

Stack 'em deep and teach 'em cheap

Policy paper on large-scale operations within education

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Introduction

The Department of Business Communication (BCOM) is a student rich teaching environment with more than 2,300 full-time students. Despite large student numbers and a resulting potential for large-scale operations, teaching activities are too expensive. Consequently, the department is expected to cut teaching related costs. This challenge is mirrored in a general trend towards a heightened focus on economic efficiency within higher education (e.g. Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992). Along with an increased focus on economic efficiency, more youths are expected to get university degrees. With an increase in student numbers also comes an increase in student diversity in terms of e.g. age, experience and background (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). The challenges posed by cost reduction must thus be seen in relation to a growing, more diverse student population. In other words, staff is encouraged to 'stack 'em deep and teach 'em cheap'. In our paper, we address the challenges faced by BCOM to reduce teaching costs. Our focus is to highlight options available and to discuss the possibilities and limitations of those options.

Potentially, there are several ways to reduce the resources allocated for teaching activities. However, we focus on three namely 1) to use student teaching assistants 2) to increase class sizes and 3) to create online learning environments.

All three options have potential limitations e.g. a lower staff-student ratio (fewer staff members per student) (Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992). A low staff-student ratio puts increasing pressure on staff members, may lead to higher student anonymity and loneliness (Ward & Jenkins, 1992) and may have a negative effect on student learning (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). However, as Gibbs & Jenkins (1992) argue, reduced resources also have the potential for carrying positive implications. One positive outcome is that it encourages teachers to reconsider how they teach and to change their methods: "If you care about quality but cannot increase resources then you have no option but to change methods" (Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992, p. 19). Similarly, Webster (1992, p. 139) suggests that the pressures on teachers have resulted in pedagogy that "is more imaginative and interesting".

We address both possibilities and limitations of the three options with the aim of establishing tentative recommendations for BCOM. The recommendations highlight different aspects of importance for future attempts to reduce the costs of the department's teaching activities. Possibilities and limitations are identified and discussed in relation to existing literature as well as experiences from BCOM's teaching staff. Knowledge of the experiences has been obtained through a series of informational conversations with staff members. The purpose of the conversations has been to uncover 1) if and how the three options are/have been in use at the department and 2) the advantages and disadvantages encountered. As such, the conversations help to determine to what extent the tendencies addressed in the literature are supported by practical experiences at the department. In addition, the experiences are helpful in articulating recommendations targeted towards the situation at BCOM.

To use student teaching assistants (STAs)

STAs play integral roles in Anglophone universities. Given the degree of imitation by Danish institutions of policies and strategies adopted by such universities, it is highly probable that existing frameworks for STAs will be adopted in part or wholesale. Accordingly, the recent literature on STAs can offer useful lessons, although allowance must obviously be made for the different economic, cultural, social and political contexts.

Can such models deliver satisfactory learning outcomes? Notably, accounts are broadly in agreement about the potential value of STAs. Surveying the literature, Kathryn Sutherland points to “decades of research that provides evidence for their effectiveness as university employees”, but – crucially – deplors the reluctance by administrations to commit resources to skilling and supporting their activities (Sutherland, 2009). She argues: “However, potential issues arise when student tutors are employed with similar expectations of expertise and experience as the industry professionals and permanent staff they teach alongside” (Sutherland, 2009). The literature stresses pedagogical and administrative challenges which face STAs and their employers.

Lave and Wenger refer to “legitimate peripheral participants” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The overriding challenge is to turn STAs into such participants. Incorporating generations of students into the “community of practice” of a department is not a straightforward task. Sutherland insists that integration must be part of “a carefully designed learning programme” (Sutherland, 2009). A recognition of which roles can be filled by STAs must be central to decision-making and curriculum-design. Expectations must be properly calibrated. Universities must also be conscious of the expectations placed on STAs not only by the senior staff, but also by fellow students. In questionnaires to STAs, Sutherland found pronounced concerns about professional adequacy among all but one respondent (Sutherland, 2009). Recommendations include regular meetings with course coordinators, formalized mentoring opportunities, clear guidelines for seminars and marking, and expectations communicated clearly and early around role, resources and status (Sutherland, 2009).

