



DIGI-HE

Supporting European universities in their strategic approaches to digital learning

The DIGI-HE project explores different ways higher education institutions can boost their strategic approaches to digitally enhanced learning and teaching and enhance their capacity.

The goal is to encourage and support a reflection on institutional strategy development and enhancement, through good practice sharing and peer learning among university leadership, and to contribute to community building. The coincidence of the Covid-19 crisis has made these activities even more pertinent and urgent.

The project provides:

- comparative data on the state of play of digitally enhanced learning and teaching at higher education institutions across Europe;
- a review of self-assessment instruments for improving the institutional digital ecosystem;
- the organisation of two cycles of thematic peer groups;
- a workshop series on self-assessment instruments and a self-paced training resource on the institutional self-assessment of digitally enhanced learning and teaching.

DIGI HE

<https://eua.eu/101-projects/772-digi-he.html>

About the project

- Three-year project: January 2020–December 2022 (extended to April 2023)
- Objective
 - Encouraging self-reflection on digitally enhanced learning & teaching at European HEIs
 - Strengthening strategic approaches to DELT and capacity building

Partnership of 5 institutions

European University Association (EUA)

Dublin City University, Ireland (DCU)

Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, Germany (DHBW)

Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania (VMU)

University of Jyväskylä, Finland (JU)

Associate partners

Irish Universities Association (IUA)

European Distance and E-learning Network (EDEN Digital Learning Europe)

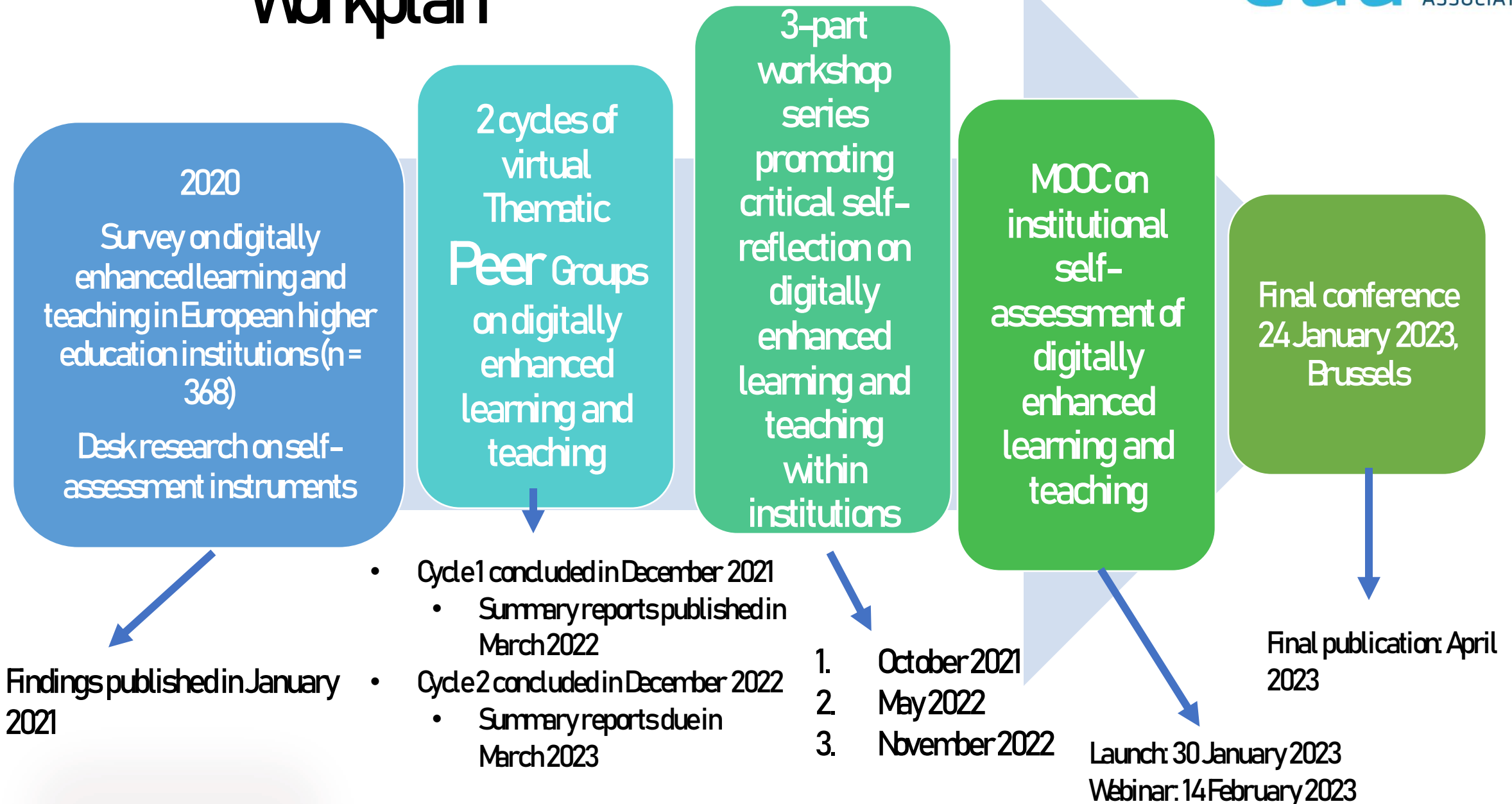
European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)



