Emergency Remote Teaching Student Experience Survey 2020

Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching

UCT ERT Student Experience Survey 2020

Final report, 25 September 2020

Contents

1 Context and Purpose 1

2 Survey delivery and responses 1

2.1 Cohort 1

2.2 Questions 2

2.3 Delivery and response rate 3

2.4 EDL Students 3

2.5 Selection bias 4

2.6 Representivity 4

3 Survey outputs and communication 8

3.1 Publications 8

3.2 Data sets 8

3.3 Communication to UCT constituencies 8

3.4 UCT News article 8

3.5 Social media 9

3.6 Vula home page 10

4 Interpretation and notable findings 10

4.1 Baseline and comparative data 10

4.2 Mental health 10

4.3 Course workload 11

4.4 Course site design 13

4.5 Assessments 14

4.6 Social connectedness 14

4.7 Data 15

4.8 Video content 15

4.9 Synchronous tools 16

4.10 Readiness for Term 3 16

4.11 Positive findings 17

5 Differential impact on students 17
5.1 Students who left residences 17
5.2 Extended Degree Programme Students 21
5.3 Challenges faced 22
6 Acknowledgements 23
7 References 23
Appendix A: Responses by question 24
Appendix B: Questionnaire 62

1 Context and Purpose

UCT's Teaching Online Task Team (TOTT) requested CILT to design and deliver an online survey of undergraduate student experiences of emergency remote teaching (ERT) during the 2nd term of 2020 (April to July 2020). The Postgraduate Online Task Team (POTT) agreed to extend the survey to postgraduate students in coursework programmes.

The purpose of the survey was to inform and improve the design of courses taught online during the second semester (August to November 2020), and improve support for students where possible. The survey is thus a form of institutional research and follows an exploratory research design rather than setting out to confirm or disprove specific hypotheses.

The survey and research proposal were reviewed and approved by the CHED Research Ethics Committee, and permission to access students was granted by the Department of Student Affairs.

The analysis and dissemination strategy focused on providing immediately actionable insights, given the short interval between the first and second semesters.

2 Survey delivery and responses

2.1 Cohort

The survey was targeted at a total of 22328 students:

- undergraduate students enrolled in at least one course on 28 April 2020 (16981 students), and
- postgraduate students enrolled in identified taught postgraduate programmes, at PGDip, Honours and Masters level (5347 students).

For the Faculties of EBE, Health Sciences, Law, Humanities and Science, all postgraduate programmes with coursework components were included. For the Faculty of Commerce, specific postgraduate programmes were identified for inclusion by Heads of Department:

Faculty	**Postgraduate programmes surveyed**
Commerce	CG010ACC01, CG012BUS01, CG015BUS07, CG028BUS12, CG030BUS03, CG040INF02, CG040INF04, CG041BUS25, CG042BUS01, CH001ACC01, CH001 BUS01, CH001 BUS09, CH001 ECO01, CH001 FTX11, CH001INF01, CH022ECO09, CH022INF01, CH023ECO09, CM031ECO01, CM031ECO05, CM031ECO08, CM031ECO12, CM033ECO16, CD001INF01
EBE	All PGDip, All Honours, Masters **except** EM023, EM025

Faculty	Postgraduate programmes surveyed
Health Sciences	PGDip, Honours or Masters; students in MH002, MH003, MH004, MM006, MM012, MM017, MM018, MM025, MM033, MM034, MM035, MM054, MM055, MM166, MB014, MZ002, MZ090, MG007, MG009, MG010, MG011, MG015, MG017, MG019, MG021, MG024, MG026, MG027, MG036, MG038, MG045, MG055, MG056
Humanities	All PGDip, All Honours, Masters in HM008, HM042, HM041, HM006, HM043, HM044, HM047, HM013, HM042, HM014
Law	All PGDip, Honours, Masters **except** LM001, LM011, LZ088
Science	Honours or Masters students in SH001, SM004, SM005

2.2 Questions

The survey questions explored the personal circumstances of students (living conditions, challenges, access to Internet, time availability), perceptions of readiness for online learning, experience of courses, online content and the online environment, the course workload and assessments, social and academic interactions and use of support services.

The survey contained 65 questions, of which 16 were text entry boxes (12 standalone questions, and 4 questions with Other options). Here is a print view of the online survey.

These questions required answers:

- Faculty
- Level of study
- Year of study
- Living in a residence during term 1

All other questions were optional.

These questions were conditionally shown to students based on earlier question responses:

- Are you on an extended degree programme? [level = undergraduate]
- Orientation questions [participated in orientation = yes]
- Transcripts and captions [videos had captions/transcripts = Usually or Sometimes]
- Accessibility questions [disability which requires accessible content = Yes]
- Questions about projects [Faculty = EBE]

2.3 Delivery and response rate

The survey was delivered on Qualtrics, an online survey platform, to a total of **22328** students.

Students were invited to participate through a personalized survey link emailed on 2 July 2020, with reminders emailed to students who had not completed the survey nor opted out on 9 July 2020 and 13 July 2020. The survey closed on the morning of 15 July 2020.

Activity analytics for Vula (UCT's online learning environment) show that 99% of students in the target group (22110) had logged to Vula at least once in the 6 weeks preceding the survey period, so can be assumed to have had sufficient Internet access to receive the survey invitation email and take the survey online.

5018 students started the survey (clicked on the survey link), with a completion rate of 76% which was **3818** responses. Incomplete responses were discarded. The overall response rate was **17%.**

Qualtrics estimated a typical time of 13.9 minutes for respondents to complete the survey, with the suggested ideal survey target time being 7 minutes. The actual median time taken to complete the survey was 15 minutes.

While the response rate of 17% is low compared to the much shorter April 2020 Student Access Survey (82.9% overall response rate and 96% for undergraduates), it is closer to the 27% response rate from the September 2017 Student Access Survey which was delivered online on Vula over a 2 week period.

2.4 EDL Students

The survey did not disaggregate or explicitly investigate the experience of students who received learning materials in print or offline digital form during term 2 through the Emergency Distance Learning (EDL) programme:

Faculty	EDL Students
Humanities	217
Commerce	90
EBE	74
Health Science	24
Law	8
Science	12
Total	**425**

Access records to Vula for term 2 suggest that around half of these students did have some level of Internet access, and therefore may have responded to the survey.

2.5 Selection bias

The following factors may have lowered the response rates or introduced different forms of selection or response bias:

- The survey was available from 2 to 15 July 2020, which substantially overlapped with the period set aside for term 1 examinations or final assessments (29 June to 10 July).
- Students with poorer Internet access may have been less likely to take the survey. In addition, Qualtrics is not a zero-rated site, and so students may have been unwilling to use their data allocation or incur additional costs to take the survey.
- The survey was relatively long, which may have contributed to the 24% non-completion rate (students who accessed the survey but did not submit it).
- The survey was only distributed by email. Email and communications overload is a factor for students, and some may not have read the emails or ignored them.
- The survey invitation email was sent from a Qualtrics non-UCT email address and included a link to a non-UCT URL. A number of students queried whether the survey was legitimate, and other students may have opted not to click on the link out of cybersecurity concerns about whether it was fraudulent.
- Students with strongly negative or strongly positive experiences may have been more likely to respond to the survey invitation.

Survey results should thus not be regarded as generalizable to the entire student population.

2.6 Representivity

These survey questions required answers:

- Faculty
- Level of study
- Year of study
- Were you living in a UCT residence during term 1?

and it is therefore possible to compare the response distributions for these descriptors with the target cohort.

Undergraduate and Honours students are slightly over-represented in the survey responses, with PGDip and Masters students somewhat under-represented.

Level of study (academic career)	**Survey responses**	**Cohort size**	**Response rate**
Undergraduate (including MBChB)	3144	16981	18.5%
PGDip	175	1249	14.0%

Level of study (academic career)	Survey responses	Cohort size	Response rate
Honours	254	1455	17.4%
Masters	245	2513	9.7%
PhD and Other	0 *	130	
Total	**3818**	**22328**	**17.1%**

** A PhD programme in Commerce included 73 students in the survey cohort, but the response options for the required programme level question did not include PhD as an option. It is not known therefore whether PhD students did not proceed or selected another option. The Other category here, 57 students, is non-degree postgraduate registrations (occasional students), who may have selected the level of study appropriate to their enrolment.*

By Faculty, Humanities and Science are slightly over-represented, with EBE and Commerce slightly under-represented.

Faculty & Level	Survey responses	Cohort size	Response rate
Commerce	828	5353	15.5%
EBE	554	3919	14.1%
Health Sciences	514	2905	17.7%
Humanities	1328	6805	19.5%
Law	160	1014	15.8%
Science	434	2332	18.6%
Total	**3818**	**22328**	**17.1%**

By Faculty and level, undergraduate students in Health Sciences, Humanities and Science are over-represented, while postgraduates in EBE and Health Sciences are somewhat under-represented.

Faculty & Level	Survey responses	Cohort size	Response rate
Commerce UG	683	4146	16.5%
Commerce PG	145	1207	12.0%
EBE UG	483	3125	15.5%
EBE PG	71	794	8.9%

Faculty & Level	Survey responses	Cohort size	Response rate
Health Sciences UG	425	2020	21.0%
Health Sciences PG	89	885	10.1%
Humanities UG	1076	5269	20.4%
Humanities PG	252	1536	16.4%
Law UG	106	589	18.0%
Law PG	54	425	12.7%
Science UG	371	1832	20.3%
Science PG	63	500	12.6%
Total	**3818**	**22328**	**17.1%**

By academic year of study for undergraduate students, students in later years are slightly over-represented:

Year of study	Survey responses	Cohort size	Response rate
1	1040	5775	18.0%
2	892	5132	17.4%
3	729	3979	18.3%
4	364	1649	22.1%
5	105	233	45.1%
6 or above	14	194	7.2%
Unknown		19	0%
Total	**3144**	**16981**	**18.5%**

Students who were in UCT residences during term 1 are significantly over-represented in the survey responses:

In residence (term 1)	Survey responses	Cohort size	Response rate
Yes	1798	7413	24.3%
No	2020	14915	13.5%
Total	**3818**	**22328**	**17.1%**

Undergraduate students were also presented with the option to identify whether they were in an Extended Degree Program (ADP students), which applies to 5 Faculties:

Faculty	Extended degree programme codes
Commerce	CB011, CB018, CB015, CB020
EBE	EB801, EB802, EB805, EB809, EB810, EB811, EB819, EB822
Health Sciences	MB016, MB017, MB018, MB019, MB020
Humanities	HB061, HB062
Science	SB016

The Faculty of Commerce also has Augmented programmes, which are not included in the definition of extended degree for this purpose, although it is unclear whether students in a Commerce Augmented Degree programme would have responded yes to “Are you on an extended degree programme?”.

Extended Degree students are over-represented in the survey responses in all Faculties except Health Sciences:

Faculty	Survey Responses	Extended Degree cohort size	Response rate	Faculty UG response rate
Commerce	151	541	27.9%	16.5%
EBE	124	597	20.8%	15.5%
Health Sciences	23	122	18.9%	21.0%
Humanities	316	1132	27.9%	20.4%
Science	80	300	26.7%	20.3%
Total	**694**	**2692**	**25.8%**	**18.5%**

3 Survey outputs and communication

3.1 Publications

Survey analysis has focused mainly on actionable insights, where foregrounding student experiences and difficulties could improve course design and student support for the second semester. The survey builds on and corroborates findings from the April 2020 Student Access Survey, and the results underscore the importance of design choices which support equity, inclusion and flexibility for students.

Five outputs from the ERT Student Experience Survey were published prior to this report:

1. Summaries of all closed responses (UCT only, 15 July 2020)
2. Interactive PowerBI Dashboard for closed responses (UCT only, 21 July 2020)
3. Insights from the ERT Student Experience Survey (public, 24 July 2020)
4. UCT ERT Student Experience Survey Comments (UCT only, 29 July 2020)
5. Tips for ERT from UCT Students (public, 25 August 2020)

The interactive dashboard requires access through MS Teams and a PowerBI license.

The "Insights" publication highlighted survey findings which were immediately actionable for course convenors and lecturers for second term teaching, with practical recommendations.

3.2 Data sets

Data sets of individual responses by Faculty have been provided to the Faculty representatives on TOTT (undergraduate) and POTT (postgraduate).

3.3 Communication to UCT constituencies

The survey publications were distributed to the UCT COVID-19 working groups:

- Teaching Online Task Team (undergraduate)
- Postgraduate Online Task Team
- Vulnerable Students Working Group

and advertised through the Remote Teaching Communities MS Teams site.

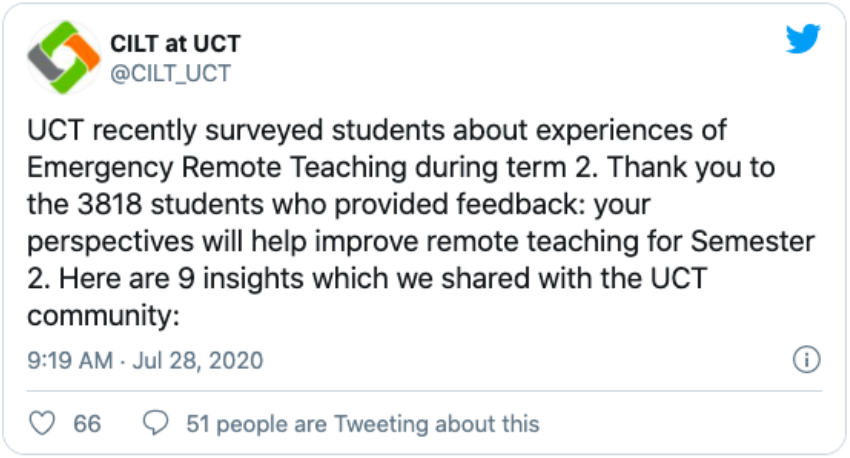
3.4 UCT News article

UCT News published a press release and article on the survey with extracts and a link to the Insights document on 5 August 2020: Survey reveals remote learning highs and lows

The press release was picked up by Radio 786, a local community radio station, which featured a news short item and interview about the survey on 6 August 2020.

3.5 Social media

CILT tweeted a thread on the main survey topics from the Insights document on 28 July 2020:



This tweet thread attracted widespread interest from a South African and international audience, attracting 10,834 impressions by 16 September 2020, as reported by Twitter analytics:

Impressions	10,834
Total engagements	879
Detail expands	693
Likes	66
Retweets	60
Profile clicks	55
Replies	5

The themes reported in the survey appear to have had wide resonance, which is an indication that the experience of UCT students is not unique but reflects the consequences of similar circumstances faced by students worldwide.

Tips for ERT from UCT Students was tweeted as a series of 4 infographics by CILT and ICTS, although these tweets attracted far less attention.

3.6 Vula home page

Infographics for Tips for ERT from UCT Students were placed in the image rotation on the Vula homepage, to maximise exposure for students, who are the primary audience for this publication

4 Interpretation and notable findings

4.1 Baseline and comparative data

As both the circumstances of the COVID-19 transition to Emergency Remote Teaching and the survey itself are unique, there is no baseline or comparative data which could be used to establish changes over time in responses to particular items.

The survey findings therefore need to be interpreted in absolute rather than relative terms, and not all findings are solely attributable to the circumstances brought about by COVID-19.

Some comparative data points are noted below for specific questions.

4.2 Mental health

Mental health emerges as a key concern, with 2518 students selecting “Mental health challenges (e.g. anxiety, stress, depression)” for the question “I faced the following challenges studying remotely”. This is 66% of all survey respondents, and 71% of respondents who answered the question.

By contrast, the UCT Science Faculty Student Experience Survey of returning students in February 2019 asked students “If you didn’t do as well as you hoped in any courses last year, [...] Why do you think you didn’t do well?” Of the 368 respondents, 39% selected “I experienced poor mental health” as a reason (and 36% for a similar 2018 survey).