A survey of Australian programs includes a list of issues identified by STAs as vital for optimal performance:

- Payment for extra activities (training, planning and preparation)
- Provision of training in the use of teaching tools (online course resources, audio-visuals etc.)
- Provision of, and encouragement in, professional development activities
- Opportunities to get to know other staff (both full-time and part-time) in their School or Department;
- Access to facilities (such as computers, internet, email, printers, phone, photocopier, stationary etc)
- Recognition for good performance, and feedback on performance (from supervisor and/or peers)
- Awareness or relevant policies and institutional documents/procedures (Chalmers et al, 2003).

Hogan et al emphasise the “period of maturation” needed to develop, trial and perfect STA programs. They recommend mandatory seminars which include material on “course organization, evaluation procedures” and – even – videotaping of STAs (Hogan et al., 2007). Such seminars should discuss “the entire course: its organization, management, record-keeping, evaluation, and other such teaching functions” (Hogan et al, p.187). The authors are adamant that such programs - if properly executed - can generate positive learning outcomes. Indeed, they conclude that STAs promote student activity: “Enriching the overall learning experience by use of UTAs [undergraduate teaching assistants] is probably the principal benefit to other students” (Hogan et al., 2007).

The literature insists on the need for sufficient resources for STA integration, to the degree this model cannot – in the short term – be considered a cost-cutting exercise. As Sutherland notes, the use of STAs is “best encouraged through sufficient and systematic support from full members of the university teaching community. Faculty and administrators should recognise student tutors’ lack of pedagogical and subject expertise, while harnessing and nurturing their energy, understanding, and closeness to the undergraduate student experience” (Sutherland, 2009).

However, questions remain. What about the complexities of language instruction? Are official requirements for ‘research-based’ teaching necessarily complied with if student access to

senior staff is restricted to the lecture theatre? Moreover, the literature rarely addresses subject knowledge. Can inadequate subject knowledge be alleviated by close supervision and meticulous planning? To what degree can STAs be entrusted with complex or “slippery” topics? Encouraging critical thinking is an oft-stated ambition. Are STAs capable of lifting that particular task? A recent survey in the Sheffield University social science department showed that students even found doctoral students serving as STAs lacking in “a sound, overall knowledge of the subject” or having knowledge which was “too specific and narrow when compared to academic staff” (Muzaka, 2009). Nonetheless, evaluations found seminars run by STAs worthwhile, in part because “their recent university experience gives them additional awareness and knowledge of what might work best for students in this setting” (Muzaka, 2009). Muzaka lists additional points made by undergraduate students about STAs, namely that they “are not afraid to try new methods of running the seminar”, “tend to be more open to ideas from the group” and “are better at using technology and IT” (Muzaka, 2009). Crucially, student criticism centred not on STA performance, but on the coordination between lectures and seminars.

Invariably, the literature cites academic development and recruitment of potential postgraduate students as a benefit. Namely, that the role of STA constitutes an important “stepping-stone” for potential postgraduates which vastly accelerates learning and professional acclimatisation. By teaching and interacting with senior staff, these students become part of a community of practice. This is without a doubt a welcome bonus, yet the continued prominence given to this argument is noteworthy, especially when contrasted with the somewhat surprising scarcity of documentation about student learning outcomes in seminars taught by STAs.

It is doubtful that significant additional funding will flow to teaching or that the ranks of tenured staff will grow or – even – be replenished. STAs will play an increasing part in the teaching environment. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that STAs are an administrative response to economic and strategic pressures rather than a pedagogical “silver bullet”. Accordingly, while such models might potentially satisfy calls for economic accountability, it is vital to commit sufficient resources to building robust and sustainable frameworks.

Reflections on student teaching assistants at the (former) Aarhus School of Business

Aarhus School of Business has a longstanding tradition of using STAs to supervise exercises of 20-30 students to supplement traditional lecturing by senior staff in classes from 30 up to 350 students.

One example is IT in Business – a five ECTS course consisting of two lecture lessons per week for 10 weeks and two seminar lessons per week for 13 weeks. This course is mandatory for BScb and BA(MMC) students during their first semester. Senior staff members provide lecture sessions (100-300 students in each of the five lecture groups). Seminars consist of classroom-based discussions and problem-solving exercises in support of the lecture series. They are taught by STAs in classes of around 25 students. Each STA has responsibility for two seminar groups. The final exam is based on a prescribed group assignment in groups of four students followed by an individual oral exam. Based on the group assignment there is an individual examination in the curriculum.