VYTAUTAS
MAGNUS
UNIVERSITY
M C M X X I I



DIGIHE Workplan



Objectives of Thematic Peer Groups (TPG)

- Share with the European HEcommunity – via reports & at the European Learning and Teaching Forum
- Recommendations for institutions (& policy makers)
- Reflect on enhancement of institutional approaches
- Identify promising practices and challenges on the given theme
- Call for participation to institutional leadership responsible for learning and teaching



Foster
community
building



Bottom-up
approach

Cross-cutting findings – first round of TPGs

- Strategy and organisational culture
- Curriculum and assessment
- International partnerships

- The Covid-19 experience offers valuable lessons for the future of DELT.
- Digital tools must be used in an intelligent, appropriate and safe manner in order for DELT to be delivered effectively, which requires adequate support for staff and students.
- A collaborative approach, involving staff, students and stakeholders is required to effectively deliver DELT in HEIs.
- A culture shift is required to fully embrace and exploit the advantages of DELT.
- Need to make higher education more flexible, student-centred, equitable and inclusive.
- Useful measures = training opportunities, validation of educators' digital skills, communities of practice, support of innovative initiatives and dissemination of good practices
- Helpful for boosting ownership and help avoiding "guideline fatigue".
- Important to celebrate "early adopters" and incremental transformation but also ensure a solid strategy for DELT is in place. Institutional self-assessment is a vital first step in this process.

Cross-cutting findings – second round of TPGs

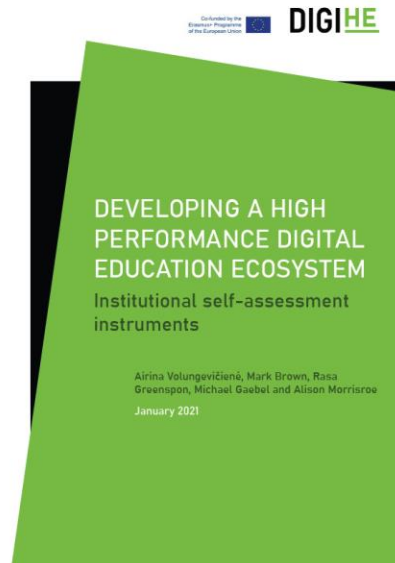
- Digitally competent teachers in designing quality learning environments
- Collaborative teaching practice
- Needs and wellbeing of students and staff

- Academics experience difficulties managing workload - a trend which has been exacerbated by digitalisation.
- Lack of time to innovate in teaching, develop the skills needed to deliver digitally enhanced learning and teaching and to focus on wellbeing.
- Lack of recognition for and investment in digitally enhanced learning and teaching in comparison to research.
- Despite the dramatic uptake of DELT during the pandemic, the added value of digitally enhanced learning and teaching may not be clear to all academics and therefore they may still be reluctant to engage in it.