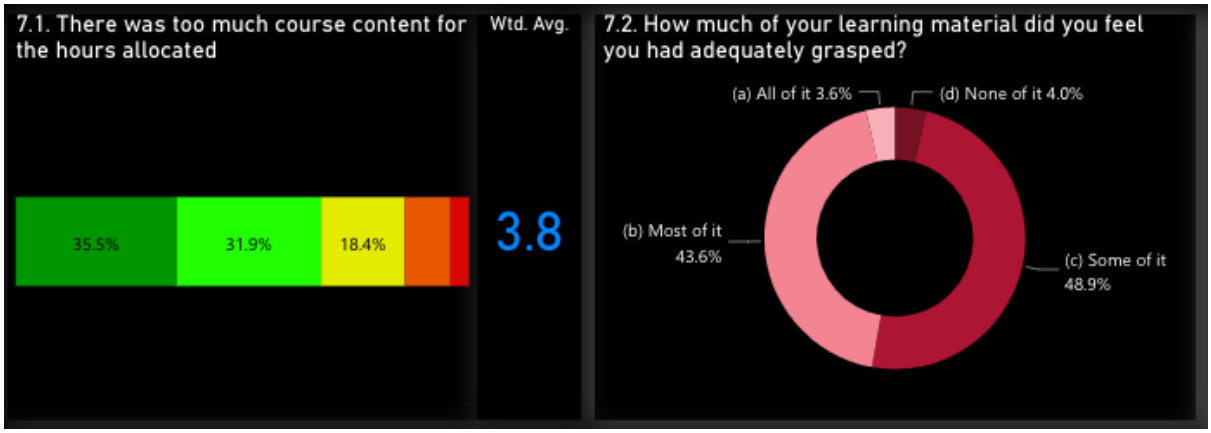
UCT's Student Wellness Service does maintain comparative year-on-year data, and the Director reported that for Semester 1 of 2020:

- the proportion of students honouring appointments with Student Wellness was much higher than usual
- academic issues were ranked second-highest in the list of clinical presentations, appearing in the top 5 issues for the first time and closely related to anxiety and depression (ranked 1 and 3)
- there was an increase in psychosocial issues arising from studying at home and family issues, in comparison to pre-pandemic statistics.

While the exam period is one of the most stressful times of year for students, it's likely that difficult personal circumstances and background stress from the pandemic were significant contributors.

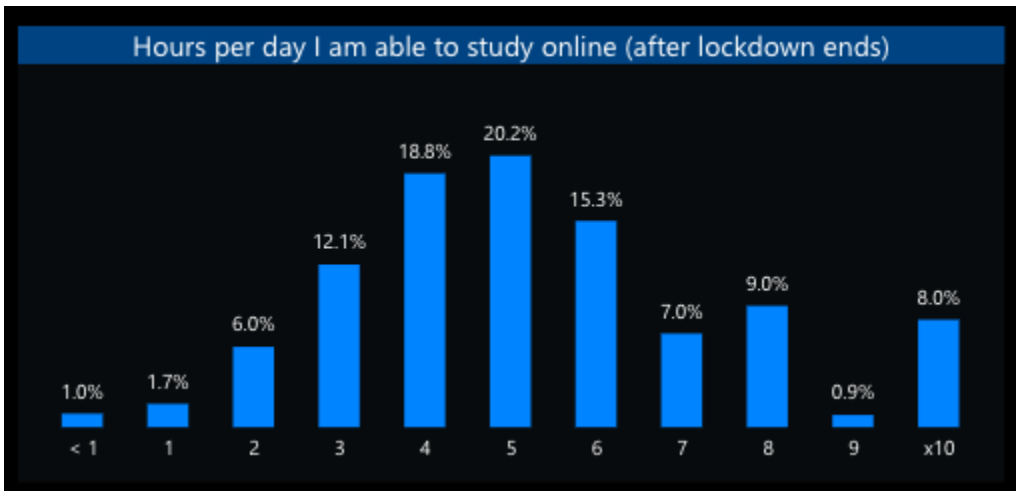
4.3 Course workload

Most students felt there was too much course content for the available time, and only **3.6%** of students who responded felt that they had grasped all of the learning material in their courses adequately.

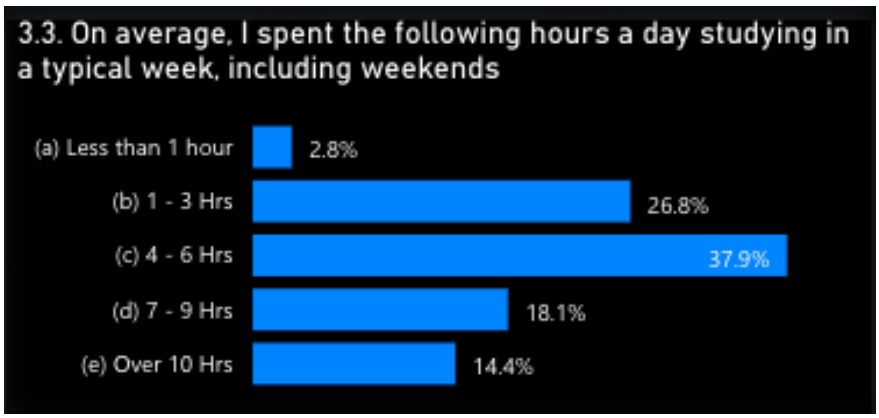


Informed by the results of the April 2020 Student Access Survey, UCT announced that Emergency Remote Teaching would be designed around a nominal weekly workload of 30 hours per week.

This reflects the median hourly time allocation which undergraduate students believed they could achieve in April (although without knowing at the time that lockdown would be extended):



Comparing this to what students reported in this survey shows a similar pattern:



with a weighted average of 5.3 hours per day from the Access Survey, and 5.5 hours per day from the Experience Survey.

However, although the target of 30 hours per week appears to have been well-founded, Faculties reported difficulties implementing this consistently across courses. The issue of workload in relation to available time was particularly acute for Law students, with Commerce and EBE a close second, based on average results from these 4 questions related to time and course content:

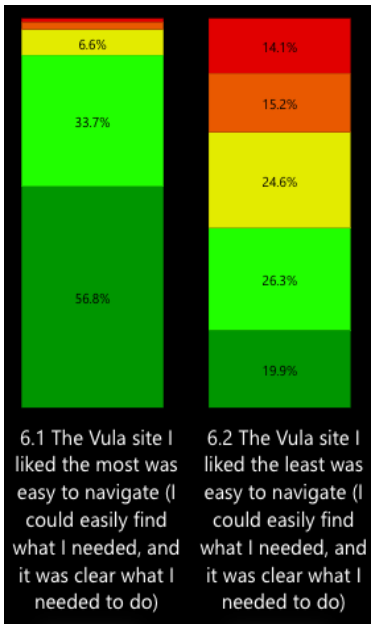
Red = most adverse score, Orange = second most adverse score

Question	Average	COM	EBE	FHS	HUM	LAW	SCI
3.5 I had sufficient time for remote learning	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2	2.9	3.4
5.2 I found the course load manageable during the remote teaching term	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.1	2.7	3.3
7.1 There was too much course content for the hours allocated	3.8	4.1	3.9	3.9	3.7	4.0	3.6
9.4 I found the assessments manageable in terms of time in the remote learning environment	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.6	3.2	2.8	3.5

This relative ranking of course workload and time pressure by Faculty does not appear to be new to ERT in 2020, however. Deferred examination applications, which are to some extent a proxy for student stress and workload, show that the highest proportion of applications in 2019 were from Law and Commerce students (16% and 8% of the undergraduate cohorts, respectively).

4.4 Course site design

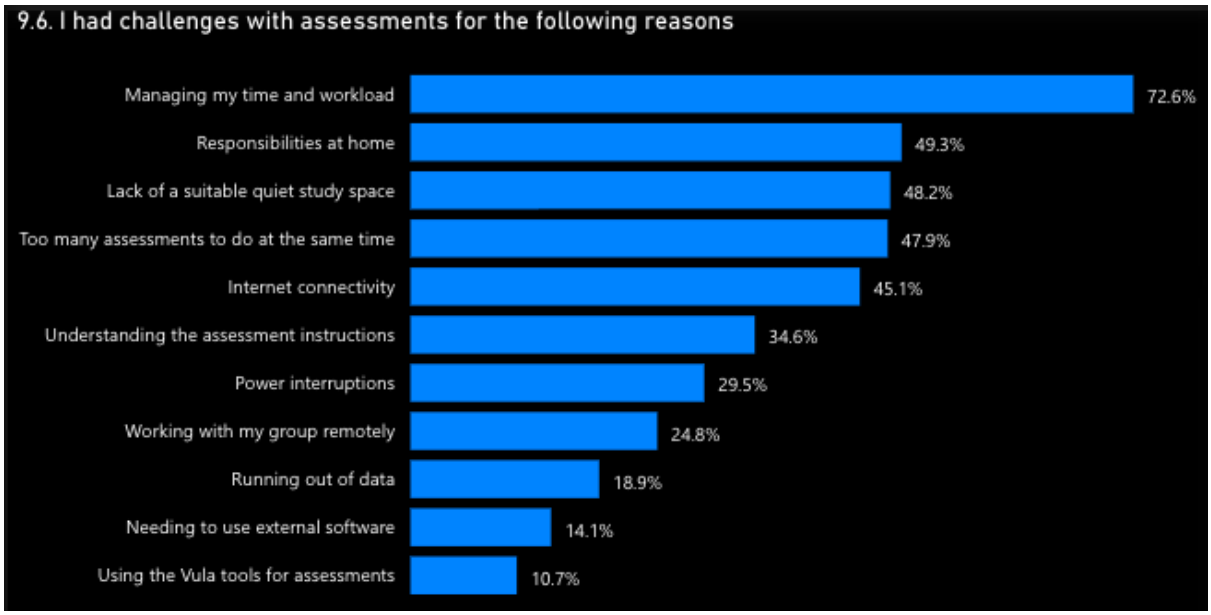
Students appreciate Vula sites which are well designed and easy to navigate. There was a large satisfaction gap between sites they liked the most and the least:



4.5 Assessments

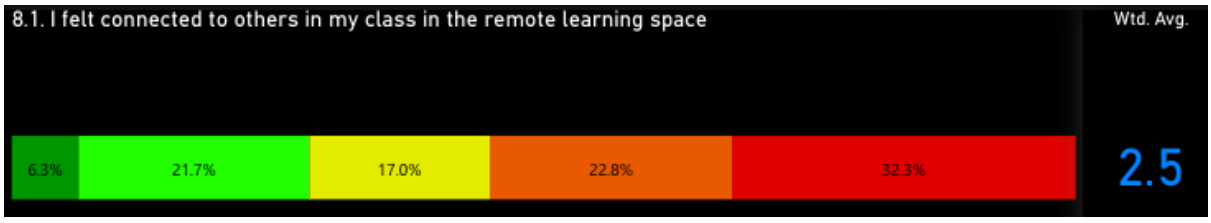
Many of the difficulties which students faced with assessments arose from their personal and home circumstances. A surprisingly large number of students reported difficulties **understanding the assessment instructions.**

This may reflect a lack of familiarity with new forms of assessment used for Emergency Remote Teaching, on the part of both students and lecturers. For students, this may have been compounded by not being able to ask for clarification easily.



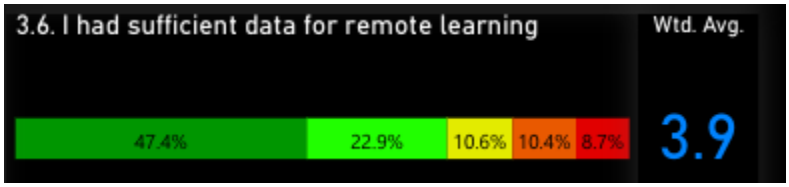
4.6 Social connectedness

Students did not feel strongly connected to other students in the online education space.

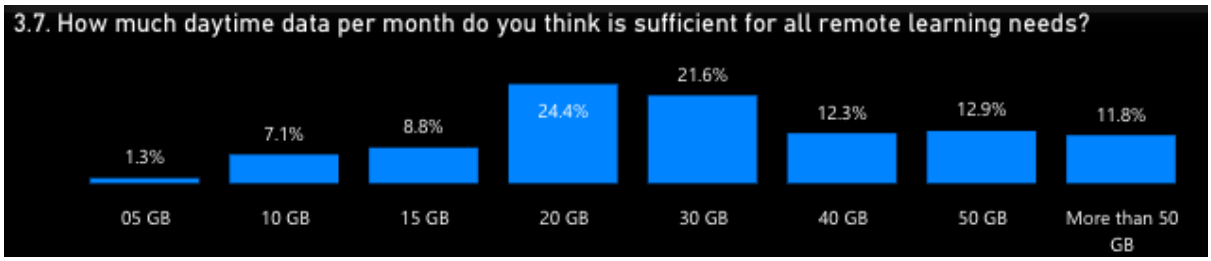


4.7 Data

Nearly 20% of students surveyed thought they had insufficient data for remote learning. This was higher in faculties such as Commerce, EBE, Science, and Health Sciences where students are expected to access more external websites:



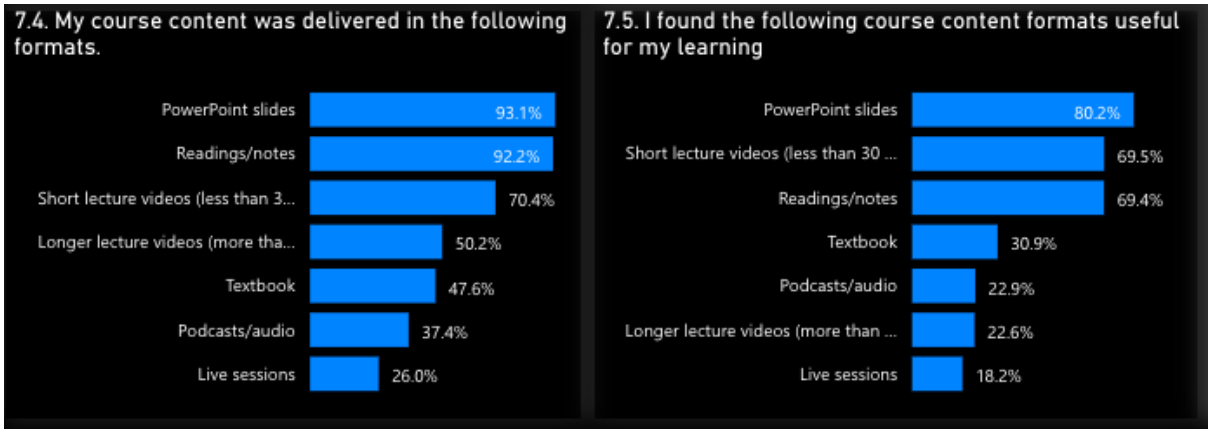
Most students believed that 10G of daytime data per month was insufficient:



Data usage is in part related to the extent of use of synchronous sessions using Zoom or MS Teams, which were not zero-rated.

4.8 Video content

While many courses used longer lecture videos (30 minutes or longer), students strongly preferred shorter lecture videos.



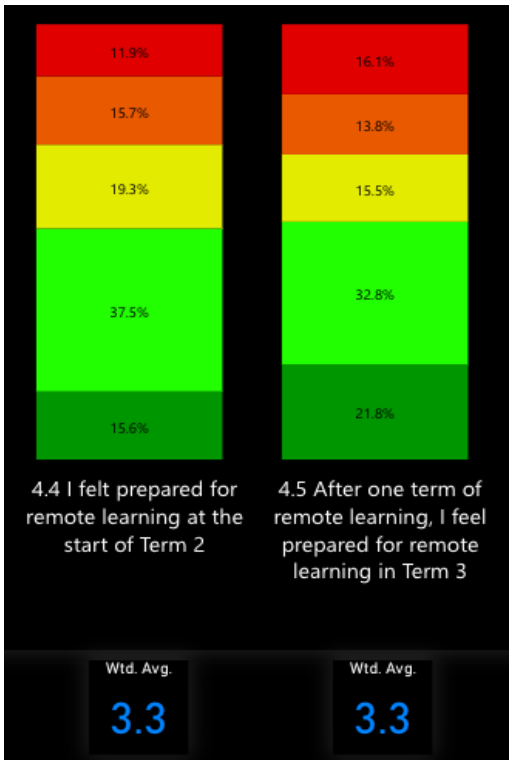
When transcripts were provided, students found these helpful for a range of purposes, including creating notes or summaries and referring back when revising. Students found captions helpful when the lecturer's voice was unclear, to understand the content and recognize unusual terms.

