

Rethinking Collaborative Group Learning in a Hybrid First Year Graduate Medical Degree Course in the Midst of a Pandemic

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Abstract

Student engagement can be a challenge in the traditional face to face classroom. Thus, the transition to online learning, which happened as an emergency measure during the COVID-19 pandemic, has come to the educational forefront recently. Faculty and students were not prepared for the rapid transition and now, almost one year into the pandemic, lessons have been learned on what works and does not work in the new terrain of the online classroom. Connect with colleagues, be visible and engage students is the new mantra. COVID 19 forced a re-evaluation and a rethink of existing teaching and assessment methodologies to accommodate a new community of learners; first year graduate entry Medical students geographically separated in a collaborative group project. Embedding active learning strategies in a group work project encouraged self-directed learning and collaborative engagement between both student groups. Whilst scaffolding relationships between online and face-to-face students through learning, online students were further supported through their unexpected first year experience, working online in their home country. Whilst a deviation from the traditional instructor-guided flipped classroom, this novel, innovative flipped classroom incorporated project-based learning initiative is an authentic, innovative approach where class-based activities are delivered and facilitated by students for students with each group reflecting, analyzing, processing and preparing material, in discussion with their peers.

Keywords: active learning; flipped classroom; project-based learning; COVID-19; lessons-learned