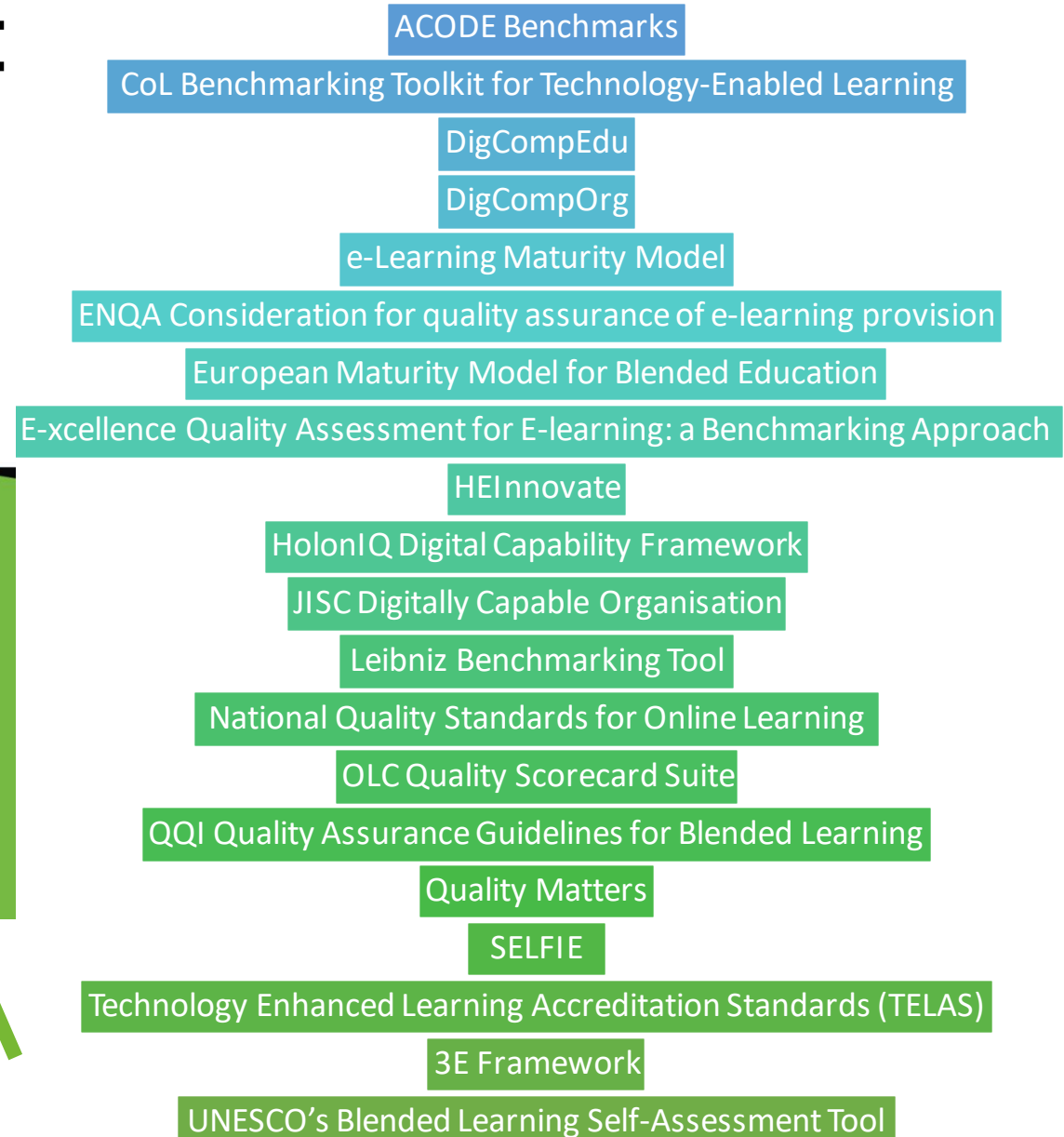
- More transparent work allocation models needed which reflect the amount of time actually spent delivering DELT and development of digital competences.
- DELT needs to be embedded in institutional strategies and action plans in order to be fully embraced by HEIs. L&T needs to be considered in the assessment of academics and taken into consideration for career progression to reach parity of esteem with research.
- A transparent and evidence-based approach is needed to validate and sustain digitally enhanced learning and teaching.