4.9 Synchronous tools

While a number of courses used **live sessions** (synchronous tools such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams), not all students found these useful.

4.10 Readiness for Term 3

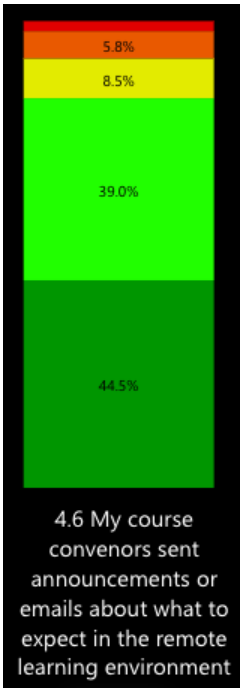
A counter-intuitive result is that students did not report feeling any more prepared for remote learning in the second semester, despite the orientation process and a full term of remote learning experience:

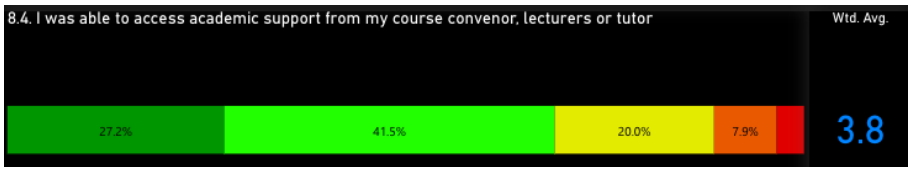


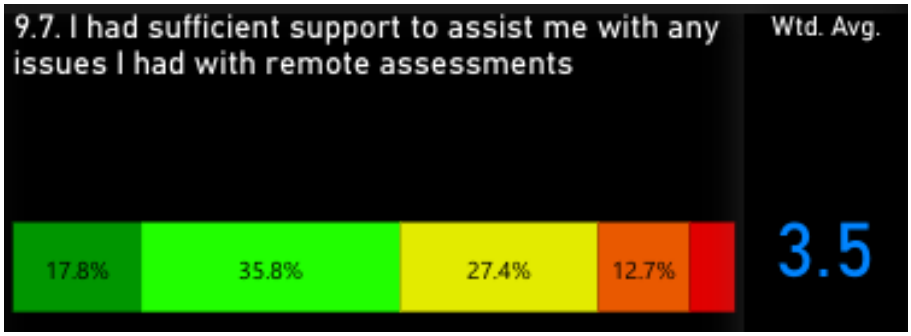
Looking more closely at this result, students were not in residence during term reported average readiness of 3.8 (an increase over 3.3), whereas students who were in residence during term 1 reported average readiness of 2.8 for term 3, suggesting that personal and living circumstances dominated this result, rather than increased familiarity with online learning.

4.11 Positive findings

The majority of students reported that course convenors communicated well with them about what to expect, that they were able to access academic support when needed, and that they got appropriate support when they ran into issues with remote assessments.







Students also valued the flexibility provided by asynchronous learning enabling them to learn at their own pace and in their own way, support from lecturers and tutors, communication from lecturers and tutors, study resources (e.g. lecture recordings, narrated slides), and a better understanding of and engagement with the course content.

5 Differential impact on students

5.1 Students who left residences

UCT took the decision to close all student residences on health grounds on 15 March 2022, affecting over 7000 students who were required to vacate their residences at short notice.

The April 2020 Student Access Survey shows that while 95.6% of students remained in South Africa when lockdown started (including many international students), they were widely dispersed across the country, in both urban and rural areas:

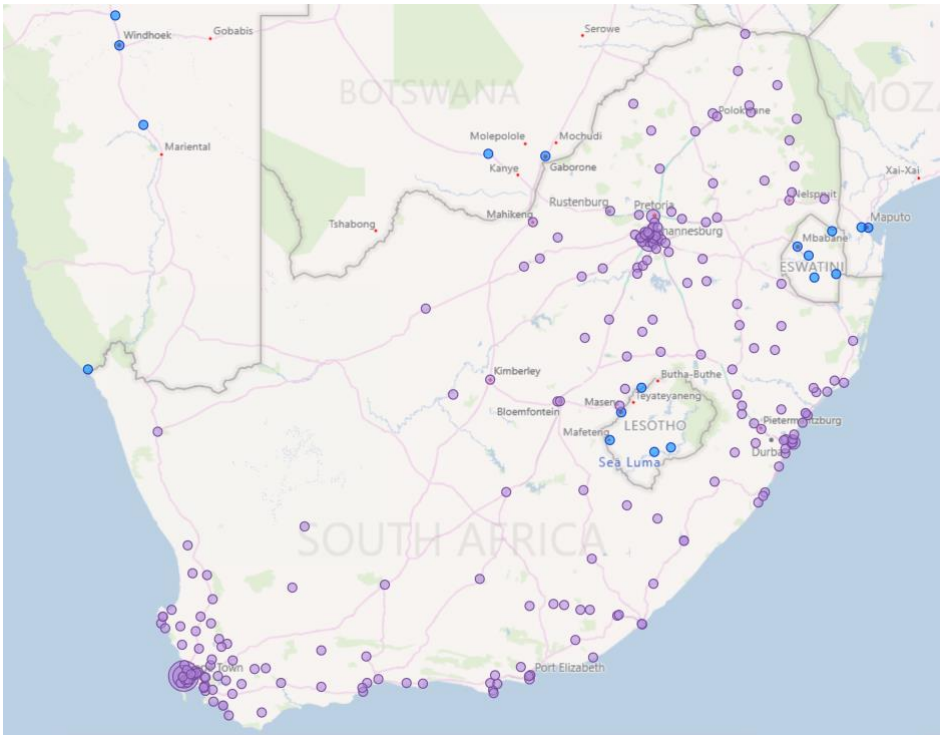
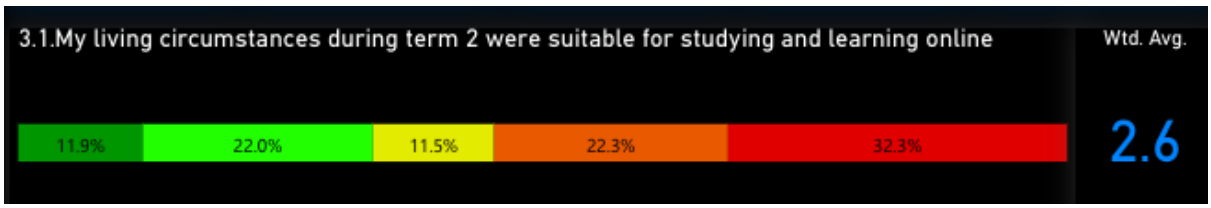


Figure 1 Geolocation of student responses to the 2020 Student Access Survey (South Africa)

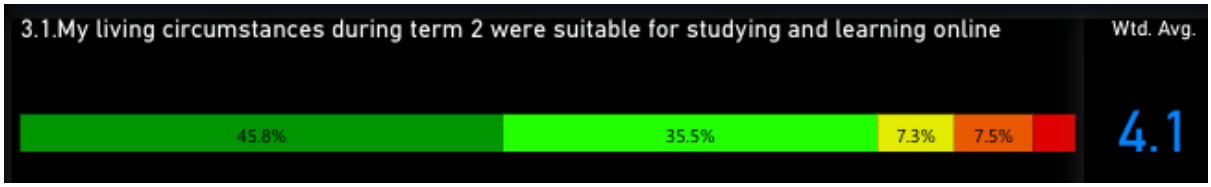
215 residence students were unable to leave for various reasons, and received a concession to remain in a UCT residence during lockdown and term 2. Final year medical students were permitted to return to campus early to complete clinical training, and thus a further 220 students returned to residences or private accommodation in May 2020.

However, the large majority of students who were in residence during term 1 had to return home or to other accommodation for the duration of term 2, and the survey responses show a significant adverse impact in living circumstances, Internet access, time available for studying and ability to cope with the expected workload.

For suitability of living circumstances, the average score for students who were in residence during term 1 (and thus mostly not in residence for term 2) is 2.6:



compared to an average of 4.1 for students who were never in residences and thus remained in the same accommodation:



These 10 questions which all relate in some way to personal circumstances and access issues show a difference in average response ranging from 0.4 to 1.0:

Scaled Questions **1 = strongly disagree** **5 = strongly agree**	**Average of all responses**	**Average for students in residence in term 1**	**Average for students not in residence**	**Difference in averages**
3.1 My living circumstances during term 2 were suitable for studying and learning online	3.4	2.6	4.1	1.5
3.5 I had sufficient time for remote learning	3.2	2.7	3.6	0.9
3.6 I had sufficient data for remote learning	3.9	3.4	4.4	1.0
4.4 I felt prepared for remote learning at the start of Term 2	3.3	3.0	3.6	0.6
4.5 After one term of remote learning, I feel prepared for remote learning in Term 3	3.3	2.8	3.8	1.0
5.2 I found the course load manageable during the remote teaching term	3.0	2.7	3.2	0.5
7.1 There was too much course content for the hours allocated	3.8	4.1	3.7	0.4
9.4 I found the assessments manageable in terms of time in the remote learning environment	3.3	3.1	3.5	0.4
9.5 I found the assessments manageable in terms of difficulty in the remote learning environment	3.3	3.0	3.6	0.6
9.7 I had sufficient support to assist me with any issues I had with remote assessments	3.5	3.2	3.7	0.5

However, for questions which are unrelated to personal circumstances, there is little difference in responses:

Scaled Questions **1 = strongly disagree** **5 = strongly agree**	**Average of all responses**	**Average for students in residence in term 1**	**Average for students not in residence**	**Difference in averages**
4.6 My course convenors sent announcements or emails about what to expect in the remote learning environment	4.2	4.1	4.2	0.1
6.1 The Vula site I liked the most was easy to navigate	4.4	4.4	4.4	0
6.2 The Vula site I liked the least was easy to navigate	3.2	3.2	3.2	0
8.1 I felt connected to others in my class in the remote learning space	2.5	2.4	2.5	0.1
8.2 I was able to engage productively online with other students in the course	3.1	3.0	3.2	0.2
8.4 I was able to access academic support from my course convenor, lecturers or tutor	3.8	3.7	3.9	0.2

Students who left residence were able to spend less time studying than students who remained in their pre-lockdown accommodation, on average 30 minutes less per day:

3.3 On average, I spent the following hours a day studying in a typical week, including weekends

	Less than 1 hour	**1-3 hours**	**4-6 hours**	**7-9 hours**	**10 or more hours**	**Weighted average hours per day**
All responses	2.8%	27.7%	38.2%	17.7%	13.6%	5.4
In residence term 1	3.5%	31.9%	36.3%	14.5%	13.8%	5.1
Not in residence	2.2%	23.9%	39.8%	20.6%	13.4%	5.6

These students also spent significantly more time studying during the night than other students, typically because of commitments to or disruptions from family members or other members of the household, and possibly also because of a reliance on night-time mobile data allocations:

3.4 I typically studied at these times of day

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	During the night
All responses	46.1%	53.8%	48.1%	59.3%
In residence term 1	35.4%	41.2%	40.6%	72.9%
Not in residence	55.6%	65.0%	54.8%	47.3%

Finally, students who left residences had poorer Internet access overall and less time flexibility, and were less able to participate in course activities such as live synchronous video sessions or meetings:

7.3 The course included online resources or activities which I felt excluded from because I couldn't access or participate in them easily

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
All responses	39.3%	30.2%	23.5%	7.0%
In residence term 1	24.7%	30.4%	33.2%	11.7%
Not in residence	52.2%	30.1%	14.8%	2.8%

5.2 Extended Degree Programme Students

Students who identified themselves as being in an extended degree programme (ADP students) also reported more adverse circumstances than other students overall, although less so for students who were not in residences:

3.1 My living circumstances during term 2 were suitable for studying and learning online

Average for Q3.1	All	EDP	Not EDP
All	3.4	2.7	3.6
Res Term 1	2.6	2.3	2.8
Not in Res	4.1	3.8	4.2

5.3 Challenges faced

Question 3.2 asks students to identify which challenges they faced studying remotely. The responses to these vary somewhat by Faculty as shown in the table below which compares response rates by Faculty to responses to particular items.

Humanities students were more likely to identify housing security as an issue, and Law students reported facing more challenges on average than students in other Faculties.

3.2 I faced the following challenges studying remotely

Key: Below expected average for Faculty Above expected average for Faculty

Question 3.2	Commerce	EBE	Health Sciences	Humanities	Law	Science
Average number of items selected	3.43	3.15	3.53	3.80	4.01	3.27
Responses by Faculty	21.7%	15.4%	13.5%	34.2%	3.4%	11.8%
Internet connection	23%	15%	14%	34%	3%	11%
Insufficient data	25%	16%	15%	31%	3%	10%
Access to laptop / computer	19%	17%	12%	39%	5%	8%
Family responsibilities	21%	12%	16%	37%	4%	10%
Study space	23%	14%	13%	36%	3%	11%
Mental health	21%	13%	13%	38%	4%	11%
Physical health	21%	13%	15%	37%	5%	10%
Food security	19%	16%	11%	36%	4%	14%
Job commitments	14%	14%	9%	44%	6%	13%
Physical safety	18%	13%	12%	43%	4%	9%
Housing security	16%	14%	5%	51%	3%	11%
Financial stress	20%	14%	11%	39%	5%	11%

6 Acknowledgements

Survey design by Sukaina Walji and Stephen Marquard, with contributions from Sunetra Chowdhury, Francois Cilliers, Alan Cliff, Laura Czerniewicz, Geney Gunston, Tasneem Jaffer, Rudiger Laugksch, Goolam Modack, Lisa Seymour, Suellen Shay, Riashna Sithaldeen and Denise Oldham.

Analysis, reporting, communication and visualization by Stephen Marquard, Kende Kefale, Soraya Lester, Andrew Deacon, Nawaal Deane, Gregory Hendricks (Im-possible Designs).

Comparative and supporting data provided by Memory Mutiriki, Dale Taylor, Karen van Heerden and Polite Nduru.

Our thanks to the CHED Research Ethics Committee and Department of Student Affairs for expedited review and approval.

