

Learn!Bio Study 4: Questionnaire

Participant Information Sheet

Principal researcher

[X] - modified for publication

Background

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, education has been affected massively for the past 2-3 years.

We're living in unprecedented times, with every aspect of society being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Education is no exception. In May 2020, UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation) (2020) reported that over 91% of the world's student population – a total of 1,576,021,818 learners across 188 countries and in all sectors – were affected in spring 2020 by the closure of educational institutions as part of a broader 'lockdown' strategy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many institutions have had to rush their teaching online, at an unprecedented scale. Student assessment has also been affected, with many exams cancelled, and others moved online, creating uncertainty for all involved.

Invitation

I am inviting you to a time-limited longitudinal study, conducted online & anonymously, which will evaluate the effects of the new blended learning concept for undergraduate students at Edge Hill University's Biology department.

Learning and teaching has been affected in the past due to the Covid-19 pandemic/crisis with many sessions previously being offered online and remotely. While the university has returned to primarily face-to-face teaching and has overturned many restrictions imposed during the pandemic, there are still lingering affects.

This **study will evaluate students' perceptions** of the **learning approaches used during and after the COVID-19 pandemic**: Does it work? Is it suitable for biology education? Does it prepare for a biology career? How do you perceive your peer-to-peer community feeling? Do you miss remote access to learning? We have so many questions.

This study will be a time-limited longitudinal study: **Time-limited** means it will run only this academic year (2022-2023). **Longitudinal** means it observes several events in a participant's life, not just one. Previous Learn!Bio studies were undertaken in December 2020, May 2021, and May 2022 and results from these studies will be compared to results in this one.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to evaluate Biology undergraduate students' perception on the different learning approaches used during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will evaluate how students feel that previous education during the pandemic (A-Levels and previous undergraduate levels) have affected their university experience in the present. The study also aims to discover how students' mental health has been affected during these times.

Why have I been invited?

I invite all students currently enrolled in a biology undergraduate programme (levels 4-6): *BSc (Hons) Biology, Biomedical Science, Biotechnology, Ecology & Conservation, Plant Science, Food Science, and Genetics*.

Consent

Anonymised study

This study will be conducted **online** using the (online) EHU approved survey software JISC. JISC is an UK-based company and adheres to the UK national **data protection regulations**, both the **Data Protection Act (DPA)** and the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**.

This study will be conducted in an entirely **anonymised** fashion – *what does this mean*

for you?

- You will be sent an email to your Edge Hill University email address with a link to enter the survey.
- You can then commence the survey in your own time - **your name or email address will NEVER be traced, tracked or collected**
- If you have doubts or if you do not wish to participate, you can click “no” and you will leave the study. No harm done.
- The first page of the survey summarises this PIS. If you agree with the study by clicking “yes” on the first survey page; you will then enter the main survey.

Can I withdraw consent?

This is an anonymised study. Once you have submitted your survey, it cannot be identified as yours anymore. You can then not withdraw your consent. This is a longitudinal study. There will be 3-4 individual surveys, they are not linked or associated to each other. Each survey needs your new consent. If you are unhappy with how this study is conducted, you can decide not to participate in the following surveys.

Will my participation be confidential?

This is an anonymised study.

This study will ask about your study experiences, your feedback on teaching styles and access to learning and learning content, your experience with personal tutors and supervisors, as well as how your mental health has been affected. I am also interested to understand how the peer-to-peer community might change with this new learning environment.

Questions to the above topics will be general and will NEVER interfere with your **privacy rights** or your **right to confidentiality**.

In rare cases some questions required for statistical analysis might interfere with your **privacy rights**, this is related to the small size of our department.

Why should this be a problem?

We are a close-knit department and it might be that from these facts alone the research team will know who this student is. Just imagine this is you. The survey asks but some very critical questions about the department's teaching (we do want you to be critical). If you feel you could be identified, you might not be as straight forward with your answers as you could. This would be sad for us. We don't want you to feel intimidated.