Desk research on self-assessment instruments

- Led by VMU and EUA
- 23 instruments reviewed between May and September 2020
- Each instrument – 2 reviewers
- Purpose, features, resources needed, conditions to be fulfilled, theoretical perspective, examples of use, target group
 - But also strengths & limitations
- Not all evident from the information provided by the creators



Inventory report published in January 2021



“Developing a high-performance digital education ecosystem” : three-part workshop series

- Workshop one – 19 October 2021: Strategy and organisational culture
- Workshop two – 24 May 2022: Institutional self-assessment
- Workshop three – 14 November 2022: Assessment of institutional approaches and ambitions beyond the pandemic

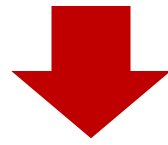
42 participants

33 participants

36 participants

Pre-recorded presentations made by DCU, VMJ and JMU on their experiences with self-assessment instruments





Video message from Dublin City University, Ireland : Reflections on an Institutional-Level Benchmarking of Digital Learning using the ACOE Benchmarks

Video
23 December 2022

[view more](#)

Video message from Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania, Self-Assessment Group on the Digitisation of Academic Activities

Video
23 December 2022

[view more](#)

Video message on experience with E-xcellence Quality Assessment for E-learning – Jyväskylä Open University, Finland

Video
05 December 2022

[view more](#)

Strategy and organisational culture

Report
18 March 2022

This report outlines the conclusions of the Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Group "Strategy ...

[Read more](#)

<https://eua.eu/101-projects/772-digi-he.html>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7OIbpsVxUc>

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NEW

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The screenshot shows the FutureLearn interface. At the top, there's a navigation menu with 'WEEK 1' and 'WEEK 2' sections. The main content area features a large image of the Vytautas Magnus University building. Below the image, the title 'Case Study 4 - Vytautas Magnus University' is displayed. The text below the title reads: 'In this step, we explore the example of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU), Lithuania, an institution which has worked on their digitalisation strategy over the past ten years.' There are navigation buttons for 'Previous', 'Mark as complete', and 'Next'.

In this step, we explore the example of **Vytautas Magnus University (VMU)**, Lithuania, an institution which has worked on their digitalisation strategy over the past ten years.

Six months into the COVID-19 pandemic, the institution decided that it was necessary to assess the outcomes of online and blended learning being mainstreamed throughout the institution, as well as to discuss future priorities and lessons which were learned.

In order to do so, VMU established a self-assessment group on the digitalisation of academic activities. One of the key aspects of this exercise was to involve a broad cross-section of the academic community and to agree on which direction to take. This in turn entailed identification of the items to include in the institution's strategy on digitalisation, to respond to the academic community's needs, using a collaborative approach.

The self-assessment exercise consisted of a SWOT analysis using the **DigCompOrg** framework. The topics assessed and applied to their analysis, among others, included the following:

- Virtual mobility of students and staff,
- Digitalisation of mobility processes,
- Recognition of virtual joint-degree programmes and virtual student traineeships,
- Use of micro-credentials,
- Digital recognition of qualifications and competences,
- Career development courses for people working abroad and migrants.

- **Develop** online open studies,
- **Improve** the environment for online studies,
- **Apply** the latest smart technology,
- **Foster** the university's international co-operation, such as European alliances,
- **Prepare** the institution for the Digital Transformation.

This self-assessment exercise was important to increase the quality of study programmes, develop the capacity of their teaching staff, and assess the satisfaction of academic and institutional activity. Its findings led to concrete actions such as increasing the number of distance programmes as well as the availability of formal and informal online studies.

For example, several important strategic items have been established under the strategic objective to aspire to community sustainability and synergy, harmony and consolidation. A further major objective was "To increase the innovativeness, flexibility, and accessibility of studies addressing the needs of today's society and building the society of the future", described through aspects including the following:

- **Development** of online and open studies,
- **Increasing** the range of modern online environment and smart technologies, preparation for micro-credentials,
- **Establishing** lifelong learning services through open learning opportunities, digital assessment and recognition of competences,
- **Expanding** teacher professional collaboration models in digital space.