7 References

Data Analysis of 2019 Second Semester Deferral Process, Karen van Heerden

EDL Student Breakdown per Term, Libie Nel, September 2018

SWS Semester 1 2020 Mental Health Stats (Preliminary), Student Wellness Service, Department of Student Affairs, 23 July 2020

Registration 2018 Survey, Faculty of Science, February 2018

Science Faculty Student Experience Survey 2019, Faculty of Science, February 2019

UCT Student Access Survey, CILT / DASS, May 2020

Vula Activity Analytics, CILT / DASS, accessed September 2020

Appendix A: Responses by question

2.1 Faculty

Answer	%	Count
Commerce	21.7%	828
Engineering & the Built Environment	14.5%	554
Health Sciences	13.5%	514
Humanities	34.8%	1328
Law	4.2%	160
Science	11.4%	434
Total	100%	3818

2.2 Level of study

Answer	%	Count
Undergraduate	82.3%	3144
Honours	6.7%	254
Masters	6.4%	245
Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)	4.6%	175
Total	100%	3818

2.3 Are you on an extended degree programme?

Answer	%	Count
Yes	22.9%	707
No	77.1%	2377
Total	100%	3084

2.4 Year of study in your current programme (required)

Answer	%	Count
1st	40.0%	1528
2nd	25.7%	981
3rd	19.4%	741
4th	11.1%	424
5th	3.3%	125
6th	0.4%	15
7th and above	0.1%	4
Total	100%	3818

2.5 Were you living in a UCT residence during term 1?

Answer	%	Count
Yes	47.1%	1798
No	52.9%	2020
Total	100%	3818

3.1 My living circumstances during term 2 were suitable for studying and learning online

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	29.8%	1137
Somewhat agree	29.1%	1110
Neither agree nor disagree	9.3%	354
Somewhat disagree	14.5%	551
Strongly disagree	17.3%	661
Total	100%	3813

3.2 I faced the following challenges studying remotely

Answer	%	Count
Slow or unreliable Internet connection	51.9%	1842
Lack of a quiet study space	54.0%	1917
Family or caring responsibilities	64.3%	2282
Insufficient mobile data or capped ISP connection	25.5%	905
Shared access to a laptop / computer	9.5%	337
Other	7.4%	262
Food security (insufficient access to healthy food)	10.2%	361
Mental health challenges (e.g. anxiety, stress, depression)	71.0%	2518
Physical health challenges (e.g. illness, fatigue)	31.4%	1115
Financial stresses	35.7%	1266
Housing security (uncertainty about having somewhere to live)	6.0%	213
Physical safety and security	7.4%	263
Work / job commitments	12.6%	447
Total	100%	3548

For the *Other* responses, in most instances participants seemed to expand on an item that already existed in the closed response options of the survey.

Electricity supply problems (e.g. outages) was the most commonly mentioned issue, followed by family related issues (e.g. conflict or health of family members). A smaller number of respondents experienced problems with their laptops and course related issues.

An even smaller number mentioned lacking basic studying necessities (e.g. a desk to work from) or that studying from home on its own was an issue, that they felt isolated or alone, and a small number referred to a lack of motivation as well.

Theme	References
Basic studying necessities	6
Course related	20
Electricity supply problems	49
Family related issues	31
Laptop problems	13
Studying from home	9

3.2 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Sheer inconsideration from some course lecturers in terms of setting far too many assessments, resulting in dominating time over my other courses. A continually diminishing amount of sleep due to being overworked.
Science	I live in an informal settlement where the source of water and electricity is the nearby RDP houses. We would sometimes experience power cuts which would make studying more difficult.
Commerce	My parents are still renovating so I could only study at night and for the first 2 months it was hard as most of the lights were taken out to renovate the ceiling and I had to rely on the light from the laptop screen.
Humanities	The inconsistency of electricity in the place I live in where I can go for 4 days straight without electricity at times.
Health Sciences	Quarreling between family members, and one who is an alcoholic once smashed a window of the room next to where I was studying
Law	Living in households where there's a lot of drama, arguments etc
3.2 Postgraduate Experiences	
Science	My work station is in my room. This means, at any point in time, the option to get back into bed exists. Being on campus forces me to remain productive even when I may not necessarily be in the mood.
Commerce	Lack of proper working space i.e. table or desk
Humanities	The laptop I got is not working
Law	Toxic relationships and animosity with family members that the living space is shared with.

3.3 On average, I spent the following hours a day studying in a typical week, including weekends

Answer	%	Count
Less than 1 hour	2.8%	108
4 to 6 hours	38.2%	1455
7 to 9 hours	17.7%	676
10 or more hours	13.6%	518
1 to 3 hours	27.7%	1055
Total	100%	3812

3.4 I typically studied at these times of day (check all that apply)

Answer	%	Count
Morning	46.1%	1756
Afternoon	53.8%	2049
Evening	48.1%	1833
During the night	59.3%	2261
Total	100%	3810

3.5 I had sufficient time for remote learning

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	17.9%	680
Somewhat agree	31.2%	1188
Neither agree nor disagree	17.0%	647
Somewhat disagree	19.5%	743
Strongly disagree	14.5%	551
Total	100%	3809

3.6 I had sufficient data for remote learning

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	47.4%	1807
Somewhat agree	22.9%	872
Neither agree nor disagree	10.6%	404
Somewhat disagree	10.4%	395
Strongly disagree	8.7%	331
Total	100%	3809

3.7 How much daytime data per month do you think is sufficient for all remote learning needs?

Answer	%	Count
5 GB	1.3%	36
10 GB	7.1%	201
15 GB	8.8%	249
20 GB	24.4%	693
30 GB	21.6%	614
40 GB	12.3%	350
50 GB	12.9%	366
More than 50 GB	11.8%	336
Total	100%	2845

4.1 Did you participate in the online orientation programme (20-24 April) before starting Term 2?

Answer	%	Count
Yes	71.5%	2723
No	28.5%	1086
Total	100%	3809

4.2 Please mention up to three things that were most helpful about the orientation phase of remote learning

Students noted that the following aspects were helpful:

- Learning about how to use Vula. Students also mentioned finding particular value in practising using the tools on Vula (e.g. submitting, uploading, downloading, and completing practice assessments), learning about where to find resources, and learning about using the Lessons tool, Forums tool and Q&A tool (and how to communicate on these platforms).
- Having the time to adjust/prepare and become familiar with online learning
- Receiving resources on skills (e.g. time management), study methods, and academic writing et cetera
- With regards to their courses, students mentioned learning about the course requirements, structure, and resources; receiving updated course outlines; information on how they would be assessed, and the individual course orientations
- Communication and support from their lectures/convenors, and learning about how they could contact their lecturers/convenors and tutors, and comments and support provided by other students
- Receiving information on zero-rated sites, laptop and data supply
- Receiving information on support services e.g. Student Wellness
- Receiving information on how to access and use the library

4.2 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Revising how to use functions on Vula that I did not commonly use, such as Q&A and forums
Science	They explained how we were going to study, like the study material, how we will write the online tests, like everything was crystal clear.
Commerce	Getting to terms with learning how to operate via the online system
Humanities	Navigating how to write & submit tests including physically written questions.
Health Sciences	Provided time to mentally prepare for online learning
Law	New course outlines that specified exactly what would happen every week
4.2 Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Need for a quiet environment
Science	Learning about Forums

Commerce	Having an easing in process
Humanities	Showing where and how to access resources
Health Sciences	I learnt features on Vula i was not aware of before
Law	contact from lecturer explaining how course would be run

4.3 What changes would improve the orientation experience?

Some of the more common suggestions students offered included the following:

- Alter the duration of orientation. There seemed to be a preference for orientation to be shortened.
- Tailored orientation: a number of requests were made for each course to have its own orientation. Some students suggested alternatively tailoring orientation to their study year. Perhaps related to this were requests for more specific information about courses (e.g. detailed course outline, timetable/schedule/term plan, information about exams)
- Use videos or host live sessions.

Some of the less commonly made suggestions included the following:

- Offer more study method tips (e.g. around time management)
- Provide information about who students should contact for help
- Offer more opportunities for practice (e.g. how to use Zoom)
- Course convenors/lecturers and tutors should engage
- Coursework should start only after orientation has ended
- Check students have access to devices/internet to attend orientation
- Improved communication about orientation

4.3 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Not sure if it's related to orientation in particular but some courses haven't updated the course handout so students didn't really know the full extent of how the academic year has changed for them.
Science	All the courses used different tools, so it may have been helpful to include in the orientation how each course would be presented and assessed
Commerce	Shorten Orientation week- 4 days is unnecessary.
Humanities	It was very long, the whole process took me a day. Didn’t need to be a week long

Health Sciences	I personally feel the orientation time period could have been shorter, seeing as we already knew how to use Vula and hand in assignments.
Law	It was only centred around using vula, not really how to properly be productive in a home studying environment
4.3 Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Including a video and audio, helps with people who learn differently
Science	It was a little too late for me as I commenced online learning prior to the orientation
Commerce	It was very basic and most of us know how to use vula already. I didn't find it helpful or necessary. Maybe first years would have had a different experience.
Humanities	Must be more tailored to the level of study
Health Sciences	First have survey on what the student knows how to do, it felt like a waste of time going through things that i knew how to do
Law	Improve the awareness campaign about the date and participation

4.4 I felt prepared for remote learning at the start of Term 2

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	15.6%	595
Somewhat agree	37.5%	1428
Neither agree nor disagree	19.3%	734
Somewhat disagree	15.7%	598
Strongly disagree	11.9%	455
Total	100%	3810

4.5 After one term of remote learning, I feel prepared for remote learning in Term 3

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	21.8%	831
Somewhat agree	32.8%	1251
Neither agree nor disagree	15.5%	589
Somewhat disagree	13.8%	527
Strongly disagree	16.1%	613
Total	100%	3811

4.6 My course convenors sent announcements or emails about what to expect in the remote learning environment

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	44.5%	1696
Somewhat agree	39.0%	1487
Neither agree nor disagree	8.5%	326
Somewhat disagree	5.8%	222
Strongly disagree	2.2%	82
Total	100%	3813

5.1 At the start of the first semester (before we went online), I was enrolled for the following number of courses

Answer	%	Count
1	4.8%	183
2	10.1%	384
3	24.9%	947
4	29.8%	1135
More than 4	30.4%	1158
Total	100%	3807

5.2 I found the course load manageable during the remote teaching term:

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	13.3%	507
Somewhat agree	30.5%	1161
Neither agree nor disagree	15.7%	598
Somewhat disagree	23.6%	898
Strongly disagree	17.0%	646
Total	100%	3810

5.3 I decided to drop one or more courses to manage my course load

Answer	%	Count
Yes	5.7%	218
No	94.3%	3586
Total	100%	3804

5.4 What strategies did you find most helpful to manage your course load?

Strategies relating to time management seem to be mentioned the most. For example, students referred to making a schedule / timetable, using a planner, and developing a routine. Students also mentioned their work ethic: working hard, working for long hours, or working consistently. Some students found engaging with others helpful e.g. using a course WhatsApp group and studying with friends.

A smaller proportion of students referred to asking for assistance e.g. asking for extensions, asking for consultations or help. Students found their lecturers helpful in a few ways as well, for example, through being lenient, offering flexible submission deadlines, and offering suggestions. Students also suggested a wide range of particular approaches they took to completing their work, e.g. focusing on particular courses, starting assignments early, working on their more difficult courses first.

5.4 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Having a separate group of friends who do the same courses to hold each other responsible and keep each other updated with deadlines and goals
Science	Time management. Writing out a daily schedule for every day of the week every Monday. It largely worked except for when courses randomly uploaded work in the middle of the week.
Commerce	Sticking to what would have been the normal class schedule. Ie doing lectures on the day it would have been delivered

Humanities	Letting some courses lag while I focused on others. Horrible strategy but it was that I could do to manage
Health Sciences	I asked for extensions in most of my submissions. I also asked assistance from the lecturers
Law	Working 7 days a week and for a minimum of 5 hours a day (of actual work time; not inclusive of any breaks). There is simply no other way to cover all of the material and consolidate and complete tuts and tasks. This however does not mean I have a good grasp of concepts - managing our course load and actively getting an education (at the standard we are expected to perform) are two very different things.
5.4 Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Minimizing my hours of sleep Focusing only on my school work Working each and every day including weekends
Science	I did strategize and created a weekly schedule. I called a zoom meeting for group discussions and WhatsApp video calls. I was consistent with my timetable. Tracked my deadlines of assignments well and worked on my course work before attempting assignments.
Commerce	Planning ahead. Don't lose track of time because if one does so they will have a load of work in such a short period of time. However if you plan and keep up with your work, you won't feel the pressure.
Humanities	Regular meetings with the Course convener and teaching staff where students could engage the teaching team with regards to the course load, assignments and also having flexible due dates helped.
Health Sciences	Working with classmates to keep each other on track and focused. Whatsapp group reminding each other of deadlines and sharing helpful articles and/or offering support.
Law	Do early preparations before class and do both two courses simultaneously in order to balance.

6.1 The Vula site I liked the most was easy to navigate (I could easily find what I needed, and it was clear what I needed to do)

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	56.8%	2164
Somewhat agree	33.7%	1284
Neither agree nor disagree	6.6%	251
Somewhat disagree	1.9%	73
Strongly disagree	0.9%	35
Total	100%	3807

6.2 The Vula site I liked the least was easy to navigate (I could easily find what I needed, and it was clear what I needed to do)

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	19.9%	727
Somewhat agree	26.3%	963
Neither agree nor disagree	24.6%	899
Somewhat disagree	15.2%	556
Strongly disagree	14.1%	515
Total	100%	3660

6.3 I used the following tools

Answer	%	Count
Vula Lessons (content pages)	78.2%	2979
Vula Assignments	94.8%	3611
Vula Lecture Videos	71.4%	2720
Vula Forums	62.1%	2363
Vula Chat	40.4%	1539
Vula Tests & Quizzes	82.6%	3146
TurnitIn	61.1%	2327
WhatsApp	76.3%	2904
MS Teams	20.1%	765
Zoom	34.9%	1328
Vula Resources	96.3%	3666
Other	7.1%	272
Total	100%	3808

Specific tools mentioned by students included Discord, YouTube, WhatsApp, Zoom, Google, G Suite, Skype, and Dropbox. Generic and Vula tools mentioned included emailing, audio, file sharing, assessment tools, and Vula chatrooms and forums.

A few made broader comments:

- “I couldn't use Zoom because of the data shortage”
- “I didn’t really like the Vula Lessons. They became too many on the tab and it was a bit difficult to keep track. I can do without it much like I did for my other 3 courses.”
- “I only got a phone recently so I only joined WhatsApp last month. This was a disadvantage as I realized that there was less support if you didn’t have WhatsApp and how I realized this was by how much things became better with WhatsApp”
- “If it wasn't for friends in the same course as me I wouldn't have fully understood what was required for some of my courses”;
- “lecture videos were unreliable, English ones often skipped either audio or visual at times. I used the narrated powerpoints for the most part. Philosophy podcasts were a brilliant innovation”
- “Vula weekly checklists set up by certain lecturers were very helpful”
- “We also used Instagram at times”
- “We didn't have any resources uploaded to Vula, mostly because we are research MAs”
- “YouTube videos. I am an auditory learner so I require more sound lessons. That was my strategy on campus to catch up quickly when I had missed lectures.”
- “YouTube when network decided to work properly on certain days for better understanding“

7.1 There was too much course content for the hours allocated

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	35.5%	1352
Somewhat agree	31.9%	1216
Neither agree nor disagree	18.4%	701
Somewhat disagree	10.1%	385
Strongly disagree	4.1%	157
Total	100%	3811

7.2 How much of your learning material did you feel you had adequately grasped?

Answer	%	Count
All of it	3.6%	136
Most of it	43.6%	1659
Some of it	48.9%	1860
None of it	4.0%	151
Total	100%	3806

7.3 The course included online resources or activities which I felt excluded from because I couldn't access or participate in them easily

Answer	%	Count
Never	39.3%	1488
Rarely	30.2%	1146
Sometimes	23.5%	889
Often	7.0%	266
Total	100%	3789

7.4 My course content was delivered in the following formats

Answer	%	Count
Short lecture videos (less than 30 mins)	70.2%	2668
Longer lecture videos (more than 30 mins)	50.0%	1901
PowerPoint slides	92.8%	3527
Readings/notes	92.0%	3496
Textbook	47.5%	1805
Live sessions	26.0%	987
Podcasts/audio	37.3%	1418
Other:	3.9%	149
Total	100%	3801

Students mentioned videos (e.g. YouTube videos, video calls), PDF slides, slides with voice overs, WhatsApp, Zoom (live and recordings), chatrooms, forums, tutorials (live and worksheets), and Vula Lessons.

