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## Fast Facts - Teaching in the time of Covid-19

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# HPEC Fast Facts

Welcome to the start of another academic year! Although all the usual cues are there – the first hints of Autumn, children off to school – this year will be unlike any other.

Over the last few months, we've come to terms with the many changes imposed on our teaching by the pandemic, and learned new ideas and skills along the way.

In this edition of Fast Facts, we offer practical tips for health professions' educators, as we continue to teach in the time of Covid-19.

Jenny Moffett

Editor, HPEC Fast Facts

## [Fast Facts: Teaching in the time of Covid-19](#)

The 2020 pandemic has had a huge influence on how health professions' education institutions operate with most adapting to change via a switch to online learning. Students' clinical learning opportunities evaporated and clinical educators were diverted into urgent patient-care roles. These were some of the

findings made in a [recent BEME rapid review](#), whose authors include HPEC researchers Prof Teresa Pawlikowska and Dr Andrea Doyle.

The review highlights several different forms of remote teaching that were rapidly deployed by health professions' universities, with many of these likely to persist beyond the pandemic. To ensure success for the future, the review authors advise that educators focus on “learner engagement, structure and organization” and maintain opportunities for learners' clinical exposure through use of telehealth, PPE, and physical distancing.

As we enter into this new academic year, we now know that teaching to the backdrop of a global pandemic is less of a sprint and more of a marathon. Here are our eight tips for educators:

1. **In this time of complexity, try to simplify as much as you can.** Learning will look very different this year so focus on what's important. If you can build a pleasant, inviting learning environment, and help your students to achieve the learning outcomes, you are on the right track.
2. **Recognise there are things that you can control, and things that you cannot.** External influences may trigger a switch from hybrid teaching to online, or from synchronous to asynchronous, events that are not under our control. What we can influence, however, is our relationship with our students, by reaching out, connecting, and being a welcoming face.
3. **Build flexibility into your teaching approach.** There will be hitches and glitches, so take ten minutes to consider what you might do if a session doesn't go to plan. Can you re-do the video, or use a discussion forum to interact with students?
4. **Take time to connect with your colleagues.** Remote and physically distanced work impacts on our interpersonal relationships, an essential part of our capacity to cope with adversity. How might you replicate that “waiting for the kettle to boil” moment in the staff room? Could you arrange a regular, online (and informal) catch up with a small group of colleagues?
5. **Ring-fence space in your weekly schedule.** Where possible, create buffers against long periods of back-to-back teaching. Online teaching can be taxing and “[Zoom fatigue](#)” is an emerging topic of interest for cyberpsychologists. Take regular breaks from the screen and from sitting.
6. **Reflect on what you enjoy most about your work.** It's natural to go on “auto-pilot” when under pressure, but if a sense of meaning and enjoyment is missing, motivation can wane. Ask yourself what you used to enjoy about your teaching; can you find that again in this new format? Or, are there aspects of online teaching that you like a lot and can do more of?
7. **Know that it's common to feel overwhelmed by the technology at times.** Remember, you are an educator first and much of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the job remain unchanged. The QQI reminds us that the “[technology is in the service of pedagogy](#)”. For help with the technology, the [RCSI Digitally Engaged Learning Hub](#) has a wide range of training resources [RCSI log-in required].
8. **Finally, take time to feel proud of what you have achieved so far.** It hasn't been an easy year and the educational community has pulled together in an unprecedented fashion. Adopting a perspective of compassion for ourselves and for our students, we can continue to meet the challenges of this new landscape.



## Useful resources

### Articles:

- [Gordon et al., 2020. Developments in medical education in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: A rapid BEME systematic review: BEME Guide No. 63](#)
- [McClintock, 2020. 10 Mental Health Tips for Teachers During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)
- [QQI Guidance for education and training providers](#)
- [Sklar et al., 2020. COVID-19: Lessons From the Disaster That Can Improve Health Professions Education](#)

### Podcasts:

[Back to School, Back to College with The Edtech Demonstrator Programme.](#) In this podcast, you'll hear how top schools and colleges are using technology to continue teaching and learning during 2020 and to embed continuity and wellbeing in teaching practice.

[HE in a post-Covid world: Bonus interview with Professor Tony Bates.](#) In this conversation Tony's student-centred advice mentions several important considerations for changing teaching methods, planning for improvement and education systems.

[OLC EdSurge. Howard Gardner on His Theory of Multiple Intelligences, and Lessons for COVID-19 Era.](#)

## Upcoming events



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### *Peer observation of teaching*

*We will shortly be rolling out information sessions around online peer observation of teaching at RCSI.*

*The current recommendation is that any individual with an active role in teaching RCSI students should take part in peer observation twice yearly (once as an observer, once as an observee).*

*So, whether you are new to peer observation of teaching or you want to set up this year's observation, please visit the HPEC website to access our [supporting resources](#).*

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*We hope you enjoy HPEC's Fast Facts. If you would rather not receive these educational updates, please reply to us at [hpec@rcsi.ie](mailto:hpec@rcsi.ie) with "Unsubscribe" in the email title.*

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