STAs meet on a weekly basis with the staff member in charge of the subject to discuss the week’s teaching. Discussions consider course content and approaches to teaching. STAs are asked to prepare teaching plans and exercises on the basis of the course-plan. Feedback is given to teaching plans and exercises alike.

The weekly meetings are part of a formalised course structure which also includes a joint introductory meeting before the semester, mid-semester meetings and a post-semester evaluation meeting. A “senior” STA teaches a two-day course covering the “technical” aspects of the course. Furthermore, experienced STAs give presentations to inspire new STAs. Lastly, assignments are marked in groups which included both experienced and new STAs.

In the process of running this particular course, a number of observations have emerged

about the challenges and opportunities which arise from employing STA in this type of teaching environment:

1. STAs provide a “cheap” resource to supplement scarce VIP (and D-VIP) teaching resources.
2. By substituting 1/3 of the STAs each year, the existing group of STAs acts as a ‘shared memory’ regarding the subject. Senior STAs are responsible for training their successors.
3. Sufficient VIP resources must be allocated to ensure a rigorous selection-process and to “nurse” STAs.
4. To maintain high quality of teaching and involvement, it is essential to establish a STA community, both in terms of physical space (office facilities on campus) and social environment (social events and introductory meetings). IT in Business includes a post-semester get-together and STA of the Year Award.
5. When carefully selected, properly integrated and continually supervised, STAs are a reliable workforce.
6. Student evaluations are generally encouraging. Students view STAs as more accessible and less intimidating than the senior staff encountered throughout the lecture series. Hence, STAs can promote greater student involvement. However, extensive supervision and coaching are essential.
7. The pool of STAs is an excellent source of research assistants and prospective PhD-students and contributes to cultivating a department-wide community of practice.
8. Another positive outcome is the favourable attitude of STAs towards their degree programmes.

There is considerable overlap between the literature and existing models. In both cases, STAs are considered legitimate actors, but only when sufficient resources are committed to integrating them into the teaching environment. Accordingly, Institutions need to be mindful of the possibilities and limitations of this model.

To increase class size

A second option is to increase the number of students in each class. Increasing class size potentially implies a shift from seminar-style teaching to lecture-style teaching: a practice also common at BCOM. However, it is also possible to conduct seminar classes with a higher number of students. Seminar classes are defined as teaching activities other than lectures (unidirectional communication from staff to students) and may consist in seminars, discussions, cases and exercises (two-way communication between staff and students with focus on involvement and interaction).

Before addressing possibilities and limitations associated with teaching large seminar classes, a few words on the term ‘large’ may be in order. According to Mulryan-Kyne (2010), it “is difficult to determine exactly what constitutes a ‘large’ class in a tertiary level education context” (p. 176). What counts as a large class is contingent upon a number of factors such as a) the homogeneity of students (the more students have in common, the larger a class can be) b) subject matter taught (quantitative subject with black and white answers can be taught to larger classes than qualitative subjects where answers are many shades of grey)

and c) teaching style (whether teaching is lecture-driven or discussion-driven) (Damodaran, 2008, p. 89). At BCOM, seminar classes (typically) range from 10 to 35 students. Consequently, a large seminar class, in this context, is defined as one with more than 35 students.

Amongst the limitations or challenges addressed by literature on large seminar classes are:

- Reduced amount and intensity of student/teacher interaction (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Gibbs, 1992)
- Reduced student motivation, engagement and responsibility (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Gibbs, 1992; Miner, 1992; Damodaran, 2008)
- Increased student diversity (Gibbs, 1992)
- Limited access to the teacher (Miner, 1992; Gibbs, 1992)
- Increased student loneliness (Ward & Jenkins, 1992)
- Problems with finding classrooms large enough to accommodate students and teachers (Miner, 1992).