7.5 I found the following course content formats useful for my learning

Answer	%	Count
Short lecture videos (less than 30 mins)	69.1%	2605
Longer lecture videos (more than 30 mins)	22.4%	846
PowerPoint slides	79.7%	3006
Readings/notes	69.0%	2603
Textbook	30.7%	1159
Live sessions	18.1%	683
Podcasts/audio	22.7%	857
Other:	3.9%	146
Total	100%	3772

Students mentioned slides (with voiceovers the most, and PDFs), YouTube videos or wanting videos, tutorials (live and worksheets), WhatsApp, and Zoom (recordings and live).

7.6 The videos in my courses had captions and/or a transcript

Answer	%	Count
Usually	32.0%	1212
Sometimes	29.5%	1118
Never	16.6%	630
I don’t know	12.3%	466
My courses didn't have any videos	9.6%	362
Total	100%	3788

7.7 Video transcripts were helpful

Answer	%	Count
As an alternative to watching the video	36.9%	782
In addition to watching the video	58.4%	1237
To find a particular point in a video that I wanted to watch	36.8%	778
To create notes or summaries	58.1%	1231
To refer back to when revising	50.4%	1067
Total	100%	2117

7.8 Video captions (subtitles) were helpful because

Answer	%	Count
I could watch lecture videos without sound	23.2%	415
The captions helped my understanding of the content	57.3%	1027
The captions helped me follow when the lecturer’s voice was not clear	68.1%	1219
The captions helped me recognize unusual terms	48.6%	871
Total	100%	1791

7.9 I have a disability that requires content in accessible formats

Answer	%	Count
Yes	1.1%	42
No	98.9%	3682
Total	100%	3724

7.10 Was content provided in accessible formats for you?

Answer	%	Count
Yes, accessible content was available in all my course sites	50.0%	19
Yes, accessible content was provided via Disability Services	21.1%	8
No, I was not provided with accessible content	34.2%	13
Total	100%	38

7.11 If you had accessibility challenges with any of the courses please describe what those were

Comments included:

- “I have a reading disability, meaning i need to enlarge and print reading content in order to read it properly. Some of my lecturers uploaded unclear scans of book pages, which made it very difficult for me to do that.”
- “Having to read all of the notes on my laptop … those readings were not short they were long and required more time to look at the screen which damages my eyesight more”
- “Hearing problems and voice overs were sometimes spoken in very low voice “
- “As a learner with ADD, only having reading resources for my course was extremely difficult. The content was unvaried in format and required hours and hours of just reading with no variation every day.”

8.1 I felt connected to others in my class in the remote learning space

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	6.3%	239
Somewhat agree	21.7%	825
Neither agree nor disagree	17.0%	646
Somewhat disagree	22.8%	866
Strongly disagree	32.3%	1229
Total	100%	3805

8.2 I was able to engage productively online with other students in the course, through Vula, other UCT-provided platforms (e.g. Zoom or Teams), WhatsApp or social media

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	13.6%	519
Somewhat agree	34.4%	1309
Neither agree nor disagree	18.0%	685
Somewhat disagree	18.9%	718
Strongly disagree	15.1%	575
Total	100%	3806

8.3 Please tell us about your experience of social interactions in your class community

Students described a large range in experiences of social interaction in their class community. A notable number of students described feeling isolated and disconnected, that social interactions had been limited or that there have been none at all, missing interacting with their class, and that it was difficult to connect with others.

However, a notable number of students also described quite positive social interactions, often referring to their helpful / supportive nature. Who students were interacting with seemed to range widely as well, with mentions of multiple classes to only a select group of friends. A smaller number of students mentioned not seeking to interact with others.

Interactions seemed to occur across multiple platforms with WhatsApp perhaps being the most common. Other popular platforms mentioned included Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Vula chat and

forums. Some students mentioned barriers to interacting, e.g. power outages, internet access, a lack of time, no device, and not establishing relationships with anyone before lockdown.

8.3 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	The class was very vocal on our WhatsApp group. This was an invaluable tool as it provided a means for all members of the course on the group to voice their opinions and discuss them with the class, as well as voice any issues they were having.
Science	Struggled with interactions as there was no zoom links and WhatsApp groups weren't really used - felt very isolated
Commerce	My class groups for courses in the Commerce faculty were (as previously experienced) less helpful and inclusive than what they are when doing courses in other faculties. Less engagement or assistance with each other.
Humanities	1/3 of my courses had a few zoom classes that made ERT not feel so isolating & it was comforting. Otherwise the social interactions have only been through WhatsApp and it was okayish but still somewhat isolating.
Health Sciences	Social interaction with the class community was very much limited and only occurred once in a week or so as per course requirements. It was difficult for me to keep interaction constant because i'd try to grapple with the work responsibilities and family responsibilities
Law	It has been a bleak experience. I have managed to stay connected with my close circle but I miss the class energy.
8.3 Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Some of my classmates were trying to organize meetings where we explain course content to each but I always missed the meetings because of circumstances in my place. It would either be that I can not make the set time because of house duties and I can only be available at night or my connection would disappoint me. I have had WhatsApp texts from some of them checking on me but other than that, we have been separated since online learning started
Science	We did have a whatsapp group for each module but I rarely engaged. Just with my friend most of the time. But the class reps were very useful when it comes to extension of assignments.
Commerce	The live meetings and tutorials were really helpful to have that contact but it was always with the same few people. WhatsApp was helpful for our honours group chat but one doesn't feel the same connection as one does in class.

Humanities	My class was a tight knit one and we all got along early on in the year, but the physical distance created by the lockdown has resulted in a social distance to match
Health Sciences	My classes are very small. We all tried to be supportive of each other throughout the semester. We had a WhatsApp group where we would all talk and help each other. Sometimes we would talk about lobbying the lecturer for more time on certain things.
Law	We had an amazing 2 hours long seminars that helped us discuss the content for that week. Most of the classes were active but considering the nature of the online space, some students though present were not active participants. But the course convener made sure everyone was on board and actively participating.

8.4 I was able to access academic support from my course convenor, lecturers or tutor

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	27.2%	1032
Somewhat agree	41.5%	1573
Neither agree nor disagree	20.0%	758
Somewhat disagree	7.9%	298
Strongly disagree	3.4%	130
Total	100%	3791

8.5 Please tell us about your experience of accessing academic support

Students described a large range in experiences of accessing academic support. Negative experiences often seemed to relate to support not being available (e.g. being ignored, non-existent), having a slow response time, and being unhelpful.

Students who had positive experiences in contrast often described support as accessible, helpful, and having a quick response time. Students referred to seeking support from lecturers, convenors, supervisors, and tutors.

Multiple platforms were referenced by students in their support seeking as well, e.g. email, Vula chats and forums, WhatsApp, going through a class representative, and Zoom.

8.5 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	There weren't any systems in place for us to access academic support for one of my courses, it has been difficult to keep up with work that I don't understand completely. For others, the lecturers and tutors (that we had had from when we were back at university) were helpful in their communicating through whatsapp/ email/ vula
Science	It was very bad honest speaking. I had 3 courses. One lecture was very supportive and answered really quickly to email, the other 2 either took forever to answer (more than 5 working days) or never answer at all which is very disappointing because each course had multiple lecturers and they all acted the same way.
Commerce	The most helpful form of support was when there are allocated time slots where tutors are available to answer questions in the Vula forums. The least helpful form of support was when we were only allowed to ask questions via email to our tutors.
Humanities	Some of my courses had WhatsApp groups with our tutors so it was not that bad. But some of the courses did not have them, I would email a lecturer and they would respond really late.
Health Sciences	Some lecturers really made an effort to avail themselves to us and were constantly checking in to see that we were okay and offered any support they could, however the vast majority of lecturers, in my experience, just did the bare minimum by sending email reminders of submissions and that was it.
Law	It's very double sided. You know the lecturer is available, but I personally struggled with the lack of anonymity. You worry about feeling stupid or impostor syndrome the entire time. Support from lecturers is also delayed because students refuse to share general information that could be beneficial, which results in the lecturer needing to waste time answering the same question 20+ times via email. Outside of academics, it's also very difficult to explain your home situation. Some of us have opted simply to suffer through it because of the shame, or just telling yourself another student probably needs the lecturer’s help more than you. We also struggled with not receiving individualized feedback. You cannot fix errors or improve writing you haven't identified.
8.5 Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	They were available via emails, or whatsapp. And the response was very fast, and willingness to help and platforms to ask for help in anyway was always encouraged and highlighted

Science	Lecturers are understanding to an extent, but I feel like in postgrad they've been very insistent that we shouldn't be that affected academically because we have access to the resources we need (papers etc). That is true but to see them disregard that many of us are struggling with the situation for other reasons (primarily mental health) feels dismissive
Commerce	It's very lecture dependent. Most are well at responding, but some responses are useless as they do not answer the questions or questions are selectively answered.
Humanities	Some lecturers were very helpful with answering questions and availing themselves to us. However, other lecturers failed to communicate and deliver on some of the content they were supposed to cover during the term.
Health Sciences	The department has consistently provided academic support across this term, and has taken into consideration suggestions around format and medium of lessons that the class community made to them.
Law	Mostly it would be done via email and I would get responses that were sometimes helpful and sometimes confusing, but it I felt there were many misunderstandings because of remote learning. I felt disassociated from the course and academic support in general because of the lack of face to face teaching/support

9.1 My assessments included the following

Answer	%	Count
Timed tests or quizzes	78.8%	2992
Untimed tests or quizzes	62.8%	2386
Projects	42.5%	1615
Written assignments	84.8%	3221
Essays	65.8%	2498
Oral assignments	14.5%	551
Video assignments	15.0%	570
Other:	3.2%	120
Practicals	23.8%	905
Total	100%	3797

Students referred to tutorials (including assignments, discussions, tests), exams, forum discussion, blog postings, thesis/dissertation submissions, and posters.

9.2 My projects included or required the following [EBE only]

Answer	%	Count
Individual projects	93.0%	476
Collaborative projects	53.7%	275
Access to labs	18.4%	94
Access to software	67.6%	346
Access to technical resources	45.7%	234
Ability to do field work or face-to-face interviews for data collection	7.6%	39
Access to studios and necessary resources for Architecture, Planning, Geomatics activities	12.7%	65
Total	100%	512

9.3 Please tell us about your experience of projects [EBE only]

More negative project experiences were noted by students than positive project experiences. Students describing negative experiences referred to: lacking access to resources (e.g., internet, space, laptop, software), challenges working in a group, the nature of the projects (e.g., size and number), and poor communication about / support for projects.

- "Using the online setting it was very difficult to assess what the group members were doing or if they knew what they were doing during project week so some members didn't meet expectations but no one knew as we never saw each other And they never spoke up"
- "Unpleasant because I struggled to access the material and resources needed whilst at home. Performance was therefore affected"

Students describing positive experiences referred to: the nature of the projects (e.g. being well adapted, good/enjoyable assessments), good communication about/support for projects, productive group work, having access to the necessary resources.

- "The projects were well adapted to the online learning environment and were extremely helpful to get a good grasp of the work."
- "We were able to discuss the content amongst a group of people; however the work had to be written individually which definitely helped a lot to grasp understanding."

9.4 I found the assessments manageable in terms of time in the remote learning environment

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	14.8%	562
Somewhat agree	39.2%	1485
Neither agree nor disagree	15.5%	588
Somewhat disagree	19.1%	724
Strongly disagree	11.4%	433
Total	100%	3792

9.5 I found the assessments manageable in terms of difficulty in the remote learning environment

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	12.6%	477
Somewhat agree	40.5%	1537
Neither agree nor disagree	20.0%	757
Somewhat disagree	18.1%	686
Strongly disagree	8.8%	334
Total	100%	3791

9.6 I had challenges with assessments for the following reasons

Answer	%	Count
Internet connectivity	42.6%	1545
Running out of data	22.5%	816
Managing my time and workload	70.4%	2553
Understanding the assessment instructions	40.1%	1454
Using the Vula tools for assessments	9.6%	349
Working with my group remotely	21.2%	767
Needing to use external software	13.2%	478
Responsibilities at home	54.7%	1982
Lack of a suitable quiet study space	45.8%	1659
Too many assessments to do at the same time	51.6%	1872
Other	5.3%	192
Power interruptions	28.2%	1023
Total	100%	3625

A number of the challenges already listed in the closed response options were mentioned for this question again (these tended to relate to course load and time management, having too many assessments at the same time, understanding the assessment instructions, responsibilities at home, having a suitable space to study, and internet and electricity supply issues).

Course related challenges were the most commonly mentioned type of challenge experienced by students. These challenges related to: feedback on work, poor understanding of course material and less meaningful engagement with it, uncertainty around assessment expectations, harder assessments, mark allocation, time allocation, completing assessments online, change in assessment style, working alone or with others, access to books and other resources.

A number of students also mentioned mental health challenges, problems with their laptops and technical issues while working. Smaller numbers of students referred to work/job commitments, motivation/concentration, physical health and family related issues.

Theme	Responses
Course related	47
Family related	7
Food security	1
Laptop issues	14

Mental health	20
Motivation or concentration	9
Physical health	4
Technical problems	13
Work or job commitments	10

9.7 I had sufficient support to assist me with any issues I had with remote assessments

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	17.8%	672
Somewhat agree	35.8%	1350
Neither agree nor disagree	27.4%	1034
Somewhat disagree	12.7%	479
Strongly disagree	6.3%	236
Total	100%	3771

9.8 Please describe any challenges you had with remote assessments

Students described challenges relating to: (1) their workload and time management, (2) internet and electricity supply, (3) study space, (4) technical problems, (5) support, (6) personal factors and, (7) assessment difficulty.

Students sometimes reported experiencing a single challenge, and other times reporting that they experienced multiple. A number of these challenges seemed to be connected too, for example, problems with their internet connection affected how well students could manage their time.

With regards to their workload and time management, students mentioned struggling to manage their workload, assessment scheduling, timed assessments, and factors impeding their time management or managing time poorly. Having other responsibilities and lacking a suitable space to complete their assignments in were also noted by students.

Some technical problems students referred to related to challenges with using / accessing Vula and other software. Students also noted support and communication sometimes lacking from their lectures/tutors, instructions/tasks being unclear/erroneous and slow response times. Personal factors mentioned by students often related to their mental health and motivation/discipline.

9.8 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Certain briefs that are given in purpose have space to be a bit vague as you can then query the lecturer, however remote learning does not allow this and the vague briefs are simply confusing and require more communication between lecturers and students that is sometimes not possible in the space of time we have to complete the assignment.
Science	Sometimes we had power outages where I live, I was also struggling to keep up with my course work and hence I would have to catch up a lot just so I could do my assignments. I would run out of data, and this made it difficult for me to do some of the assessments which were due.
Commerce	I have connectivity issues in the area I live in. There isn't really a quiet study space for me as I live with many people and our house isn't big. I also had to do almost all the chores at home which made it difficult for me to put most of my focus on school work.
Humanities	Assignment due dates were moved around. This made it difficult to manage my time as shifting assignments made it difficult to manage both the coursework for all courses and other assignments.
Health Sciences	They were often challenging because there was an excessive amount of work that needed to be covered before completing the assessments. However, I felt that the pace at which one had to work in order to cover the content was oftentimes too fast to adequately grasp concepts to the degree to which we were assessed. Additionally, there was no time to even go back to work one may not have covered or understood because new work was uploaded and needed to be attended to for the next assessment. Overall, I fear that there have been multiple learning gaps created throughout this academic period.
Law	My assessments often took very long to upload and we have frequent power cuts that are not scheduled or announced so it was tricky meeting deadlines. I am a slow typer who had to tend to my home responsibilities while in the middle of assessments so sometimes I didn't finish. I feel like I didn't have enough time to sit and just focus on my assessments. For example I recently had a 6 hour exam in which I was required to take care of children and ensure they're fed, that was hard. I also feel like the difficulty of these assessments increased which isn't fair as some of us now have less access to resources
Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Internet connection because I live in remote areas, time management caused by home responsibilities that I had.
Science	I found that the workload was very intense during lockdown and struggled to do all my work whilst still getting enough sleep and keeping mentally healthy.
Commerce	I lost 40 minutes worth of work when my Vula crashed... it was very sad. I even called Vula and they couldn't find it.