These are just a small selection, with the plan in its entirety accessible [here](#).

ip members expressed appreciation of the importance transformation within the university. In particular, e crucial for successful continuation of online learning the pandemic, e.g., a peer-assessment methodology quality assurance of online and blended courses maintenance and development of virtual learning port systems established for teachers and students.

he dynamic nature of self-assessment, the group quite serious challenges lie ahead, such as introducing w formats of open and digitally enhanced learning ls. These each require careful and thoughtful research enabled by collaboration and networking in Europe and beyond.

We encourage you to watch the below (5 minute) video in which **Prof. dr. Airina Volungevičienė** and **Prof. dr. Lina Kaminskienė** present, alongside colleagues, an overview of the progress that was achieved as part of the DIGI-HE's first workshop, on Developing a high-performance digital education eco-system: Strategy and organisational culture.



This is an additional video, hosted on YouTube.

LEARNING & TEACHING PAPER #17

Strategy and organisational culture

Thematic Peer Group Report

Chair: Diana Andone, Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania

Coordinators: Mark Brown & Helene Peterbauer

March 2022

https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/eua%20tpg%20report_%20strategy%20and%20organizational%20culture.pdf

Table 1 - Summary of top institutional challenges and actions taken by group members to address individual institutional challenges

DOMAIN	CHALLENGE	ACTION
Vision, leadership and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Establishing the current state of practice, how to develop the right type of strategy and rethink teaching approaches for best practices ♦ Promoting leadership, quality assurance and self-assessment ♦ Defying delivery modes and exploring partnerships ♦ Ensuring quality and revising the quality assurance framework to support new models 	<p>Re-envisioning the future of examinations</p> <p>Written exams were previously held in rented rooms at other higher education institutions. As a result of the pandemic, there are now many fundamental questions about what requirements are attached to an exam and what the students' performance actually consists of. As a result of this cultural change, new concepts are now being experimented with. This means that institutionalised structures are also concerned with why traditions endure and how other forms of learning and assessment can be made possible.</p> <p><i>FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany</i></p>

EUA Thematic Peer Groups – mid-term results

1. TPG 1 – Strategy and Organizational Culture

Chair: Diana Adone, Politechnica University of Timisoara, Romania

Key Insights

First of all, it is important for the university to create and to have a **digital education strategy**.

Secondly, it is important for the educational institution **to develop a transformative teaching and learning culture**. It is not enough to focus only on digital aspects, e.g., tools, space, digital elements, etc. There is a need to focus on the transformative power and to embrace a paradigm of shift which is based on a digital ecosystem of the university which would allow to model, support, develop and integrate the digital education at all levels.

Finally, the need for **collaboration at all levels of learning and teaching and between all the actors and all the stakeholders involved** is necessary for the development of new organizational strategy.

Challenges

- the development of strategy and insufficient leadership have been identified as key challenges
- all stakeholders at all levels have to be involved, as there is a need to establish new communities which would connect to improve digital learning and teaching
- there is a need to focus on students as well, as they play an important role in digital strategy and can significantly contribute to improving the community
- digital spaces, tools, and resources are vital for digitalization, however, without a clear strategy or culture, the digital transformation is impossible

EUA Thematic Peer Groups – mid-term results

2. TPG 2 – Curriculum and Assessment

Chair: Stephen Rutherford, University of Cardiff, UK

Key Insights

The pandemic year was quite challenging, yet beneficial to the field of education, as it re-shaped the entire process of teaching and learning. To begin with, in terms of curriculum, the idea of using a blended learning approach, i.e., a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous activities, became very popular. Also, the educators started using things such as open questions or open book exams that are supposed to test higher order thinking rather than just how well students can memorize the information.

Another key insight was pointed out that staff needed a lot of training and support throughout the digitalization process. However, it is not enough just to provide them with training, there is a need to change their approach and mindset towards the use of technologies in education. In the meantime, the same should be applicable to students, as their education and experience must be properly appreciated.

Finally, the active involvement of students as partners in the development process of assessment and curricula. It is rather beneficial for students to be involved in such a process as they are the main recipients, and we, as educators, can benefit by seeing their point of view. In such a way, we can design a teaching and learning process that is beneficial and useful for the students.