Here is a list of topics which might interfere with your privacy rights¹

Ø Study programme (within biology), Ø year of study, Ø campus/off campus living, Ø care obligations, Ø age (brackets), Ø gender, Ø mode of travel/commute to university (if applicable), Ø ethnicity.

The survey is built in a fashion that it will alert you if you are at risk to self-identify yourself*. It will give you then the chance to modify your answer:

- you can change some or all to N/A, so you cannot be identified
- You can leave all answers as they are, and you might then be identified.

Only the study team will have access to the so-called “**raw data**” of this study. “Raw-data is the **unprocessed data** in a study, which is still to be analysed. This **raw data** will NEVER be shared with anyone from outside the department and will NEVER be published. The study team only includes personnel from the biology department.

*this algorithm is not based on your name or email address but will use exclusion logic based on student data available for our department. This will be done automatically by the software (researchers will not be informed about this - keeping your privacy secure).

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The survey(s) will result in so-called **raw data**, just long lists of Excel files, produced by the online survey software. These Excel files will be exported from the online survey

software's webpage and stored, unprocessed ("raw") in a password protected folder on my **OneDrive for Business at Edge Hill University**. Only I and other study team members will have access to this raw data and this folder.

The raw data will then be analysed, using various methods, including the tools provided on the online survey platform, but also Microsoft Excel, R Studio, Graphpad and similar. This is then the **analysed or processed data**. This data will also be stored (password protected) on my OneDrive at Edge Hill University.

Only processed, analysed data will be shared with the department, the university, or stakeholders outside the University. I will NEVER share raw data with others, thus protecting your privacy (if applicable - see above).

Processed / analysed data will also be **published**. If required, data will be "adjusted" to ensure truly all identifiable bias are removed and none of our students can **indirectly be identified** from the data we present in any form of publication.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty for Arts and Sciences (FREC) at Edge Hill University.

What will I be asked to do?

You will receive an email with a link to an online survey. The email will originate either from myself ([X] - data modified for publication) or directly from the survey provider "*JISC Online Survey*".

Click on the link provided in the email and follow the prompts. You will be asked to **agree to the consent** (= first page of survey), do so only if you can fully agree with this **Participant Information Sheet (PIS)** you are just reading. Otherwise, click no, this will terminate the survey.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are **no disadvantages** of taking part in this study. For a certain student group there is the **small risk** of being identifiable, but only in the “raw data”, and only by the study team (see above). This risk can be mitigated by the participant and will be eliminated by the research team once data is being analysed and processed.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

This study will collect students' feedback on their perception on past and current learning concepts in the academic year 2022-2023. Students feedback, comments and suggestions will feed into changes and improvements at a Department and wider educational level. The more students participate the more powerful the study and the more significant the impact of this study will be.

Is there someone independent I can talk to about the research?

Yes, you can. Please contact the Research Office. The URESC Secretary is an expert for **ethical questions & research conduct** and is not involved in this study nor in undergraduate teaching, planning and delivery:

URESC Secretary

01695 650925

✉ Research@edgehill.ac.uk

Please confirm you have read the participant information provided and that you consent to taking part in this anonymous online survey? * Required

☐ Yes

☐ No

Consent required for participation

To participate in any research, including this study, you are required to provide your consent. This ensures that you understand exactly what's involved in being a respondent, along with why, and how your data will be used. * *Required*

- ☐ I consent to participate in this survey
- ☐ I do NOT wish to participate

Please select the programme you are currently enrolled in * *Required*

- ☐ BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science
- ☐ BSc (Hons) Biotechnology
- ☐ BSc (Hons) Biology
- ☐ BSc (Hons) Ecology & Conservation
- ☐ BSc (Hons) Food Science
- ☐ BSc (Hons) Genetics
- ☐ BSc (Hons) Human Biology
- ☐ BSc (Hons) Plant Science
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Please select your study year * *Required*

- ☐ Year 1 (Level 4)
- ☐ Year 2 (Level 5)
- ☐ Year 3 (Level 6)
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Have you participated in any Learn!Bio surveys before? * *Required*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No - I'm level 4
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Over the last 3 years teaching has been delivered fully or partly online. Do you feel that you are now more technologically advanced in the use of online software? * *Required*

- ☐ Yes - By a large amount
- ☐ Yes - By a small amount
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ No - I wasn't taught the skills
- ☐ No - I already knew the skills
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Looking back over the last 3 years. Do you prefer online learning, blended learning, or face to face learning best? * *Required*

- ☐ Online learning (Off-campus)
- ☐ Blended learning (A mix of remote and on-campus learning)
- ☐ Face-to-face (On-campus)
- ☐ No preference

If you do not like or attend on campus lectures. Can you tell us why?

- ☐ I attend all my lectures
- ☐ Covid related problems prevent me attending campus
- ☐ Commuting is an issue
- ☐ Lectures are recorded so there is no point in attending
- ☐ Attendance is a low priority for me
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Please tell us any other reason you do NOT attend your on-campus lectures

What, if any online learning technologies would you like to keep as part of your continued learning? * *Required*

- ☐ Socrative
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Vevox
- ☐ BoB
- ☐ LinkedIn Learning
- ☐ Padlet
- ☐ Clinical Key Medicine/Student
- ☐ Doodle polls
- ☐ Kahoot
- ☐ No preference

Feel free to suggest software you have used in the past. It may be something we can incorporate into our sessions

Are you aware that the Biology department offers sandwich years, summer internships, and module related internships in a work placement? * *Required*

- ☐ Yes and I know how to apply
- ☐ Yes but I do not know how to apply
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Which, if any, are you interested in? * *Required*

- ☐ Sandwich Year Abroad
- ☐ Sandwich Year in the UK
- ☐ Summer Internship
- ☐ Module Related Internship
- ☐ None - Financial/personal commitment reasons
- ☐ None - Im just not interested
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Which, if any, have you taken part in previously? * *Required*

- ☐ Sandwich Year Abroad
- ☐ Sandwich Year in the UK
- ☐ Summer Internship
- ☐ Module Related Internship
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ None - Financial/personal commitment reasons
- ☐ None - I'm just not interested
- ☐ None - I'm Year 1 (Level 4)

OVERALL, rate the learning experience you have had **this** academic year, taking into account all modules and all sessions. * *Required*

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very Poor
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Any comments you might like to add on your OVERALL experience this semester?

How has the learning experience from this academic year compared to your last academic year?

- ☐ A large improvement
- ☐ A small improvement
- ☐ No change
- ☐ A small decline
- ☐ A large decline
- ☐ Would rather not say

What has contributed to this change in your learning experience?

--	--

Following the national Lockdown in March 2020, teaching at the university was delivered online or with some small group blended delivery. Do you think that not being able to attend face-to-face sessions in the past is now affecting your learning progression this academic year? * *Required*

- ☐ Absolutely
- ☐ Partly
- ☐ Depends on session content
- ☐ Depends on module
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ N/A - I have always attended face-to-face sessions at university

Following the national Lockdown in March 2020, teaching at schools and colleges were also affected. Do you feel that the lockdown in your pre-university days affected your university learning experience?

- ☐ Absolutely
- ☐ Partially
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

What level of education was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? Select all that apply.

- ☐ GCSEs
- ☐ BTEC
- ☐ AS Levels
- ☐ A Levels
- ☐ Level 4 (Year 1)
- ☐ Level 5 (Year 2)
- ☐ Level 6 (Year 3)

☐ None

☐ Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

Do you believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your social life?

- ☐ Yes - By a large amount
- ☐ Yes - By a small amount
- ☐ No change
- ☐ Unsure

In what ways do you think the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected your social life? Select all that apply.