	Adding an option for a file to download, edit locally, upload and submit is a good option when possible (for long-answer type questions).
Humanities	Because of the heavy burden on my mental health it was often difficult to be productive and the psych sessions at uct were booked up for 2 months (I will finally have my sessions next week) This also meant that instead of being able to engage meaningfully and in depth with all the work we were constantly chasing assignment deadlines and only focusing on the bits of work that applied to the assignments. In the holiday most of us will be playing catch up on lecturers and readings we did not have time for.
Health Sciences	There was no support on the course content other than the PowerPoints and readings prescribed and this is not adequate to understand complicated modules when testing strategies are application to the knowledge acquired. Instructions are vague and contradictory which is confusing. The expectations for assessments and exams were unrealistic and not suited to distance learning. It was the same workload and content that would have been given if face-to-face classes had taken place.
Law	In class settings, I would have been able to interact with my peers and thereby discuss some things I did not understand, for the other course I hardly knew anyone in the class so interactions were hard, I couldn't discuss with my peers during revisions. I felt isolated.

10.1 Which student support services have you used during remote learning

Answer	%	Count
Student Wellness	14.9%	323
Disability Services	1.0%	21
UCT Cares	2.5%	55
UCT Library	73.1%	1583
Faculty Advisors	23.5%	510
Writing Centre	10.3%	224
Total	100%	2166

10.2 Which student support services have you found useful during remote learning

Answer	%	Count
Student Wellness	14.1%	254
Disability Services	1.0%	18
UCT Cares	2.5%	45
UCT Library	69.6%	1256
Faculty Advisors	22.5%	406
Writing Centre	10.0%	180
Total	100%	1805

10.3 What have been the positives of remote learning?

Time seems to be the most commonly referred to theme. For example, students mentioned there being more time for their studies, there being less time wasted (e.g. because of no longer needing to commute), working at their own pace/having agency over how they use their time, and there being more flexibility with completing their studies.

A number of students also mentioned saving on travel expenses and being able to spend more time doing things they valued (e.g. spending time with their family) in relation to this theme.

A number of course-related findings also appeared. For example, students mentioned support from lecturers/tutors, communication from lecturers/tutors, study resources (e.g. lecture recordings, narrated slides), and a better understanding of / engagement with the course content. Some students also referred to their study environment as a positive (e.g. feeling comfortable, safe, supported).

A notable proportion of students also thought that there was nothing positive about learning remotely.

10.3 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Working at my own pace benefited me greatly. When we were still at university, I struggled to concentrate during lectures and was exhausted by the end of the day. Being able to work when I wanted and at my own pace improved my understanding of the course because the learning style I used during remote learning was better suited for me.

Science	I really had time to engage with the work and understand it on a deeper level that I wouldn't have been able to do during normal in class lectures. I felt walking away from the courses that I truly understood my work and enjoyed being able to go through it at my own pace, while having assistance of lecturers on standby.
Commerce	There are less distractions during lectures. For instance, during online lectures, you no longer have a friend next to you telling you about their weekend or asking a question.
Humanities	Well, the pandemic has been anxiety-provoking. Thus, I could have not imagined myself on campus at such a trying time. Therefore, online learning allowed me to study while in the presence of my family - getting sufficient support from them.
Health Sciences	My lecturers always checked on us and our progress , more so than they would have if teaching was in person and therefore vulnerable students were identified quicker.
Law	Actually being able to sit down with myself, study, plan, find out my own work ethic and rhythm. I find I got much more work done doing remote learning than I did during actual school hours.
10.3 Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Writing an exam and having access to resources was very helpful and I felt more prepared and less stressed during the exam.
Science	Learning to better manage time and get new varieties of learning that are largely more accessible than just lectures that weren't recorded.
Commerce	Furthermore, I have been able to structure my day as I wish rather than be tied down by a timetable. Also, time was not wasted by lecturers running late, travelling, and I was able to save travel costs which was nice.
Humanities	Having more time to research and do work, especially with the laptops provided. Initially my time was limited to only using campus equipment for a limited time during the course of the day, as I would still have to travel home. I did not stay on campus. More time was now also easily put into my studies and not spent on traveling. Adequate sleep was achieved, and a somewhat peaceful approach to the work, given there was no rush to have to wake up, get ready, and leave early to avoid the traffic rush, and leave campus later to also avoid as much traffic as possible.
Health Sciences	Studying in your own time and having flexibility to negotiate time-management.

Law	It meant that I could really understand the work as I had the time to explore and do research at the same time as learning the information. This really helped me to grasp concepts fully straight away. The freedom to pause lecture videos as needed meant I was able to make excellent quality, fully comprehensive and researched class notes which really helped with assignments.

10.4 What have been the negatives of remote learning?

Students' experiences seemed to cluster around four main themes:

1. course related factors
2. studying environment
3. personal factors, and
4. internet/power.

Course related factors seemed to be referred to the most. For example, students mentioned communication/support from lecturers/tutors was lacking, an isolated/disconnected learning experience (especially from other students), adapting how they learn, shallow learning/comprehension of content, difficulties with learning, and a large workload.

With regards to their studying environment, students often mentioned noise and distractions, responsibilities outside of studying, space for studying being limited, and conflict within the family. The personal factors students often mentioned related to their own mental health (e.g., stress, anxiety), physical health, and struggling with the motivation/discipline to work. A smaller proportion of students mentioned struggling with power outages and poor internet connections/sufficient internet.

10.4 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	- lack of a quiet place to study. - people at home not understanding the difficulty of your degree as you constantly have to beg them to keep levels of noise down. - running out of data in the middle of the month - depression. - spending a lot of hours on 1 course because of the difficulty of the assignment.
Science	- Unmanageable study content. - Chasing deadlines instead of studying material for understanding. - Writing online tests which are highly vulnerable to plagiarism. - Exclusionary learning for marginalized students, students living in conditions not suitable for e-learning. - Network access to have productive studying - Power outages during tests/exams leading to stress and mental illness.

Commerce	Limited quietness or alone time to study. Multiple and unavoidable distractions. Poor home environment. Limited space to work, shared space is crowded. Stress levels rise tumultuously. Courses give you the notes to get by and the assessments are on such a higher level of difficulty that bridging that gap is tedious.
Humanities	Lack of course engagement. I felt as if I was just learning in order to write a test/essay but not to grow my understanding or strengths in the subject matter. It was as if I studied alone and didn't have a class, as we had no tuts and no engagement whatsoever. It get like I was tackling the course by myself. The tutors were let off the hook in terms of tutoring us and I never heard from some of them the entire term. Just lectures posted daily and then an assignment expected to be handed in, without any option to engage with or chat about the course material in a tut-like manner. It was just churning out work to meet the deadlines. I don't feel like I actually learnt anything this entire term.
Health Sciences	I've had periods of anxiety over academics and the year continuing and that's been difficult to get over, and without the usual student Interaction, it's been hard to find motivation to work. Courses aren't standardised, and some courses have less faculty engagement than others.
Law	Home responsibilities Time No uniformity in delivery Workload Style of assessment Frequency of assessments Weight of assessments Home situation
10.4 Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	All my learning depends on having internet connection and electricity. Very little interaction with classmates and supervisors to informally share ideas and ask questions. Field work is a challenge. Keeping mentally healthy has been difficult with the anxiety around family getting sick, social isolation.
Science	There are some things that are better learned in person.. especially of a practical nature. As an honours student, I worry about the worth of my degree and the skills I'm gaining. We had to sacrifice much of the cool practical components which would have no doubt made me better equipped for future career opportunities. Even though the knowledge I'm gaining is valuable, all I have to show for (besides the on-going thesis) is a couple of essays and other written assignments. These aren't the skills I imagined I'd be gaining in my honours year.

Commerce	No access to uncapped/fast wifi. Lack of engagement with lectures and tutors. No invigilation or supervision during assessments meant most people could just cheat on their assessments. Difficulty interacting with group partners. No structured schedule to plan your life. Miscommunication through lack of emails and lack of face-to-face interaction.
Humanities	It has been challenging to maintain concentration levels (there is always a distraction at home, chores or otherwise) It has been challenging trying to adjust entirely to digital/screen learning and not use books and printed out articles It has been challenging not being able to develop/build relationships with classmates and engage in social learning to the same degree that would have been possible in-person It has been challenging trying to do group work in an online space (sometimes the lecturers were not as prepared as they could be, sometimes the class just couldn't absorb the instructions/guidelines) The semester seemed to drag on, which made it feel like the effort required was more than it would otherwise have been
Health Sciences	Access to resources. An adequate understanding of course material. A lack of understanding, empathy and assistance from course convenors. No positive space to do remote learning. Laptop issues. A reluctance from certain convenors to adjust learning plans and course trajectories to meet the current challenges. No feedback given on assignments in time to incorporate them into second and third assignments.
Law	-Lack of sleep. -Headaches linked to lack of sleep. -Too much noise in the morning. -Unable to download certain books. -Too many readings. -Difficulty with communication.

10.5 What changes would make the remote learning environment better for students?

The most common suggestions seem to relate to:

1. course load
2. communication, interaction and support
3. study space, and
4. course resources and assessments.

Students' suggested the following changes relating to their course load: reduce their workload, spread their work out more, and provide more time for work completion.

Students also commonly suggested: (1) improving the communication between students and lecturers (e.g., more regular communication, reachable, clear and timely), (2) improved support provision (e.g., help sessions, greater leniency, feedback), (3) increased interaction (e.g., have live sessions, tutorials, group work).

They also recommended letting students return to their residences and improving data provision.

10.5 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Some form of peer interaction every two weeks with different people. Have new discussion groups with new groups every 2 weeks where topics are discussed. For example, a tut question can have a discussion group, where everyone should have read the question and formed opinions then can meet with group once or twice and discuss it. Also gives people the chance to socialize.
Science	If all courses could release a easy-to-understand timetable of when work will be released, what topics will be covered each week, and when assessments will occur, this allows students to budget their time accordingly
Commerce	Actually reduce, spread out the course load (most subjects just released last year's lecture videos at the same rate as usual), more academic support, understanding
Humanities	More time, more patience, better structures for course management and a realistic time frame for assignments.
Health Sciences	I was fine with my course, but many of my friends in other courses told me that they weren't learning anything and were rather working from one deadline to the next because they had so many tests and assignments and so they didn't have time to consolidate the info. Easing up of these things in certain courses would help
Law	Being able to resume remote learning in residences A greater frequency of less-time consuming assessments A level of uniformity across courses Receiving all the content at the beginning of the term as it becomes very difficult to follow constant new resources and changed lecture plans, especially as emails are not under the zero-rated plan
10.5 Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Often too many emails sent from uct/ src/ faculty. Keeping track of these and important course announcements can be overwhelming. Vula's features are brilliant, but trying to keep track of chats, forums, blogs, emails is too much. Keeping it simple is sometimes best.
Science	As an Honours student, I was expecting my workload to increase this year even without remote learning. I found it difficult to know how fast I needed to work

	through content and assignments, because we were generally given content to work through completely in our own time, with no reinforced timeframes. I would have found it helpful to have weekly quizzes to give me an idea of required weekly progress and/or some sort of calendar guideline of when work was to be completed. As it was, I felt very overwhelmed and directionless and found it difficult to manage my time, especially amidst other mental issues that came with lockdown.
Commerce	Ensuring that ALL students have access to mobile data. UCT only provided data for Cell C, MTN, Vodacom and sometimes Telkom to South African students. All other service providers and international students were left behind.
Humanities	All those in residences where social distancing is possible should be allowed to return. This would eliminate issues of internet access, household responsibilities, financial stressors would be reduced, no need to deal with conflict in the home and a safe, secure environment to study and learn and take care of yourself
Health Sciences	More online engagements. I also think any form of timed tests are unfair. Testing needs to be adapted for the variations in internet access uncertainty experienced by individual students.
Law	Professors need to make more time for students. There must be an interaction between supervisors and students. There was barely an interaction between my supervisor and myself which is very difficult because in the end, the expectations are the same, however, I feel like I can't fulfill them properly.

10.6 What have you learned about yourself or your learning strategies in the remote learning environment in Term 2 that you can apply for Term 3?

Students referred to learnings around the following: (1) time management, (2) study spaces e.g., referring to their need for a particular space, (3) learning methods/strategies e.g., how to order the resources, which resources to use, whether they worked better independently or with others, and (4) personal characteristics e.g., that they are resilient, adaptable, disciplined, do not cope well under pressure.

Learnings around time management seem to be the most commonly noted. For example, some students recognised that they lacked in time management skills, or that they had learnt lessons around it (e.g., the importance of setting aside time for work and rest), and how it was helpful developing a schedule/timetable and planning how they would use their time and following a particular routine.

10.6 Undergraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	Working on things (assignments, lectures etc.) as soon as I get them instead of delaying them to work on other projects/ assignments- structuring my work week
Science	Regardless of all the difficulties I experienced, I did much better than I expected, a lot better than I did in term 1. I had a studying time table and I followed it, I was more disciplined because I knew what my home conditions were like so I had to use every opportunity I had to study to my full advantage. At res I was a bit relaxed because I knew I had all the time.
Commerce	I've learnt to just take every day as it comes and just focus on my goals. I've learnt that I can take a lot more than I imagined I've learnt that being away from campus just hurts in so many ways I've learnt not to be so hard on myself and that a grade book mark doesn't define my future.
Humanities	I need to set up a schedule and stick to it. I found that because I was left to do the work in my own time, I either took full advantage of that, or I only did lecture slides and never focused on the upcoming assignments. So, I definitely should focus on time management.
Health Sciences	I work through lectures slower than most. I have to make my own notes (I can't use other people's). Repetition of the work is key.
Law	I applied a variety of learning strategies I used in the past and they were helpful in the adjustment. I have improved my time management, but it is still highly affected by the home responsibilities I have.
10.6 Postgraduate Experiences	
Engineering and the Built Environment	To write my ideas down before having a meeting with the supervisor or the class because when now online it easy to forget and becomes difficult to express myself
Science	So taking better breaks, and actually enjoying the breaks - not using the break to do "lighter work" or read emails. A break is a break and absolutely no work is allowed to be done during a break. It helps to separate the two like that.
Commerce	- Continue to use my monthly calendar to map my tasks due dates and prepare - Attempt to have dedicated time for school work- this has been difficult - Be realistic and do not put unnecessary pressure on myself.

Humanities	I need to find more study partners to bring back the collaborative and social spirit of learning together in a class, that helped a lot the once or twice I did it.
Health Sciences	give yourself enough time. Create a flexible study time table/routine. speak up early if you're struggling. don't be scared to ask for help
Law	I am very structured and self-disciplined and thus have not had many problems in terms of my own progress during Term 2. The main issue has been the lack of engagement with lecturers and supervisors, which means it has been a largely solitary endeavour.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Included below (web browser print view from Qualtrics online delivery).

UCT Emergency Remote Teaching Student Experience Survey

Demographics

Dear Student,

UCT would like to understand your experiences of emergency remote teaching over the last 3 months to improve your learning experience during the second semester, some or all of which may be taught online. This survey is in addition to any course evaluations which you may recently have completed.

This survey will take approximately **14 minutes** to complete.

The **primary purpose of the survey is to improve teaching and learning at UCT**, particularly within this period of remote teaching. Survey results, which may include direct quotations, will be shared within the UCT community to help inform course design and improve support for students where possible. Free text responses will be summarised, and any identifying information will be removed prior to dissemination or publication of results. Survey results may also be written up for general scholarly publication. This survey is designed and delivered by the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) in the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED), on behalf of the UCT Teaching Online Task Team and Postgradute Online Task Team.