Challenges

- The first one was formulated as: “what’s next?” What practices and experiences educational institutions, and all stakeholders, should keep and what needs to be discarded? How educators should implement these good practices in their daily work and adapt teaching processes when going back to a more face-to-face mode. It became obvious that changes in curriculum design are inevitable. However, support for and empowerment of teachers are vital for the change to happen.
- Inefficient integration of assessment practices into teaching activities. Attitude towards assessment is rather conservative as it is seen as an end of semester activity and its purpose is to check whether students understood something or not. However, the potential of assessment to improve learning is taken for granted. As a result, there is a necessity to re-develop and to re-define assessment literacy in both students and staff members so they can understand the purpose of assessment and feedback, and in what ways they can be used to facilitate overall student development.
- The issue of equity was raised. It is necessary to ensure equity between teaching and research, and students of different abilities, students from different backgrounds, or students with disabilities. It is important to make sure that everybody can participate and have equal opportunities

TPG 3– International Partnerships

Chair: Pastora Martinez Samper, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain

Key insights

The future of international and internationalized higher education is digital, including blended and fully online teaching modes.

Digitally enhanced internationalization offers new opportunities, including widening access to international offers and experiences.

A digitally enhanced ecosystem contributes to facilitating internationalization processes and making them more sustainable.

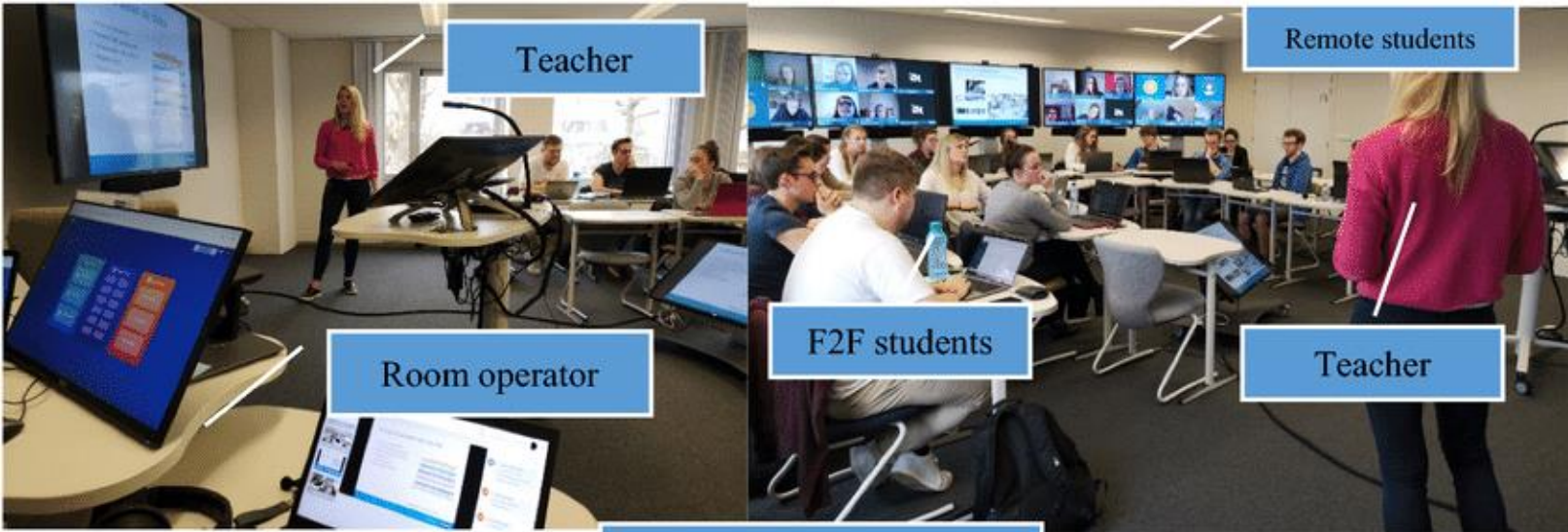
Moreover, it is assumed that digitally enhanced higher education will contribute to the establishment of an online global classroom and global universities. A global classroom can incorporate a global context as well as connect teachers with students from all around the world.

Finally, virtual mobility was gaining momentum during the lockdown.