- ☐ My social life has not changed
- ☐ I have developed anxiety
- ☐ I have been unable to meet classmates
- ☐ I have been unable to socialise outside of university
- ☐ I have been unable to make friends outside of university
- ☐ I have been unable to move out from parents/guardians
- ☐ I was forced to do a long distance relationship
- ☐ I feel unable to relate to others
- ☐ I spend more time trying to catch up in my studies
- ☐ I feel uncomfortable socialising due to the risk
- ☐ I have developed health problems that reduce my capacity to socialise
- ☐ Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

In what way has your learning been affected this academic year? Tick all that apply *
Required

- ☐ I'm excited to be getting back to pre-pandemic learning
- ☐ I'm anxious about being in contact with large number of people during a pandemic
- ☐ I'm I excited to meet my class/roommates in person
- ☐ I'm anxious about the lack of social distancing/mask wearing on campus/my commute
- ☐ I watched videos during remote learning to gain practical knowledge, now I feel I'm prepared to learn and develop those lab skills.
- ☐ I'm anxious about my lack of practical knowledge from missed in person teaching
- ☐ The lockdowns gave me a nice break from the everyday social situations
- ☐ I struggle with lectures with linked rooms
- ☐ The lockdowns have made me more self-conscious in everyday social situations
- ☐ N/A There has been no impact on my learning

Any comments you might like to add on your OVERALL experience this academic year?

Are you aware of what the current Biology Departments COVID-19 policies are? *

Required

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ I used to but I am unsure how they have changed
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

How do you feel about the removal of social distancing, COVID testing, and the mandatory mask wearing?

- ☐ Very Happy
- ☐ Happy
- ☐ No feelings one way or the other
- ☐ Unhappy
- ☐ Very unhappy
- ☐ I am unsure
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

While no longer mandatory, some staff members chose to wear face coverings. In your opinion, do you believe the face covering affects how well you can understand your tutors? * *Required*

- ☐ Yes by a large amount
- ☐ Yes but only slightly
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

Tutors are back on campus and available for in-person meetings. Tutors can always be contacted by email and are happy to chat to you remotely using online technology. How do you prefer to contact staff? * *Required*

- ☐ Online via messaging (Email, MS Teams)
- ☐ Online via video call (MS Teams, Skype etc)
- ☐ In person (lone session)
- ☐ In person (group session)
- ☐ No preference
- ☐ Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

How do you prefer to meet with staff? * *Required*

- ☐ Online via video call (MS Teams, Skype etc)
- ☐ Online messaging (Email, MS Teams etc)
- ☐ In person (lone session)
- ☐ In person (Group session)
- ☐ No preference
- ☐ Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

Please rate the OVERALL accessibility, availability, and response time of your MODULE tutors * *Required*

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very poor
- ☐ I have never tried to contact a module tutor
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Please rate the OVERALL accessibility, availability, and response time for your PERSONAL TUTOR. * *Required*

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very poor
- ☐ Have never tried to contact a module tutor
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Please rate the OVERALL support you have received from OTHER EHU departments (careers, catalyst, FM, student support, etc) since the start of this semester. If you have not required any of the below listed offers, please tick not applicable. * *Required*

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very poor
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Please indicate where you live * *Required*

- ☐ On campus
- ☐ Private student accommodation
- ☐ At home (parents)
- ☐ At home (own/ with partner/children)
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Please share how you usually travel to campus AND how long a single (one direction) journey takes? * *Required*

- ☐ I walk to campus (living on campus)
- ☐ I walk to campus (living off campus)
- ☐ I cycle to campus
- ☐ I use public transport train/bus/tram
- ☐ I drive by car/motorcycle or car-share
- ☐ prefer not to say

How long is your usual commute to campus?

- ☐ <10 minutes
- ☐ 10-20 minutes
- ☐ 20-30 minutes
- ☐ 30-40 minutes
- ☐ 40-50 minutes
- ☐ 50-60 minutes
- ☐ >1 hour

Many students have a care role for children, siblings, parents, elderly or disabled relatives. During the Covid-19 pandemic care responsibilities increased with access to other support being limited/restricted. Please let us know if you are a carer and select from the list below: * *Required*

- ☐ I am not a carer
- ☐ I have a child/children (below the age of 12 years)
- ☐ I have a child/children (older than 12 years of age)
- ☐ I am a carer for my sibling(s) (below the age of 12 years)
- ☐ I am a carer for my sibling(s) (older than 12 years of age)
- ☐ I care for a parent(s)/elderly/disabled relative
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Working from home was challenging for us all, especially when you share your accommodation and/or have caring responsibilities. Following the return to face-to-face teaching, is your learning being impacted by any residual restrictions as we navigate our way through the pandemic? Please tick all which have affected your learning since the start of this academic year. * *Required*

- ☐ Childcare not back to pre-pandemic levels
- ☐ Isolation (due to awaiting test)
- ☐ Isolation (due to positive test)
- ☐ Adult care duties support/assistance not back to pre-pandemic levels
- ☐ Loss/reduced of employment
- ☐ There are no residual restrictions impacting my learning
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Public transport disruptions

Has there been anything else that affects your learning this academic year?

Overall, how would you rate your mental wellbeing THIS SEMESTER? * *Required*

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very poor
- ☐ Prefer not to say

How would you say your mental health this semester has changed from last semester?

- ☐ Large improvement
- ☐ Small improvement
- ☐ Unchanged
- ☐ Small decline
- ☐ Large decline
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What factors have influenced this change in mental health?

- ☐ More stress
- ☐ Less stress
- ☐ More support
- ☐ Less support
- ☐ Larger workload
- ☐ Smaller workload
- ☐ Outside factors
- ☐ Module choices

☐ Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

Do you believe the Covid-19 pandemic has had (or still has) a negative impact on your overall mental wellbeing? * *Required*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Don't know / not so sure myself

Have you ever/ever considered contacting someone in relation to your Wellbeing? Tick all which apply. * *Required*

- ☐ I have already reached out
- ☐ Biology Admin team
- ☐ My personal tutor
- ☐ Year coordinator at the department
- ☐ One tutor at the department I feel comfortable with
- ☐ A class tutor (MRes, PhD/GTA) I feel comfortable with
- ☐ EHU Services
- ☐ Non-EHU (External) service e.g. NHS
- ☐ I did not know whom to contact
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ N/A

If you have previously contacted someone in regards to your wellbeing, do you believe they helped?

- ☐ Yes - By a large amount
- ☐ Yes - By a small amount
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ No change
- ☐ No - they made it slightly worse
- ☐ No - they made it massively worse

Your Personal Tutor can always provide you first-line assistance whenever needed. Furthermore, Edge Hill University can offer you a range of tailored support options. Please indicate which you have ever accessed or know of: * *Required*

- ☐ Catalyst Helpdesk
- ☐ Campus Support
- ☐ Wellbeing Team
- ☐ Inclusion Team – support for those with disabilities
- ☐ Learning services – support for those with SpLD

Is there somewhere/someone specific you go to for assistance?

Thinking ahead to your graduation, do you think the pandemic has changed your perception of your dream job and what you will do next? * *Required*

- ☐ My post-graduation plans have not changed
- ☐ I never had any post-graduation plans
- ☐ I am now unsure about my future
- ☐ My plans have now changed
- ☐ There aren't any jobs for what I want to do
- ☐ With the pandemic there are now more jobs in my dream role than ever
- ☐ I prefer not to say

These are extraordinary times. Teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic has been challenging for us all. We would love to hear from you how we can improve teaching. Any ideas, suggestions, or comments you have, please provide them below. *May I ask you provide constructive feedback. Both, positive and negative feedback should be voiced in a respectful and polite manner. Do not discuss other students here.*

Thank you for your consideration

Thank you for your consideration. May I ask why did you chose not to participate?

- ☐ No incentive to participate
- ☐ I can't be bothered reading the consent form
- ☐ We have too many surveys to answer
- ☐ I'd rather not say
- ☐ I didn't understand why/how my data will be used

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is invaluable and very much appreciated.

Final page

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is invaluable and very much appreciated.