Participation in this survey is **voluntary**, and your response is **anonymous and confidential** (although you should avoid including any information which identifies you personally)**.** Continuing with the survey will be taken as an indication that you consent to participate, and you understand that your responses may form part of internal survey summaries for the UCT community and may also be included in scholarly publications. Your survey responses will also be shared with your Faculty. You may withdraw from the survey at any point prior to final submission, and there are no negative consequences for doing so. Most questions in this survey are optional, and you do not need to respond to any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. There are no foreseeable risks arising from your participation in this study, nor will you gain any direct benefit.

This survey has been approved by the CHED Research Ethics Committee [CHED2020_16_ Marquard] and the Department of Student Affairs [DSA100 01-07-2020].

For any queries about the survey or if you have difficulty completing it, please email help@vula.uct.ac.za

If you are concerned about an aspect of your studies or circumstances and **need help but are not sure what to do next,** UCT_Cares can help resolve or direct your query appropriately. To get in touch with UCT_Cares, email uctcares@uct.ac.za.

Sincerely,
University of Cape Town

Please confirm your participation:

☐ I understand what the survey entails and voluntarily agree to participate.

Academics

Faculty (required*):

- ◯ Commerce
- ◯ Engineering & the Built Environment
- ◯ Health Sciences
- ◯ Humanities
- ◯ Law
- ◯ Science

Level of study (required*):

- ◯ Undergraduate
- ◯ Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)
- ◯ Honours
- ◯ Masters

Are you on an extended degree programme?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Year of study in your current programme (required*):

- ◯ 1st
- ◯ 2nd
- ◯ 3rd
- ◯ 4th
- ◯ 5th
- ◯ 6th
- ◯ 7th and above

Were you living in a UCT residence during term 1 (required*)?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Home and study circumstances

My living circumstances during term 2 were suitable for studying and learning online:

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

I faced the following challenges studying remotely (check all that apply):

- ☐ Slow or unreliable Internet connection
- ☐ Insufficient mobile data or capped ISP connection
- ☐ Shared access to a laptop / computer
- ☐ Family or caring responsibilities
- ☐ Work / job commitments
- ☐ Lack of a quiet study space
- ☐ Mental health challenges (e.g. anxiety, stress, depression)
- ☐ Physical health challenges (e.g. illness, fatigue)
- ☐ Food security (insufficient access to healthy food)
- ☐ Housing security (uncertainty about having somewhere to live)
- ☐ Physical safety and security
- ☐ Financial stresses
- ☐ Other ____

On average, I spent the following hours a day studying in a typical week, including weekends:

- ◯ Less than 1 hour
- ◯ 1 to 3 hours
- ◯ 4 to 6 hours
- ◯ 7 to 9 hours
- ◯ 10 or more hours

I typically studied at these times of day (check all that apply):

- ☐ Morning
- ☐ Afternoon
- ☐ Evening
- ☐ During the night

I had sufficient time for remote learning

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

I had sufficient data for remote learning

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

How much daytime data per month do you think is sufficient for all remote learning needs?

- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ 5 GB
- ◯ 10 GB
- ◯ 15 GB
- ◯ 20 GB
- ◯ 30 GB
- ◯ 40 GB
- ◯ 50 GB
- ◯ More than 50 GB

Start-up/preparation for remote learning

Did you participate in the online **orientation programme** (20-24 April) before starting Term 2?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Please mention up to three things that were most helpful about the orientation phase of remote learning (optional)

1

2

3

What changes would improve the orientation experience? Please mention up to three (optional)

1

2

3

I felt prepared for remote learning at the start of **Term 2**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

After one term of remote learning, I feel prepared for remote learning in **Term 3**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

My course convenors sent announcements or emails about what to expect in the remote learning environment

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Experience of course load

At the start of the first semester (before we went online), I was enrolled for the following number of courses (check one option):

- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3
- ◯ 4
- ◯ More than 4

I found the course load manageable during the remote teaching term:

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

I decided to drop one or more courses to manage my course load

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

What strategies did you find most helpful to manage your course load?

Experience of online environment

The Vula site I **liked the most** was easy to navigate (I could easily find what I needed, and it was clear what I needed to do)

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

The Vula site I **liked the least** was easy to navigate (I could easily find what I needed, and it was clear what I needed to do)

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

I used the following tools (check all that apply):

- ☐ Vula Lessons (content pages)
- ☐ Vula Resources
- ☐ Vula Lecture Videos
- ☐ Vula Forums
- ☐ Vula Chat
- ☐ Vula Tests & Quizzes
- ☐ Vula Assignments
- ☐ TurnitIn
- ☐ WhatsApp
- ☐ MS Teams
- ☐ Zoom
- ☐ Other

Experience of course content

There was too much course content for the hours allocated

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

How much of your learning material did you feel you had adequately grasped?

- ◯ All of it
- ◯ Most of it
- ◯ Some of it
- ◯ None of it

The course included online resources or activities which I felt excluded from because I couldn't access or participate in them easily:

- ◯ Never
- ◯ Rarely

- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Often

My course content was delivered in the following formats (check all that apply):

- ☐ Short lecture videos (less than 30 mins)
- ☐ Longer lecture videos (more than 30 mins)
- ☐ PowerPoint slides
- ☐ Readings/notes
- ☐ Textbook
- ☐ Live sessions
- ☐ Podcasts/audio
- ☐ Other: [ ]

I found the following course content formats useful for my learning (check all that apply):

- ☐ Short lecture videos (less than 30 mins)
- ☐ Longer lecture videos (more than 30 mins)
- ☐ PowerPoint slides
- ☐ Readings/notes
- ☐ Textbook
- ☐ Live sessions
- ☐ Podcasts/audio
- ☐ Other: [ ]

The videos in my courses had captions and/or a transcript

- ◯ Usually
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Never
- ◯ I don’t know
- ◯ My courses didn't have any videos

Video transcripts were helpful (check all that apply):

- ☐ As an alternative to watching the video
- ☐ In addition to watching the video
- ☐ To find a particular point in a video that I wanted to watch
- ☐ To create notes or summaries
- ☐ To refer back to when revising

Video captions (subtitles) were helpful because (check all that apply):

- [ ] I could watch lecture videos without sound
- [ ] The captions helped my understanding of the content
- [ ] The captions helped me follow when the lecturer's voice was not clear
- [ ] The captions helped me recognize unusual terms

I have a disability and require content in accessible formats

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Was content provided in accessible formats for you? (check all that apply):

- [ ] Yes, accessible content was available in all my course sites
- [ ] Yes, accessible content was provided via Disability Services
- [ ] No, I was not provided with accessible content

If you had accessibility challenges with any of the courses please describe what those were:

Experience of social interactions

I felt connected to others in my class in the remote learning space

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

I was able to engage productively online with other students in the course, through Vula, other UCT-provided platforms (e.g. Zoom or Teams), WhatsApp or social media

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Please tell us about your experience of social interactions in your class community:

I was able to access academic support from my course convenor, lecturers or tutor

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Please tell us about your experience of accessing academic support:

Experience of assessments

My assessments included the following (check all that apply):

- ☐ Timed tests or quizzes
- ☐ Untimed tests or quizzes
- ☐ Projects
- ☐ Essays
- ☐ Written assignments
- ☐ Oral assignments
- ☐ Video assignments
- ☐ Practicals
- ☐ Other:

My projects included or required the following (check all that apply):

- ☐ Individual projects
- ☐ Collaborative projects
- ☐ Access to labs

- [ ] Access to software
- [ ] Access to technical resources
- [ ] Ability to do field work or face-to-face interviews for data collection
- [ ] Access to studios and necessary resources for Architecture, Planning, Geomatics activities

Please tell us about your experience of projects:

I found the assessments manageable in terms of **time** in the remote learning environment

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

I found the assessments manageable in terms of **difficulty** in the remote learning environment

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

I had challenges with assessments for the following reasons (check all that apply):

- [ ] Internet connectivity
- [ ] Running out of data
- [ ] Power interruptions
- [ ] Managing my time and workload
- [ ] Understanding the assessment instructions
- [ ] Using the Vula tools for assessments
- [ ] Working with my group remotely
- [ ] Needing to use external software
- [ ] Responsibilities at home
- [ ] Lack of a suitable quiet study space
- [ ] Too many assessments to do at the same time
- [ ] Other:

I had sufficient support to assist me with any issues I had with remote assessments

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Please describe any challenges you had with remote assessments:

Support Services

Which student support services **have you used** during remote learning (check all that apply):

- ☐ Student Wellness
- ☐ Disability Services
- ☐ UCT Cares
- ☐ UCT Library
- ☐ Writing Centre
- ☐ Faculty Advisors

Which student support services **have you found useful** during remote learning (check all that apply):

- ☐ Student Wellness
- ☐ Disability Services
- ☐ UCT Cares
- ☐ UCT Library
- ☐ Writing Centre
- ☐ Faculty Advisors

What have been the positives of remote learning?

What have been the negatives of remote learning?

What changes would make the remote learning environment better for students?

What have you learned about yourself or your learning strategies in the remote learning environment in Term 2 that you can apply for Term 3?

© University of Cape Town, 2020

Powered by Qualtrics

Insights from the ERT Student Experience Survey

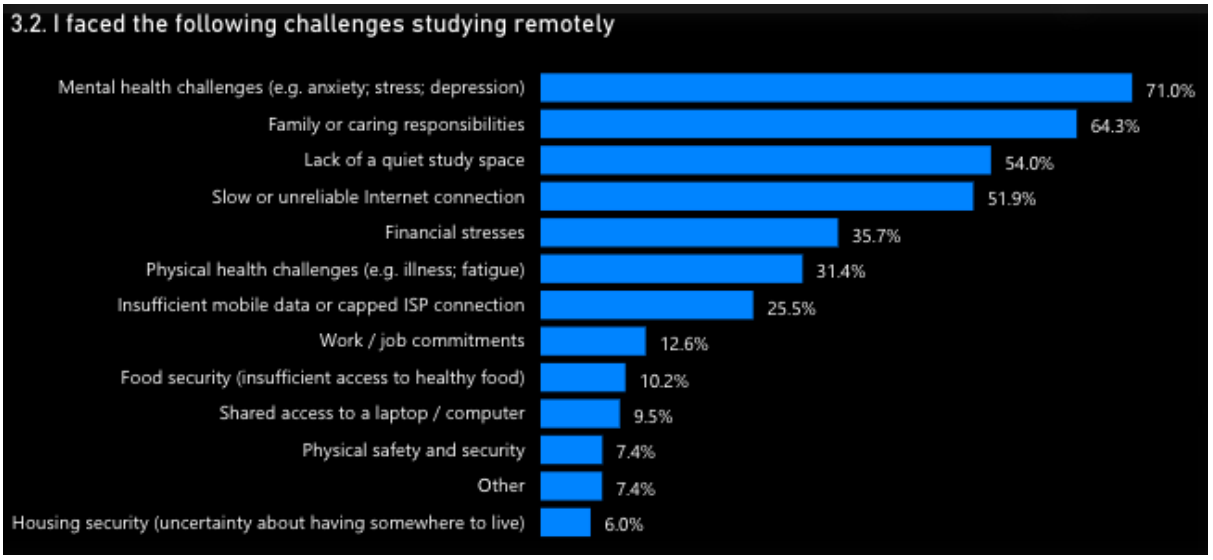
Published 24 July 2020

UCT surveyed students from 2 to 15 July 2020 about their experience of Emergency Remote Teaching, attracting responses from **3818** students. Here are 9 insights from the survey which you can act on for your Semester 2 course:

Student mental health
Course content overload
Course site design
Assessments
Social connectedness
Data
Videos
Synchronous tools
Great job!

1. Student mental health

The challenge the highest proportion of students faced was mental health (for example anxiety, stress or depression), cited by **2518** students:

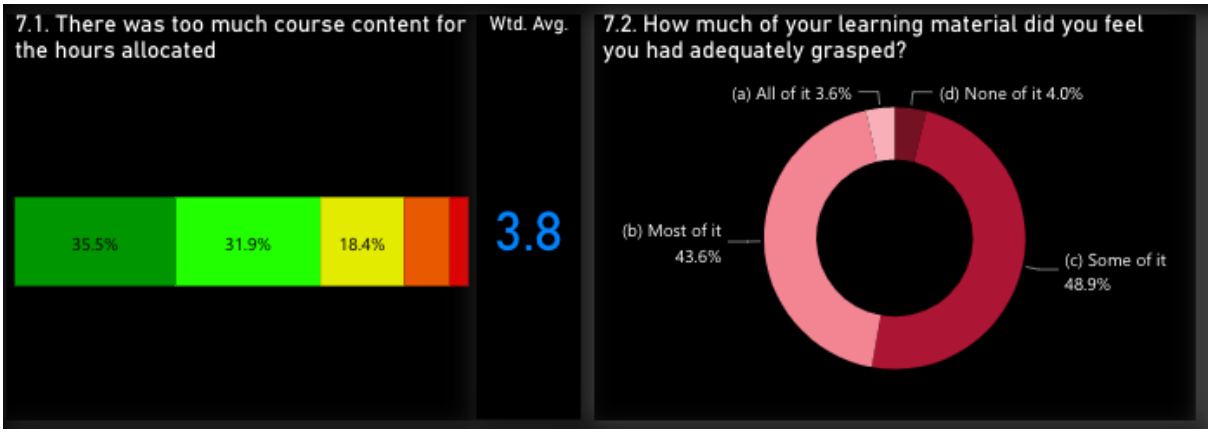


How you can help:

- Promote healthy behaviours that support physical and mental wellness. The Remote Learning Orientation Guide includes a number of suggestions.
- Consider developing a peer-buddy system so that students can support each other (for example through WhatsApp, Vula Forums, or Tut groups).
- Have regular check-ins to find out how students are coping with the workload. Tutors can also be assigned to do check-ins with groups on a regular basis.
- If you're aware of students who are struggling, encourage them to contact Student Wellness. Students can also email uctcares@uct.ac.za for assistance with more complex issues, or if they are unsure of who can help them resolve a particular problem.

2. Course content overload

Most students felt there was too much course content for the available time, and only **3.6%** of students who responded felt that they had grasped all of the learning material in their courses adequately:

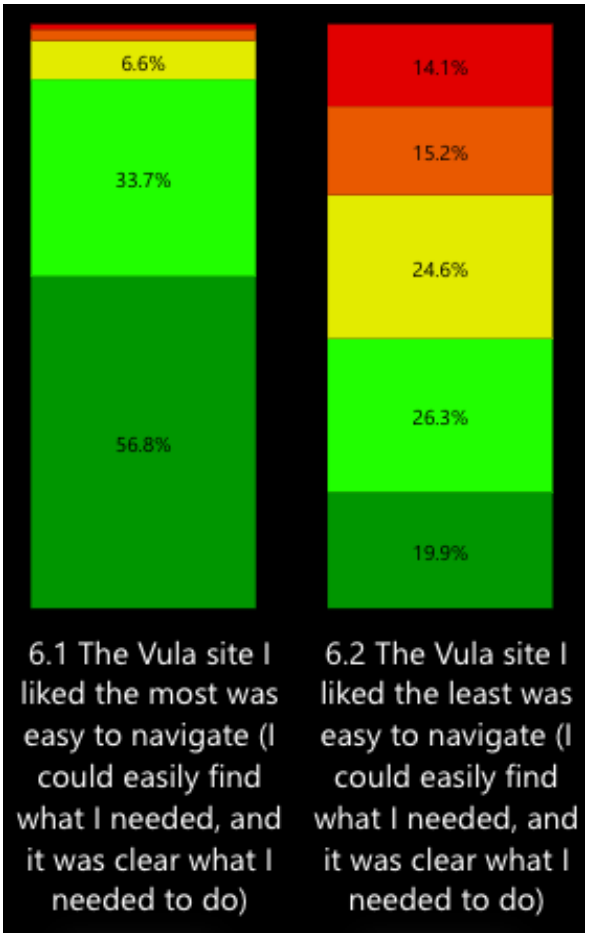


What you can do:

- Review your course using the Remote Teaching Checklist, with specific attention to content and workload.
- Estimate time per activity (see Calculating Student workload time) and provide guidelines to students as instructional text.
- Distinguish between core and additional content so that students who are pressed for time can focus on core content.
- Refer students who are still struggling with workload to Faculty advisors, to consider the possibility of dropping courses to reduce overall workload.