As a larger number of students have to be activated by a single teacher, there is a high likelihood that the “amount and intensity of interactions and exchanges” between students and teacher are reduced (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010, p. 176). When in-class activity levels drop, there is also a risk that students become less motivated to participate in class discussions and to prepare for in-class activities (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Using the term ‘student loafing’, Miner (1992) addresses how students in large classes are less likely to take responsibility for their own role in the educational process. Loafing may also reflect another challenge namely a series of negative emotional consequences for students. Ward & Jenkins (1992, p.4) thus state that students taught in large classes report “experiences of feeling bewildered, overwhelmed and anonymous”. Existing literature on the topic thus mentions several challenges associated with teaching large seminar classes. Some of these are mirrored in one BCOM staff members’ experience which teaching such classes. The course in question is Experience Economy taught at the Faculty of Arts. This semester’s class has 47 students. Amongst the immediate disadvantages are those associated with finding classrooms that are large enough to accommodate a large seminar class. In addition, the staff member states that activating such a large number of students requires a particular kind of student. Students are expected to practice self-discipline and to maintain motivation on their own. In other words, a high student work ethic is a necessity for the class to function.

While there are some limitations, there are also possibilities. The possibilities are linked to the potential solutions offered to solve the challenges which face teachers when teaching large seminar classes. The solutions offered in the literature include:

- Increased student independence (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992)
- Increased transparency and visibility in terms of objectives and expectations (Damodaran, 2008; Gibbs, 1992; Ward & Jenkins, 1992)
- Continued personalisation in staff-student interactions (Miner, 1992; Barkham & Elender, 1995).

In addition to the possibilities focused on in-class involvement and interaction, equal emphasis is given to activities extending beyond the classroom. Thus another solution offered is to work on reducing the level of student dependence on the teacher for knowledge acquisition (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010, p.181). Ward & Jenkins (1992, p. 161) suggest: “If students are to learn more independently ... then they need to learn how to be independent. Some course structures can leave students dependent on being taught”. Increased student independence may suggest that students, with the appropriate training and instructions, are able to teach – and learn from – each other (Ward & Jenkins, 1992). The importance of student independence is also highlighted by the BCOM staff member. She stresses that since (some of) the interaction between teacher and students is lost with many students in a single class, it is crucial that students interact with other students. At the Faculty of Arts, continued student interaction is encouraged by establishing permanent work groups at enrolment.

The solutions listed above point towards the importance of maintaining a high level of student activity both outside and inside the classroom using existing activities. Miner (1992, p. 301) argues that teaching large classes is not about “a change in methodology but rather a

concentration on the elements that matter". Moreover, Damodaran (2008, p. 89) suggests that: "As teachers ... we accept the conventional wisdom that what we do well in small settings cannot be scaled up to larger ones. While this may be true for some teaching styles, it is not the case for others, and there are ways in which we can continue to be effective as class sizes increase and enjoy ourselves". This sentiment is mirrored in local experience that there is little difference in the activities that can be carried out and the tools used in activating students. As pointed out by Mylryan-Kyne (2010, p.175): "More active teaching approaches may go some way towards addressing some of the problems that are being encountered in the context of large group teaching". A main goal of seminar style teaching is to activate the students i.e. getting students to ask and answer questions, to discuss theory and practice, to challenge conclusions and solutions etc. However, when classes grow in size, there is a tendency towards lecturing rather than discussions. While lecturing offers a number of advantages (especially if coupled with STA led seminars as addressed above), it can be difficult to involve and interact with students. Consequently, there may be a continued need for seminar classes. And a viable way to maintain them is to increase the number of students in each class (in the study programmes where it is possible/relevant).

To create online learning environments

A third option is to focus on establishing and maintaining online learning environments. It has been pointed out that increasing student numbers and reduced resources may carry positive implications as it encourages teachers to reconsider how they teach and to apply more imaginative and interesting methods (Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992; Webster, 1992). New forms of teaching include the creation of virtual classrooms, online learning environments and e-tivities. They are explored below in terms of lessons learned in relation to possibilities and limitations when focus is on maintaining student interactivity and activity. The creation of online learning environments is a long-term strategy for interactive teaching applicable to larger and smaller classes, distance teaching as well as other kinds of teaching.

Andresen (1999) introduces the concept of flexible learning in internet-based team learning and points at two generations. First generation is organised as traditional class teaching but based on two-way communication through e-mails, text based Internet fora (e.g. Campusnet) and videoconferences. Second generation combines time and place flexibility e.g. situation-oriented learning, collaborative learning, dialogue-based learning and differentiated learning (Andresen, 1999, pp. 98-99).

According to Pontydysgu (2007), Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) are not an application but a new approach to using new technologies for learning. There remain many issues to be solved, but the argument for the use of PLEs is not technical but rather philosophical, ethical and pedagogical. Moreover, PLEs can provide a more holistic learning environment, bringing together sources and contexts for learning hitherto separate. Moreover as students learn to take responsibility for their own learning. PLE's can bridge the silos between educational institutions and the outside world. In so doing, learners can develop the judgements and literacy necessary for using new technologies in a rapidly changing society (Pontydysgu, 2007). As one BCOM staff member suggests, it is important to motivate students with reference to potential requirements in their future working life and that the university has to prepare the students to be able to interact and function in changing sectors.

Since 2007, the University of Aalborg (AAU) has experimented with digital portfolios and personal learning environments on open source platforms as supplementing tools to the existing it-infrastructures primarily used as more traditional administrative-centred learning tools for the sharing of information e.g. slides and course descriptions. In contrast, the open source platforms are personal, student-driven learning platforms, where students can create a profile, write blogs, create groups, share resources and create digital portfolios. The online learning platforms were created as a response to the double up of students in the class of Humanistisk Informatik. With classes with up to 180 students, lectures became the main form of teaching coupled with logistical challenges such as lack of classrooms. It became increasingly difficult to find space for group exercises, dialogue and discussion. The main issue for AAU was how to make room for and guarantee the necessary competences. There was a need for learning environments where the students could participate in activities with the

possibilities of sharing experiences and reflections through dialogue. According to Ryberg & Wentzer (2011, p. 14), the objectives included:

- The development a disciplinary identity
- The creation of social and knowledge transparency among the students as well as among students and staff
- To supplement and qualify problem-oriented group work

The experiences of AAU mirror the overall picture of the experiences of the teachers at BCOM. They highlight uncertainty about the purpose, voluntary student participation, uncertainty about the relation to other assignments and classes, the popularity of Facebook, difficulties in creating transparency and students who were unexpectedly not familiar with RSS-feeds, social bookmarking and the Web 2.0 possibilities of sharing resources.

According to Clausen (2007), students love new technology. However, this is not the story told by several of the teachers at BCOM who have experienced student reluctance towards new, social technology. Staff at BCOM has used twitter, wikis and Facebook. Results were unsatisfying as only few students engaged on the platforms. Student attitudes towards implementing open-access technologies show a closed culture among the students. Many students considered the sharing of ideas as 'giving away' their knowledge and not as a 'give-and-take' where sharing leads to greater expansion and co-production of knowledge. This is the general experience. However, one staff member also explained how an effort in the offline class room to build trust and to give feedback can change student resistance. Another staff member had positive reactions from the students on her use of Skype, but in her case the use of Skype was compulsory whereas the others used online tools on a voluntary basis to supplement classroom teaching. Solutions suggested include establishing clear learning objectives and creating diversity. The key is to socialise students to be open to diversity and new ways of using technology. One teacher has a class where students *themselves* maintain a Facebook page which is far more active than one initiated by the teacher. On the page, the students share course related material. In contrast, another staff member experienced low student activity on the course's Facebook page. Potentially students are more likely to be active when they create and maintain the page themselves whereas a teacher-driven page may not be as successful. Ryberg & Wentzer (2011) confirm that Facebook is preferred by students when it comes to study social communication - meaning that Facebook has the potential of creating a habitus for sharing. Moreover, Ryberg & Wentzer (2011) focus on the necessity of aligning platforms and courses. It is not enough to encourage a voluntary participation. There has to be a pedagogical, course-related empowerment to engage the users into collective knowledge production in groups. Finally, technical issues may create obstacles and tensions that often arise in technology use and design. One staff member stresses that technology and its functionality and technical support has to be fully efficient when conducting all teaching on Skype: if the connection is not working, there is no teaching.

A key issue identified is the problems with motivating students to engage with and on online platforms, One solution to this challenge is addressed in Salmon's five stage model for online education and training. The model is based on and developed from the experience of participants in early computer-mediated conferences at the Open University of the United Kingdom (OU) (Salmon, 2000). It shows how to motivate online participation, to build learning through appropriate online activities (e-tivities) and to pace e-learners through online courses. The five stages are access and motivation, online socialization, information exchange, knowledge construction and development. Arranging gradually more demanding participative and interactive tasks provides the action base for the model (Jacques & Salmon, 2007). When reviewing Salmon's work on e-tivities, Slevin (2006) notes that taken together, the five-stage model of online teaching and learning articulate a new role for communication technologies in late modern education. It is a role that allows for a more generative approach to 'preparing for life' and cultivates the ability to live daily and at peace with uncertainty and ambivalence (...) and respect the right to be different (...) fortifying critical and self-critical faculties and the courage needed to assume responsibility for one's choices and their consequences. It is a way of training for capacity for 'changing the frames' (Slevin, 2006, p. 14).

Each teaching situation is governed by a unique set of variables which no universal or general approach can embrace e.g. teacher personality, student characteristics, the effects of the learning environment in the particular institution and the structure of the curriculum being taught. That every teaching situation is different means that it is important to use test procedures such as interaction analyses, keep track of one's own comments in a diary as well as those of the students (Jacques & Salmon, 2007, p. 48). One staff member at BCOM lets the nature of the content decide the technological platform, i.e. a socio-technical design (e.g. Wenger). Content actually effects change - and not just getting more information. Her solution is to think in process-driven learning environments like the ones the students will meet in their future jobs. In addition, she gives a higher degree of control to the students by allowing them to learn from each other. Nevertheless, as a teacher you have to be present as well. Content and one-to-one interaction is crucial for learning and online teaching cannot create that connection alone.

There are good intentions and plans to achieve economic and quality benefits from the introduction of e-learning. This potential has seduced many higher education institutions. However, reports illustrate that many have a somewhat shaky approach to e-learning and an aspirational rather than realistic approach to the achievement of student numbers together with a lack of capacity to adapt, especially from the perspective of academic staff and institutional structures (Salmon, 2005a, p. 204). Any pedagogical innovation has start-up costs, especially if associated with the sharing and reusability of resources and processes. Costs associated with e-learning include the capital and direct costs of the technology itself but also the development of resources involving a number of professionals and considerable academic and technical staff development to increase the chances of success. In the medium term, the costs associated with the human resources are likely to be higher, but offer more reliable payback and quality than the technology provision (Zemsky & Massy, 2004, in Salmon, 2005a, p205). While e-learning in higher education is now considered (and welcomed by many staff) for its potential, real development beyond projects initiated by innovators has so far been modest.

Based on the shared limitations and possibilities identified in relation to three options in focus, we proceed to articulate tentative recommendations for BCOM.

Recommendations

Potentially, all three options are solutions that can help BCOM reduce its teaching costs. In fact all options are currently applied by BCOM staff, but on a fairly limited scale. However, there are several key points that are worth considering in relation to implementing the different options.

Firstly, realise that resources are required. Resources not only of a technical and economical kind - but also in terms of the hours teaching staff will have to use on designing, establishing and maintaining new teaching forms.

Secondly, focus on student socialisation. The purpose with socialisation should be to heighten student independence. Consequently, it is not a question of 'nursing' new students - creating students who are dependent on staff - but a question of 'liberating' students. One potential tool is to establish permanent work groups at enrolment.

Thirdly, be willing to challenge preconceptions about what works and what does not. Having to redesign teaching activities also means taking a closer look at existing 'taken-for-granted' practices.

Implementing new teaching forms such as using student teaching assistants, increasing class size and creating online learning environments are options that hold potential for BCOM. However, they should not be seen as 'quick fixes' to short-term economic problems, but as strategic decisions that require further discussions and thought.

Conclusion

By exploring possibilities and limitations associated with different options for reducing teaching costs, the paper shows significant overlaps between what is addressed in the reviewed literature and what is experienced by BCOM staff members. Similar aspects are addressed in relation to the three options such as the difficulties in motivating students and getting them to take responsibility for their own learning processes. Moreover, staff experiences point to additional areas to be considered for instance the willingness of students to participate in online learning environments and other new initiatives.

The recommendations solely relate to the three options identified in the introduction of the paper. However, there may be additional options that need to be addressed. As a BCOM staff member commented to one of the authors during an informal conversation: I think the students have too many lessons. The staff member argued that students do not have enough time to prepare for class. A potential fourth option may be to reduce the number of lessons taught. An option which – due to nature of the present political climate and its focus on providing students with more lessons – may prove problematic. In addition, there are numerous other questions that can be raised such as: what about exam forms? what about course and learning objectives? And what about maintaining quality in higher education?

“Teaching ‘cheap’ does not mean teaching badly.” (Webster, 1992, p. 146)

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