Challenges

- A lack of digital skills and competences in students, teachers, and administrative staff has been indicated as one of the key challenges. To illustrate, the TPG 3 members did a survey across their own institutions and the results indicated that 70% of the educational institutions listed insufficient levels of digital skills and competences as one of the main challenges that needs to be addressed in the future.
- The second challenge was related to cultural issues and mindset. There is a need to discuss the perception of the e-learning methodologies during the pandemic. Also, there is a need for a change in mindset to develop a digital ecosystem and to ensure a smooth transition from emergency remote teaching.
- The third challenge was related to the regulatory issues at national and international levels. There is a need to discuss the issues of international collaborations, not only at EU level but also develop a dialog with other continents.
- The final challenge was indicated as collaboration. In addition to well-known challenges regarding collaboration, when it comes to digitally enhanced learning and teaching, technical issues become relevant.

-



Teacher

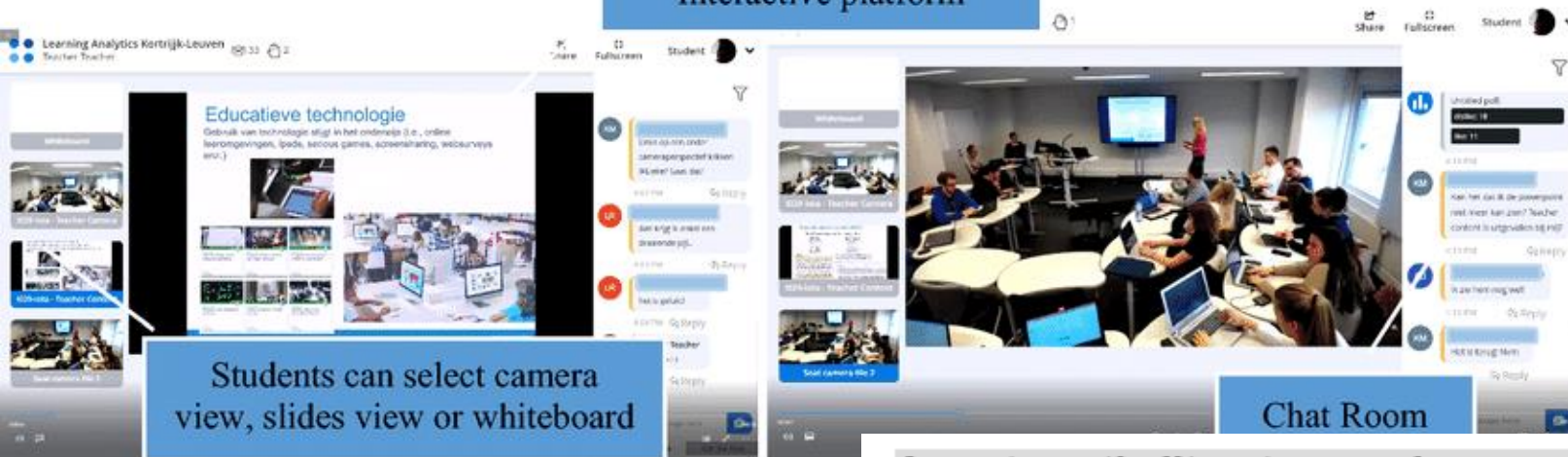
Remote students

Room operator

F2F students

Teacher

Interactive platform



Students can select camera view, slides view or whiteboard

Chat Room

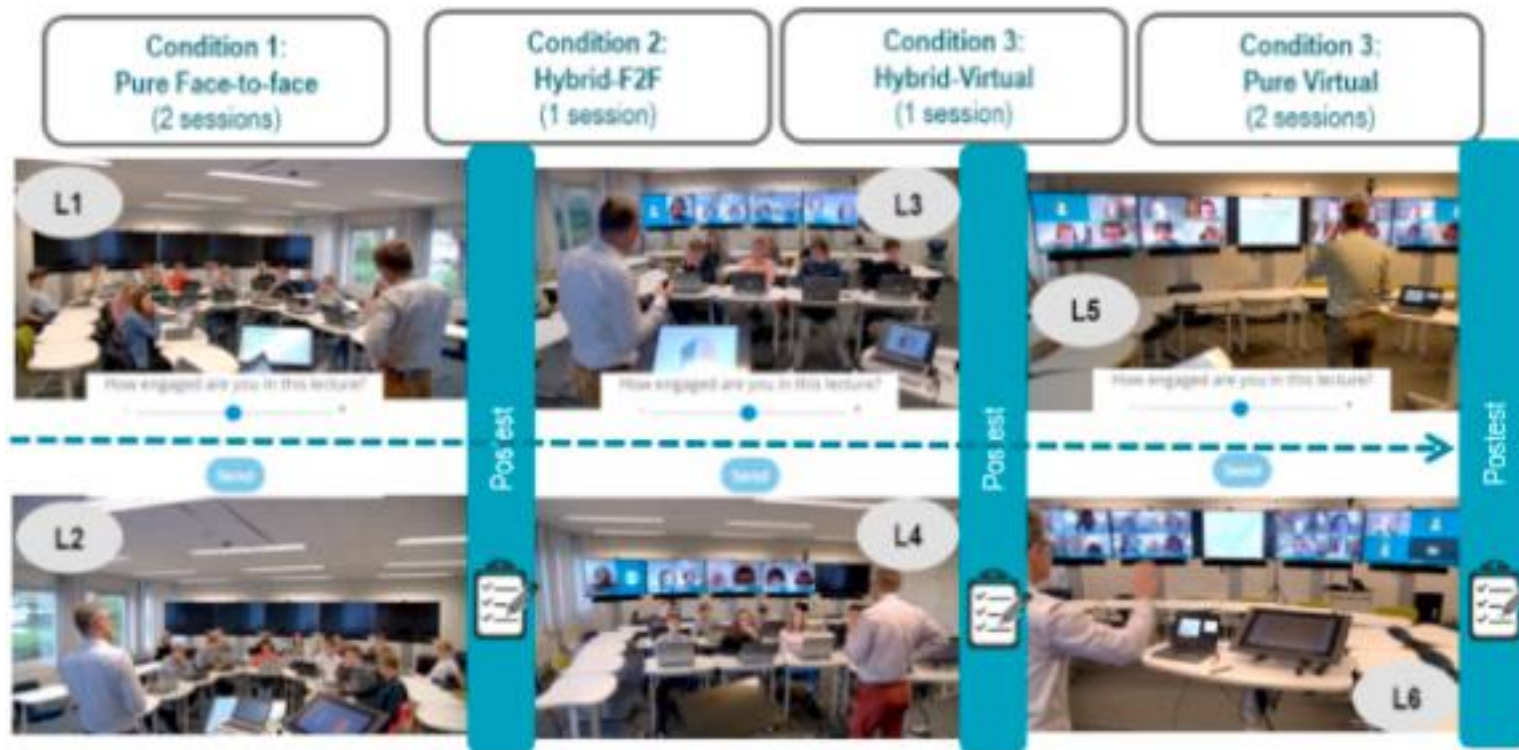
A systematic literature review on synchronous hybrid learning: gaps identified

Article Full-text available Oct 2020

Annelies Raes · Loulou Detienne · Ine Windey · Fien Depaep

A systematic literature review on synchronous hybrid learning: gaps identified

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Hybrid-virtual-classroom-including-both-F2F-and-remote-individual-students-upper_fig2_337618381



Learning and instruction in the hybrid virtual classroom: An investigation of students' engagement and the effect of quizzes

Annelies Raes ^{a, b}, ¹, Pieter Vanneste ^{a, b, 1}, Marieke Pieters ^a, Ine Windey ^{a, b}, Wim Van Den Noortgate ^{a, b}, Fien Depaep ^{a, b}

relatedness to peers, the hybrid-virtual setting is found to be the worst setting regarding experienced relatedness to peers
students were least motivated when participating remotely in the hybrid setting

when all students participate virtually, the intrinsic motivation is higher

remote learners indeed feel a significant sense of distance between remote students and their teachers and face-to-face classmates

students' engagement is especially low in the hybrid setting can probably be explained by the [Social Identity Theory \(Tajfel, 1979\)](#), stating that the group which people belong to is an important source of social identity, a sense of belonging to the social world