3. Course site design

Students appreciate Vula sites which are well designed and easy to navigate. There is a large satisfaction gap between sites they liked the most and the least:

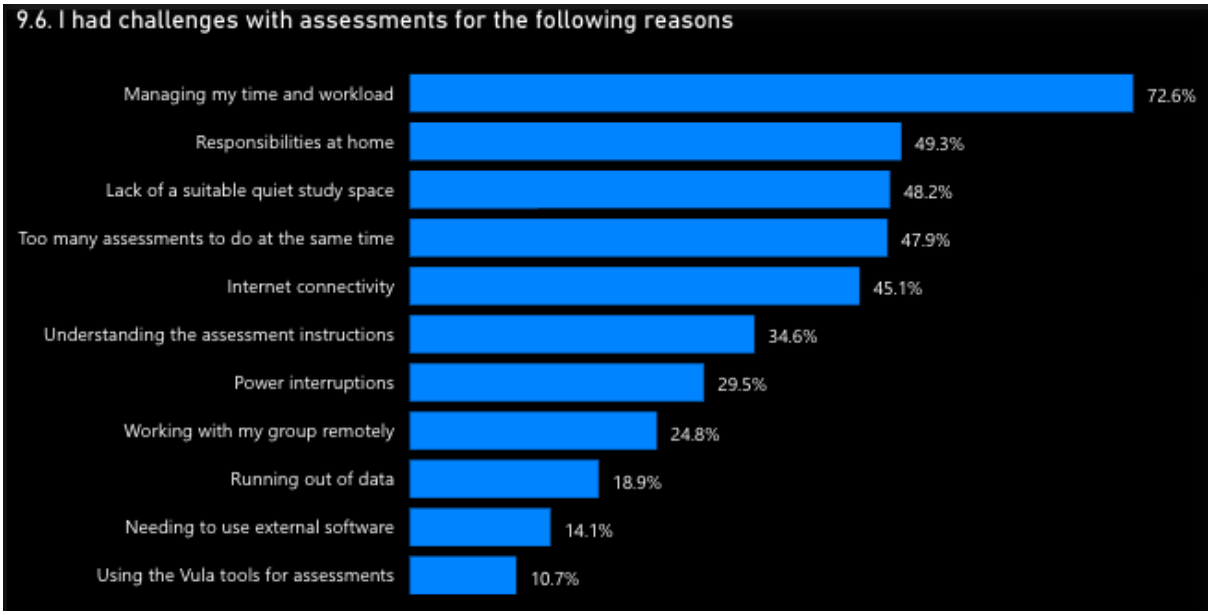


What you can do:

- Pay attention to site design, navigation, scaffolding, and clear instructions (the Remote Teaching Checklist can help you work through these systematically).
- Make use of Lessons in Vula (but avoid too many sub-pages in the left menu bar).
- Ask for a course review of your site design through a Hands-on Help consultation.
- Label files and organise folders in Resources in Vula so that information is easy to find and use.
- In the site Overview tool on Vula, offer an explanation on how the course is set up and how you expect students to engage and learn on the Vula site.
- Use tools wisely: too many tools can become confusing to students.
- Pay attention to the organisation of the site left menu bar on Vula.
- Scaffold any new tool introduced, as students may not know how to use it at first.

4. Assessments

Many of the difficulties which students faced with assessments arose from their personal and home circumstances. A surprisingly large number of students (1454, **38%** of all respondents) reported difficulties **understanding the assessment instructions.**

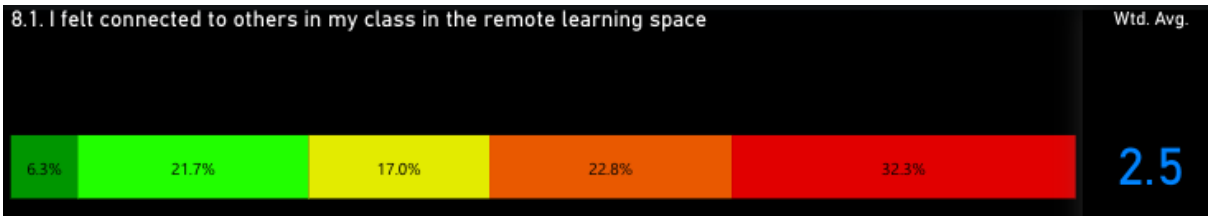


What you can do:

- Provide clearer instructions for assessments, and simplify tasks if needed.
- Give students a practice run for a new or unfamiliar assessment format and allow the opportunity to ask questions for clarification.
- Explain the assessment task through formats such as an audio / voice note or short video clip rather than only having a text / written version of it.
- Provide rubrics so students know how they will be graded and which aspects to focus on.

Social connectedness

Students did not feel strongly connected to other students in the online education space.

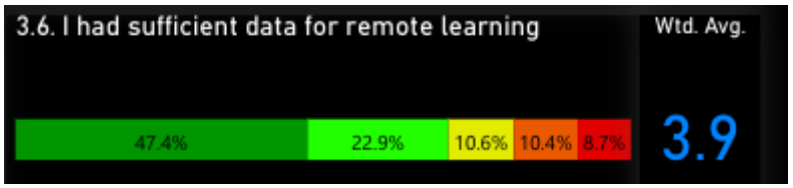


What you can do:

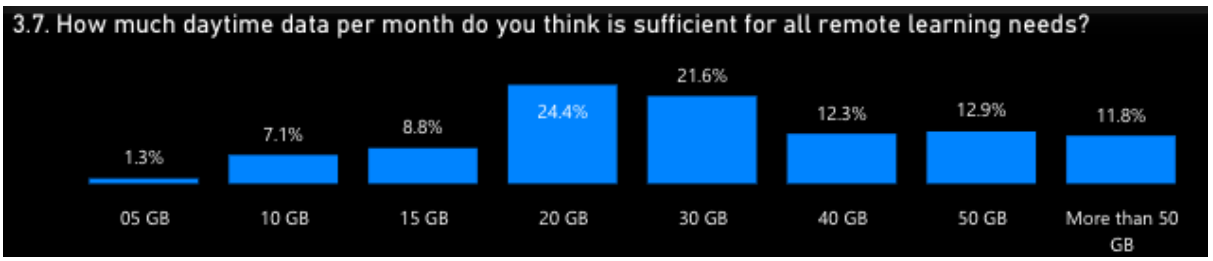
- Establish a peer-buddy system in which students can check on each other and offer moral support where necessary.
- Suggest that students connect with each other through WhatsApp groups or other social media platforms (respecting that not all students may wish to do so).
- Use group activities so that students can mix with different students and those who they know.
- Incorporate collaborative activities so that students can work together towards a particular goal.
- Incorporate short online ice-breakers where students can learn about each other and connect (can be thematised according to the topic or module) - this could be included as a tutorial group too.

5. Data

Nearly 20% of students surveyed thought they had insufficient data for remote learning. This is higher in faculties such as Commerce, EBE, Science, and Health Sciences where students are expected to access more external websites:



Most students believed that 10G of daytime data per month was insufficient:

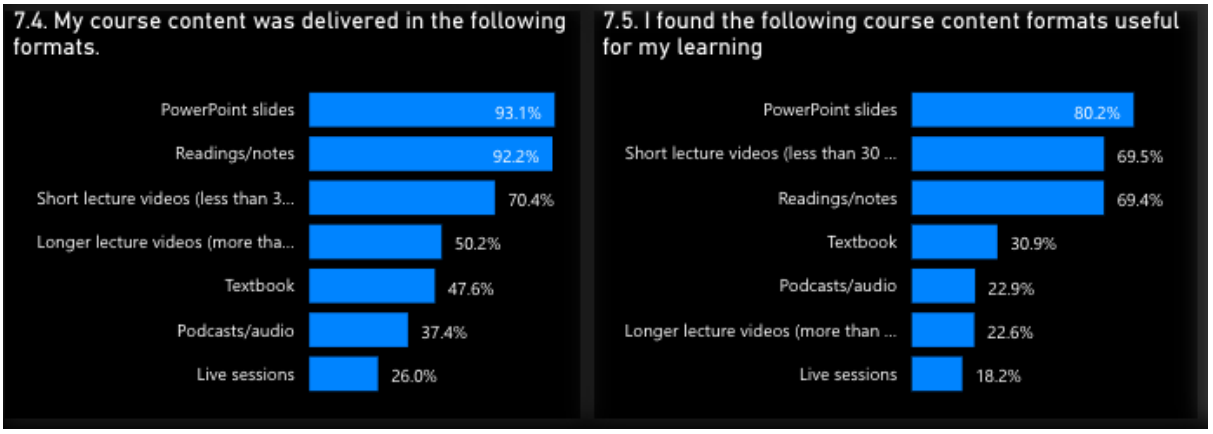


What you can do:

- Estimate data use of non-zero-rated resources which students need to use or access using the Data usage guidelines.
- Limit synchronous activities which incur data costs, such as live video meetups.
- Place copies of resources on Vula or other zero-rated sites where feasible.
- Embed files on Vula which students can access rather than requiring them to download files from external sites.

6. Videos

While many courses used longer lecture videos (30 minutes or longer), students strongly preferred shorter lecture videos.



When transcripts were provided, students found these helpful for a range of purposes, including creating notes or summaries and referring back when revising. Students found captions helpful when the lecturer's voice was unclear, to understand the content and recognize unusual terms.

What you can do:

- Break up longer lecture videos into smaller parts.
- Aim for a target length of between 5 and 10 minutes for new videos.
- Request captions and transcripts for audio and video material, unless the video is in the form of slides which include all of the spoken text.

Synchronous tools

While a number of courses used **live sessions** (synchronous tools such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams), not all students found these useful.

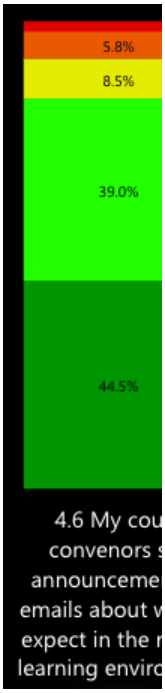
What you can do:

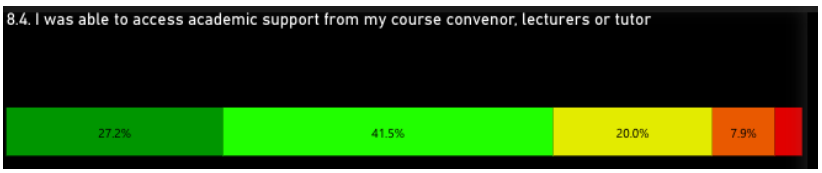
- Use synchronous interaction only where necessary, following the synchronous guidelines to take into account data and time constraints faced by students.
- If you plan on using live sessions, it is especially important to ask all students if this is possible and useful. Students' experiences of the same live session can vary widely.
- Record synchronous live meetups so students who are not able to attend can watch it at a time when it is more convenient for them. Trim the recording if possible and where necessary.

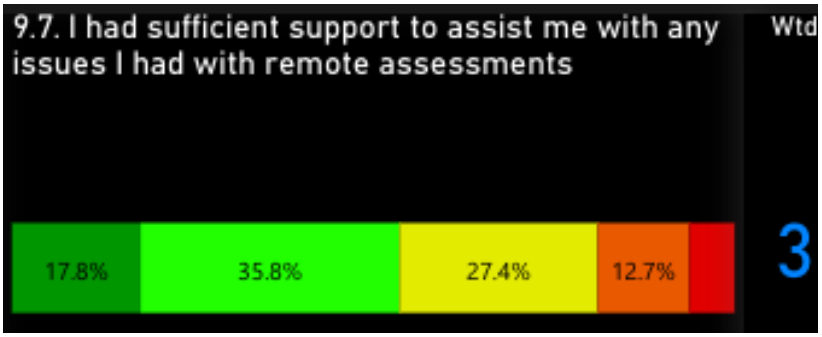
- Ask students what times and durations could work for them when planning synchronous sessions where possible.
- Limit the live sessions to not more than 2 hours, or include breaks
- Assign roles where a student or tutor can monitor the chat room if there are any questions or comments; as well as someone who can assist others who may have difficulty in joining or participating in live sessions.
- Establish a clear protocol on how to communicate in live sessions: for example, mute mic when not speaking; turn on video when speaking (if students are comfortable with this); raise hand when wanting to contribute.

7. Great job!

The majority of students reported that course convenors communicated well with them about what to expect, that they were able to access academic support when needed, and that they got appropriate support when they ran into issues with remote assessments.







TIPS FOR ERT FROM UCT STUDENTS

Time Management

> **Working consistently**. Working hard in the week and then resting on the weekends, as a reward. Working at similar times each day, keeping a day diary, creating a work and study timetable.
>
> 3rd year Commerce student

> I made sure that **I came up with a routine or schedule** for myself to follow every day and had to-do lists and knew when my assignments were due.
>
> 2nd year Science student

What you can do:

- Make a realistic schedule and stick to it
- Maintain a balanced routine
  - Choose a good time to study
  - Choose a suitable learning space
  - Rest
  - Practice healthy habits
- Work consistently and be disciplined
  - Minimise distractions

TIPS FOR ERT

> Time management, which comes down to **self-discipline**, balancing work time with relaxing time, and getting daily exercise done, which boosts concentration and improves your mood.
>
> 3rd year Humanities student

> I do well in one set environment, in my own space and when my responsibilities aren't too much. **I simply need my own space** and then I can move forward accordingly.
>
> 2nd year Humanities student

Social Connection

What you can do:

- Take part in a peer-buddy system
- Connect with other students through WhatsApp groups, social media, or Vula tools like Forums and Chat
- Take part in online ice-breakers

> Having a separate group of friends who do the same courses to **hold each other responsible** and keep each other updated with deadlines and goals.
>
> 4th year EBE student

> Working with classmates to **keep each other on track and focused**. Whatsapp group reminding each other of deadlines and sharing helpful articles and/or offering support.
>
> Health Sciences Master's student

> I kept in touch with all my friends that I have common courses with. we would **study together via video calls** and this really helped and I didn't feel alone anymore.
>
> 2nd year Humanities student

> Need to discuss course content with other students to check for my understanding. I need to actually **engage with content** and not simply just listen to what a teacher says through a video. Discuss, discuss, discuss!
>
> Health Sciences Master's student

Reaching Out

> I was actually really struggling and under pressure. I was about to drop one of my majors but I first **contacted my course convener** and he helped me. So I ended up keeping all my courses.
>
> 4th year Humanities student

What you can do:

Ask for help when you need it:

- For course-related matters, reach out to other students, your tutors, lecturer, course convenor or Faculty advisor
- Contact Student Wellness for mental health concerns
- Email uctcares@uct.ac.za for complex issues or if you are unsure

> Have a routine (and stick to it), exercise, get enough sleep. **Ask for help** when need be, don't just try and take it all on alone.
>
> 1st year Science student

> Teams meetings with classmates to work together. **WhatsApp group chats to ask for and give help**. Asking for and receiving reasonable extensions for hand-ins.
>
> Honours student in Science

Study Approaches

What you can do:

Think about how you order your work. Try:

- Doing more difficult tasks first or last
- Working with new material as it is released
- Working on assignments as soon as they are released
- Focusing on one course a day or working on all courses every day
- Setting aside particular days for coursework and for assignments

> I focused more on the most demanding courses first and be ahead then I tried to cover the work for the less demanding courses.
>
> 1st year Health Sciences student

> Dedicating one full day to each course and then spreading assignments/ tutorial work over the rest of the week.
>
> 2nd year Humanities student

> Getting assignments done as soon as I get them in order to give myself more time to study for tests and do other work.
>
> 2nd year Commerce student

Insights from the UCT ERT Student Experience Survey, July 2020

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD