



How Pandemic-Era Changes Shaped Student Learning and Attitudes in Higher Education

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Abstract

This study examined changes in students' perceptions and attitudes towards learning in Higher Education following the implementation of altered learning formats, including digital and online interventions prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. An anonymous questionnaire-based survey with 23 open- and closed-ended questions was designed for students on the MPharmacy and BSc Pharmaceutical Science courses at Kingston University London, yielding interesting insights. The impact of students' protected characteristics, such as age, gender, and ethnicity, on their perceptions of learning was also evaluated. Following the survey, both qualitative and quantitative data were subjected to thematic and statistical analyses. Key results showed that around half of the 202 students sampled (48%) felt there was a gap in their knowledge due to the altered mode of teaching and learning during the pandemic, which had negatively impacted their current academic performance. However, 59% of students felt their mental health and well-being improved with increased use of digital and online learning resources. Students favoured more open-book-style end-of-module examinations (58%), more formative and fewer summative assessments (38%), and more coursework assessments and fewer examinations (46%). This comprehensive research has offered deep insights and identified areas that need further enhancement of student-compliant teaching and assessments, which would in turn promote progression and attainment.

Keywords: assessments; digital learning; mental health; pandemic; student perceptions.