, is my best approach that I found works quite well. Because if you have a reactive approach, um, sometimes you know that that impression, especially you want to create a positive first impression, students can think of you as, you know, someone who is not so good with technology and, you know, they start forming all these impressions about you, um, quite early on, which can, can be negative for their learning experience. So, I would say, you know, being as proactive as you possibly can be, you know. Even if it is like a week before your first class or, you know, before you actually start with, with lectures would be a really good idea. And I would say, you know, don't be afraid. Um, you know, initially when, I, you know, started to utilize [the webinar tool] and, and as well as [the institution's online platform], sometimes my content wouldn't upload in the correct folder and it would give me error messages. And that can be quite disheartening. But I would say, you know, keep on trying, keep on doing it. Um, and for example, when I was creating online rubrics, that was quite a challenge. And I remember I made, I made the same error like so many times. But I was like, no, I really want to do this. I really want to persevere. Um, so I, I just kept on trying, I would watch tutorials on it, um, and that really helped me. And I, I would say, you know, attend like workshops as well, you know, with our EdTech. They are there to assist us. Um, so that also really helped me as well. And it is just, you know, embracing change and embracing, you know, innovation and not being, um, so apprehensive and, you know, scared of it would be a good idea.

CH: So almost that we have got to live through it a little bit in order to master it.

P2: Yes. Absolutely.

CH: <laugh>. So, our learning is also a place of discomfort.

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P2: Yes.

CH: If we want our students to learn, discomfort for them. But we also have to almost go through that discomfort period.

P2: Absolutely. And that's something that you can actually, you know, talk to the students about. You know, I'm, I'm very like real, I don't know if that is the right word to use. I am very real with my students. Like, "Listen guys, like I understand [the institution's online platform] is a tricky platform. I know myself. I have experienced, you know, there have been many times when things haven't uploaded and I have uploaded it in, in the incorrect folder. Um, it's, it's okay to make mistakes. Like don't be afraid of that. That is part of the learning process." So, I often just, you know, re-assure them, and be quite real with them, and let them know that we are not perfect human beings, and you know, we are going to be making mistakes, and it is completely normal for that to occur.

CH: Ya. And then, what has been your experience? So, if you had to now look at your overall experience in this online space, what has been your experience in the implementation of these online learning experiences?

P2: Well, as I said, no initially I have always been someone who embraces change and also who thrives on innovation. And sometimes, I get really excited about something and then it doesn't always pan out to what it is supposed to be. Um, so in terms of the implementation of, of the online learning experiences, um, at times, because of the challenges that I personally experienced, it, it, it was quite disheartening. And there were times when I was just like, well, you know, <laugh>, I am just going to give up. But I didn't do that. I, you know, I persevered and, I just continued to do what I wanted to do and to, to provide that uniqueness as well as innovation for those students. Um, because at the end of the day, they are my biggest priority. Like, despite the challenges that I have experienced and that I have encountered, at the end of the day, the, the student experiences are utmost important to me. So, um, I, will sacrifice a lot of my time so that they can have a positive learning experience basically. So, um, that's why, you know, during semester break, a lot of my time is spent, you know, prepping, but also engaging in that online, um, [the institution's online] platform to try and improve that, that positive learning experience for the students. So, it's kind of like, despite all of my challenges, um, they, they are like priority. They come first. So, I, I will do anything that I possibly can do so that they can have that positive learning experience.

CH: Thanks, [Janet]. And that is why your students love you, <laugh>.

P2: <laugh>.

CH: And part of the resilient factor that we, that, um, I know you didn't mention resilience, you spoke to, um, the three Cs and problem solving, but I think resilience is maybe also a key term...

P2: Yes.

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CH: ...in, in your, um... just going back to...

P2: I'm thinking that now too <laugh>.

CH: So, I am going to say it's the three Cs, problem-solving and resilience.

P2: Resilience. Absolutely.

CH: Because the students also have to persevere. So, you have kind of been a role model to them.

P2: Yes.

CH: Okay. So, um, question seven. Um, so we have spoken about obviously the, the three Cs been communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving. In your opinion, are our undergraduates ready to develop these skill-sets?

P2: Absolutely. In fact, Chantal, I think that these skill-sets should actually start to develop from high school. Um, that's my personal opinion. So, I, I feel when they come at, you know, university level, um, they should just be mastering those skill-sets. They, there should be, you know, those skillsets should be pre-existing. But they should just be mastering that, that skill completely. Um, so that is my personal take on that.

CH: Okay. So, so now do you think that is a reality?

P2: No, <laugh>, especially with my higher certificate students. And I often think, like, I often think to myself, what goes wrong in, in high school that they don't have the, this skill-set, you know, really, you know, in existence. But I find especially with those higher certificate students, they really struggle to, to, to develop those skills. Um, and I really have to push hard, you know, for them to actually develop those skills, more so than the degree students. I, I, I don't know if it is down to, you know, work efficiency or, or efforts. Um, but I, I do see a distinction between first year degree students and those HC students.

CH: Mm-hmm. Okay. So, um, where, where there is evidence of, um, so they, so you are saying absolutely they are ready for, for these skill-sets. What behaviors do you feel that the students should be showing that gives you an indication that they are ready?

P2: So, the first one that I've, I have witnessed is that willingness to learn. So sometimes, and I especially see this in a face-to-face setting. Sometimes I will walk into class and students will have their laptops on, they will have their books open, you know, they will have like a notepad and a pen, um, and they are actively just ready to engage and they, they thrive on, you know, learning and gaining new knowledge. So that willingness to learn, um, it is a big one that I have seen as well as online as well. Um, students have also, you know, when I refer to, to something like a definition of a concept, students, you can definitely tell the ones that have actually read their textbook prior to that, to that

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lecture. Um, because the answer that they provide is pretty much from the textbook, but still, it is that willingness to learn that is a good thing.

P2: So that is one of them. Um, there's quite a few that I have noted.

CH: Okay.

P2: Um, the second one is, is that active listening. So sometimes students have ears, but they don't use them <laugh>. So that active listening skill is, is definitely one that I look out for. And so, so what I do with my students for active listening, to test their active listening skill, there is this like activity that, that I show them. It's a, it is like a quick little YouTube clip, and then I ask them questions based on it. And that really allows me to gauge from, from the get-go. This is usually done in the first few sessions with the students from the get-go. It allows me to, to see, you know, which students are active listeners. Which are more passive. Um, so I'm, I am able to gauge through that. Um, so that is a big one that I look out for. Also, that collaborative learning, so the ability to work effectively in groups. So often, quite early on in the semester, I will, you know, place them into random groups, um, not with like their friends or anything. And I'll, I will see, you know, how they actually work. Can they actually work well in a team? Um, and sometimes I will find students that pretty much just sit on their own and don't want to engage whatsoever. So that allows me to see which students have that, um, skill. And then also, cohesiveness ties into that. So, you know, the ability to work in a team and be a team player, but then also the ability to, to kind of fit within their cohorts and not like, kind of exist on, on an island. They, they are kind of, you know, they are all in, you know, the grander group, their cohort. They are all in the same team and they all need to be helping. So, I often find, you know, sometimes students will remind each other, "Hey, by the way, you know, the assignment is due next week" or "Have you completed the ICE tasks? Have you read this chapter in, in the textbook?" So just that, that group cohesiveness is one that I look out for. So those are the major ones that I usually look out for quite early on in, in the semester just to gauge their level.

CH: And, okay, so you have mentioned that you do certain activities to help the students. So, you, you have spoken to, you actually put them into groups. Um, they are not with their friends. And, and the type of activities then that you give them would just be various types of activities, case studies? Do you have particular activities that you give when you are assigning them a group?

P2: Yes. So, not only for groups, like for, for all of those skills. So, for example, for the willingness to learn, um, what I will do with my students, I will say, "Okay guys, please make sure that you read chapter one, for example, in the textbook before our next class." And then at the beginning of, of the next class as part of revision, um, I will ask them a couple of questions, like clarifying questions, just to see, you know, who were the ones that actually took the time to go and, and read and to not only read the textbook, but sometimes I make them read like an article online, um, that they have to present in class. Um, so also that willingness to learn is, is promoted during that. Um, the active listening is through, usually through YouTube videos. Um, so I will show them a clip. It doesn't, the

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clip doesn't always have to be directly related to their learning outcomes. Sometimes, you know, as part of, because I lecture them communication, um, the active listening could be like a workplace scenario or it can be, you know, like a team-building exercise, you know, like an online- type of YouTube video. So, it is kind of indirectly related to what they are studying at the end of the day. Um, and then also for the group cohesiveness: So, one of the nice, I call it like an ice-breaker activity, um, where students have to work in groups to build kind of like a pyramid and they are only allowed to use toothpicks and marshmallows. Um, so that is quite an activity that I like to do quite early on in the semester. Um, just to test their, their group skills, um, before actually, you know, looking at the prescribed content and how I can actually structure activities around that. So that is often a fun activity that I like to do with the students. And, and I find over the years that they often are quite engaged during that. Um, that also promotes, you know, future group activities because they realize, "Oh, that's quite fun." So, they have that willingness to work collaboratively in the future as well. Um, so those are the activities that I usually design based on those skills.

CH: Okay. And I would imagine that there's an element of competitiveness.

P2: Yes. <laugh>.

CH: With that one <laugh>.

P2: Definitely, and I start seeing who could be a good class rep because they demonstrate that competitiveness quite early on <laugh>.

CH: Ya. Um, and just with, with, uh, giving them pre-readings and then seeing who has read, um, when you, have you ever experienced a situation where the students haven't done the pre-reading?

P2: Yes. Uh, that is quite a common one, especially early on in the semester. And I always tell them, "Guys, you can't just rely on what I am teaching you in class. You know, a lot of, part of our learning model is you dedicating a significant amount of time to self, you know, self-directed learning." So, I always, I remind them of that and I say to them, "Listen guys, I don't want this to be, to be seen again. I don't want to see this again." I am quite strict with them. And then, I wouldn't say that I scare them, but I just kind of remind them of the importance of it. Um, and I find that often helps. Um, but as we have discussed, there's always going to be some of those students that, you know, couldn't care less and that just don't dedicate enough time to their studies. But often find sometimes those little like pep talks, um, does help the students to, to improve that engagement.

CH: And just out of curiosity, your strategy when they don't do it... So, so you rep, you have reprimanded them, you have spoken to them about the importance of self-directed learning, but now there's, that is often a starting point to what you wanting to build on in the actual session. Do you then take it, well that should have been done and I am moving on? Or do you then unpack what they've read or should have read? Like how, what strategy do you adopt in moving forward with your actual session?

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P2: So initially I was, I would say I was quite mean <laugh> and that I would, you know, carry on and I'm like, "Okay, you snooze, you lose type of thing." But what I found over the years that isn't a good method to follow. And at the end of the day, students are there, you know, to learn and yes, you know, some, some of them may be slack and they may not be pulling their weight, but at the end of the day, they are still there for a specific purpose or purposes. So, so what I find helps is, um, you know, assigning those weak students, assigning them a buddy that can, can kind of, you know, help them, you know, catch them up to speed with, you know, work that they have missed. Because sometimes there are legitimate reasons why students couldn't, you know, read that chapter. You know, they, they have their own personal, you know, family issues. Um, there's a number of different reasons why this, this could occur, and I don't like to always paint them all with the same brush. So, I found that buddy support system, um, really helps my students and that is what I've, I have been doing a lot, especially with those higher certificate students where the drop-out rate can be quite high. Um, so I often always, I kind of, you know, see which students are quite weak and then I assign them, you know, to a student that is quite strong, just to, to have their back and, and to help them. So that is usually what I do to, to counteract that issue.

CH: Okay. And just out of curiosity, have you seen, like with the buddy system, um, does it extend beyond just the pre-readings? Do you find that from an academic point of view it kind of lifts their game? Or perhaps you haven't really looked into that?

P2: Yes, absolutely. So, the buddy support system for me is not only for the, you know, pre-readings and work that they have missed, but oftentimes students, initially, they, they may be paired up with someone who they don't know very well, but towards, you know, the end of the semester, they have, you know, built a relationship with this person. And so, this person's, sometimes I'll find, you know, the buddy will come and talk to me and say, you know, "Listen, [Janet], um, the student is, you know, going through these type of issues at home. But you know, I am supporting him or her and I am encouraging them." So, their support kind of extends beyond just that of like an academic peer, but more of like a friend who who is supporting them. And I find because they are friends with this person, um, that overall supports their academic learning. So it's, it's a beautiful thing to, to witness. You know, they were two complete strangers, but the end of the semester they are now working together, and they are, you know, they are uplifting and supporting each other to achieve, um, you know, good academic results. So that's often something that I've, I have witnessed firsthand.

CH: And, and I would imagine then that that is quite a strategy that one could possibly use in the online space... is connect people through just a buddy system.

P2: Yes, absolutely. And it does for me. It extends, you know, not only face-to-face, but also online as well. You know, the, the responsibility of the buddy, um, is for all types of academic learning. So oftentimes I will meet with the buddies and kind of, you know, just give them a rundown of their responsibility so that they are aware of what they need to do and what their role is, um, so that there are no blurred lines with that.

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CH: Okay. Um, then if we go to the last question and the last question lies in The Teaching and Learning Strategy Policy, it speaks to what, um, we should be doing as lecturers in preparing students, um, for the workplace. And it speaks to the development of the collaborative problem-solver. Um, what is, uh, you have unpacked collaborative learning as the ability to work in groups. Would you say that is an accurate definition for you of collaborative learning?

P2: Yes, absolutely. Um, but for me, the problem-solver, um, there is, there is a distinction between those two. Yes. Um, so for me, the collaborative problem-solver is not only your ability to work together in teams, but how I see it is sometimes there are problems, you know, within the workplace, um, or even within the academic studies that cannot be solved on, you know, by a single person and that they require, um, you to work with others and to, to capitalize on, you know, the skill-sets that others may have in order to solve a problem. So, for example, um, one student may be more of a critical thinker than another student. And so, when we put/ place them in a group, um, they are, you know, maybe another student is more creative, they are able to capitalize on each other's skills in order to solve a, a problem or in order to work towards, you know, a common goal to find a resolution to a problem. So, for me, um, that is what distinguishes just looking at collaborative learning and more of a collaborative problem-solver, which is working together not, um, to capitalize on one's skills in order to solve a, a specific problem.

CH: Ya. So, you would, you would definitely be looking at drawing on the strengths and skill-sets of the others.

P2: Yes.

CH: Um, to problem-solve. Okay. And what elements do you consider when creating collaborative tasks in the online space?

P2: So, um, the elements that I usually consider, um, so just around the actual tasks themselves, um, is firstly looking at my class size. Now, although this may seem like, I don't know, an obvious one, um, sometimes my classes are quite small, um, especially if it is a phase-out module. So, there may be, you know, group activities that won't really work well with such a small class. You know, sometimes I have like four students and that is just like, you know, one group. You know, sometimes I like to have different groups because I find that, you know, more than one group, um, can actually, you know, provide different, uh, solutions to a specific problem or, or provide a different perspective. And if I only have, you know, one group of four individuals, for example, um, I am not really seeing that difference. And for me, it is very important to have a diversity of perspectives. So, for me, class size is, is a factor that often influences the type of task that I create, um, as well as the time duration. So, um, sometimes when I do have really big classes, and maybe sometimes I have like seven or eight different groups, um, it can sometimes take an entire session just to go through every single group and their responses and, you know, some groups talk more than others and so on. Um, so from a time perspective, um, that is often a factor that, you know, when I am planning my collaborative topic task, especially in an online space, and that is also a factor that I like to take into consideration. And within that

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time duration is once again that connectivity issue that students may have and then they have thrown out their group and they, you know, that that loses that collaboration. Um, so that is usually what I, what I factor in. Um, those are the, the main things that I consider. Um, but then also because I usually see my classes face-to-face before I usually have an online session with them, I kind of, you know, get a feeling about each... I try to, I try to, you know, learn all the students' names and, and kind of learn a little bit about them. Sometimes it can be difficult when you have like 60 in your class. But I try to, especially with my smaller classes, and then when I, when I do put them into groups, I kind of know, you know, who to assign as the group leader. Okay, this person is more creative than this person, let me place them into a group. So, I kind of like can be quite strategic sometimes, although this, I always strive to do this, but sometimes in, as I said, in bigger groups, it, it can be more difficult. Some students never attend classes, for example, so you never really get to know them. Um, and then all of a sudden, they appear online. Um, so that is often a factor that are also try to, to factor into these tasks.

CH: So [Janet], we're, we are fortunate that we have got, you know, the blended approach with face-to-face and online. If we were completely online, so let's say we had no face-to-face, do you think it is not possible to get to know the students, um, in the same way as one would connect with them in face-to-face? So, you spoke about learning the names of your students, getting to know a little bit about them, understanding them so that you can, um, identify who are your potential leaders who would help with driving that activity and putting them into those groups. Do you think that it is more complex in an online space if we were completely online? Um, or do you think it's, it is a possible thing?

P2: I think it can actually be a bit of both. And the reason why I will say, I mean, because online you can still get to know, um, people quite well. And so, I usually have like a discussion forum where students will, you know, post a little bit about themselves-you know, their name, their interests, hobbies- and you kind of learn a little bit about them. But then I also, you know, especially from being a communications professional, I also know that what a person's identity online can be very different <laugh> to their real-life identity. You know, they can be completely different individuals, um, online than in a, you know, face-to-face where they kind of have to be who they are. Um, so I feel it, it kind of, you know, is a balancing act. You know, we can learn more about the students, we can build a relationship with them, but then it is also that thing about, you know, are they actually being real? You know, are they being truthful about who they are and what their strengths are and their weaknesses and so on? Um, so that is a, a challenge that one would need to consider.

CH: Okay. And then just, and I hope I, um, there with the connectivity issue... Oh yes. Um, when you are designing, um, these activities and you are saying you are looking at class size, you are looking at the duration that it is going to take them to unpack the different perspectives, and the connectivity issue, do you find that you tend to try and include the activity within that particular lecture? Or do you, do you sometimes say, "Okay, well we will do the presentations the next time we are online"? And do you see success there? And I don't know if this makes sense to you. If you want me to clarify, I can say it again.

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P2: No. No, I, I know exactly, I know exactly what you, what you are referring to. And I honestly, it is, it really depends on, you know, the material itself. Um, sometimes, you know, certain activities will require students to do further research and, you know, if I do find the connectivity to be a major issue, like a lot of students are being affected by it, then I will tell them, "Okay guys, I am only seeing you again next week. Um, then make sure that you have your answers prepared for that lecture." But if I find that it is, you know, a short activity where they don't really have to be doing a lot of additional reading and further research, then I will structure it within the, the class itself. Um, so it, it really does depend on the nature of the activity as well as, you know, the content that is being assessed, um, that usually will, and also the, the, the connectivity, you know, how many students are actually affected, um, you know, by connectivity issues in that actual encounter. So it really does vary.

CH: I am just wondering, because I know there, there are, um, some lecturers who have expressed when they have done an activity that they need to report on later, the students just don't connect.

P2: Yes.

CH: So...

P2: Yes.

CH: ...have you experienced that? <Laugh>? Is that a challenge that...

P2: Yes, I have.

CH: Okay.

P2: Yes. So, in the first session they will work on it and then I will, you know, that 10-minute break where they all have a breather, then I will say, "Okay guys, after the break we are going to discuss the activity." And then we just have like five students who are still present. So, so what I do is I won't do it within that actual lecture. I would say, "You know, the next online session, then you guys are going to be presenting." And then they also, that fear of missing out, they also want to join that next session because they, they, yes, they are reluctant to share their presentation, but then they are also scared they are going to miss out of extra content. So, I find that often works. But doing it with them the same session, no, that oftentimes, um, has been quite a challenge.

CH: Okay. And then moving on to, um, the problem-solving task. I will come back to an example. Well, perhaps we should do the collaborative task first. Do you have a specific example of a collaborative task?

P2: Sure. Um, so this is for my corporate communication students, um, in particular. They, so, uh, Johnson and Johnson (JJ), um, they had a major brand crisis, um, when was it?

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Last year in September. Um, they were, they were, they found traces of arsenic in their, their baby powder. So that was...

CH: Oh, was that the reason. I knew they recalled, but I didn't realize what, what was wrong.

P2: There was, there were traces, there was traces of arsenic in in their baby powder. It was a major, um, crisis. And so, my students, they had to, to design a communication strategy in which they would have to try and, and communicate and solve this particular problem. You know, what kind of communication would they send out? How would they deal with, you know, unhappy stakeholders? Um, so I presented them with a, with a real-world scenario. Um, and, and at that time it was a, was quite a big deal within the news. Um, and I made the students, I put them into groups, and I made them conduct further research. I, you know, I briefed them on it, but then I made them conduct further research into it. And then they all had to develop a communication strategy. And communication strategy itself is very unique and can differ. Um, so there is a lot of different perspectives that can actually be brought into that. So that is why I selected such an activity. Um, and the students did a brilliant job. This was with my final year students. They did a brilliant job. They had to present an actual presentation. Um, so I gave them time within the online class to work in groups and to, you know, brainstorm. And then the next online session I had with them, um, they had to present, you know, their actual strategy. And I must say, it was really, I'm, I've, I have actually included it in my, my teaching portfolio, uh, this year because it was a really good, um, task that they did. So I was, I was very happy with that and I could definitely see that, you know, collaboration especially because, you know, by third year I know the students quite well and I am like, "Okay, I know who was responsible for that design", for example. Because one student is quite creative. So, I was able to see their strengths, you know, putting together all, all their strengths, um, to form something so interesting and to try and solve that particular real-world issue. Um, so that was a task that really stood out for me.

CH: I think they would have enjoyed it. I think that they will remember that one for years to come.

P2: Yes. And it, it actually, it came up again in, in their POE, not the same issue, but they had to do something very similar within their POE. And they said, they actually thanked me. They were like, you know, "Thanks so much ma'am. You really prepared us for that. You know, we weren't so afraid of it." Because they had that practice in class. Um, so it kind of, you know, killed two birds with one stone in, in that aspect too.

CH: And then, um, so elements in problem-solving. So, we have spoken about elements that are linked with the collaborative. Would you say they are the same elements that you consider when you are creating a problem-solving task or are they different elements?

P2: I would say they are more or less the same. The only major one that I would include is to focus on a real-world scenario and not something that is just hypothetical. Because at the end of the day, we prepare students for the work, for the workforce, and they are

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going to have to deal with what is going on in reality. Um, so for me, you know, case studies, real-world scenarios similar to what I designed for that activity...Um, what is going on currently in the world around them is a very important element to factor into that problem-solving, um, task. So, I, I would say, you know, more or less, the others are important, but problem-solving in particular is that focus on real-world scenarios and situations.

CH: Okay. And then you have already described your problem-solving task because that's the, that is the one that is the strategy, unless you want to share another one.

P2: Um, so, so that is my major one because it was both collaborative and also problem-solving. So, it kind of, it factored both of those elements that often are very close to each other. Um, so, so that was a major one that I have witnessed. Also, another one, um, that, that I could share with you as well for additional notes, um, is, so the students, this was also my first-year students, and I was a little bit apprehensive because it was one of the first classes with them. Um, but they basically had to come up with a plan of action to design a new lecture venue, um, for [this institution], which is currently what is happening. So, I thought it was quite interesting <laugh> because this happened at the beginning of the year. Um, and they had to, so within their textbook there were five steps that um, were theoretically defined on how to actually, um, design this new lecture venue. And I posed a risk. I said "No, that [this institution] only had limited funding and they also had weather elements that they factored in." And so, there was that problem-solving, um, factor that was implemented in that activity. So, what the students had to do is they had to apply those five steps to actually, you know, build that lecture venue but also to solve those problems, those, those risk factors. Um, and they actually did a really good job. You know, they were, as I said, they were first-year students and this was something quite new to them because they are so used to theory, theory, theory. Um, this was something that is quite new to them. But they actually enjoyed it. They were like, "You know ma'am, this is very interesting." Then they asked me, "Is [this institution] really designing a new lecture venue?" And I said, "Yes, but that will be the end of the year." So, it is pretty much truthful as well. So once again, and also looking at that real-world um, scenario too,

CH: Were there any designs worth sharing <laugh> that we could have used? <laugh>.

P2: <Laugh>. Yeah, some of them I must say were a bit far-fetched, but I didn't think too, because they are first years so, but yeah. Some of them were okay. Some of them were very far-fetched and I was like, "Oh my goodness, this would never be appropriate." <laugh>.

CH: Um, [Janet], are there any, is there anything else that as we were talking, you were like, "Ooh I need to speak to that, but I haven't had an opportunity." Anything else that you want to share about how we support the development of those graduate attributes in our learning experiences?

P2: I don't think so. I think I have pretty much covered all of it. I am just like, quickly going through my notes now just to see if there is anything else that I have missed because I

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made quite a few notes. Um, but ya, no ya, I think I have actually discussed everything that I needed to, to discuss with you. Um, and I wanted to thank you, you know, for providing me with this opportunity, you know, to partake in, in, in your study. It's, it has really been an interesting one for me. And, you know, sometimes, I like to reflect on my experiences because I also learn through that reflection process. So, it really has this, this time with you, uh, really has benefited me as well. Especially, you know, now that I am trying to also work on my teaching portfolio. And so, I know, you know, some of the elements, like you mentioned resilience and I know that I haven't discussed that as yet, um, in my portfolio. So, I know now that is an element that I can discuss. So, it really has been, you know, a learning process for me as well, you know, having this, these meetings with you. Um, and ya, I really am so appreciative of everything. So, thank you for that Chantal.

CH: Well [Janet], I wanted to thank you. So, I mean, it has been an absolute pleasure engaging with you. Um, and you know, I, what I will do is once I have done the analysis of the study and that, um, I will send to you the information to verify that it is an accurate, um, reflection of the design elements that you are including in your learning experience, um, when, when you are creating them. Um, so I know that it is not the end, um...

P2: Okay.

CH: ...that, we will still, we will still definitely communicate. But just giving up your time and I know how busy you are. Um, I really appreciate the fact that you've, you have definitely welcomed me in, um, and shared so much with me. So, thanks so much. I am going to end the recording.