

# ABSENT BUT STILL ENGAGED: CONNECTING WITH DIVERSE STUDENT COHORTS USING SELF-PACED, ONLINE PHYSIOLOGY MODULES

Sarah Etherington<sup>a</sup>, Tamara Hourani<sup>a</sup>, Shu Hui Koh<sup>a</sup>, and Marnie Nolton<sup>b</sup>

Presenting Author: Sarah Etherington ([s.etherington@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:s.etherington@murdoch.edu.au))

<sup>a</sup>Medical, Molecular and Forensic Sciences, Murdoch University, Perth WA 6150, Australia

<sup>b</sup>Learning, Teaching and Technology, Murdoch University, Perth WA 6150, Australia

**KEYWORDS:** student connection, physiology, online teaching, self-paced

## PROBLEM

On-campus clinics to support mastery of challenging physiology threshold concepts among a cohort of Murdoch University students were introduced to BMS206 (Biomedical Physiology) in 2009, and recognised for their impact on student learning and engagement in an Office of Learning and Teaching Citation. Despite ongoing popularity, clinic attendance declined to less than 5% from 2014-2018, with personal commitments cited as barriers to participation.

## PLAN

To adapt to changing student needs, on-campus clinics were reconceived in asynchronous, self-paced, digital form.

## ACTION

Nine question-and-answer style clinics were created to direct students on digital learning journeys through physiology threshold concepts, providing alternate, scaffolded, individualised “paths” through material, depending on students’ responses.

## REFLECTION

Clinic participation increased from 5 to 75% with implementation of optional, non-assessed online clinics. Student perception and unit performance data indicate that clinic use promotes deeper learning. Diverse students (undergraduate and postgraduate, with wide ranging Australian Tertiary Admission Ranks (ATARs) cite clinics’ in-built flexibility, effective use of repetition to promote mastery and confidence and interactive, engaging presentation as particular benefits. Students describe a sense of connection with staff in self-paced clinics, thanks to the careful incorporation of the staff voice, helping online clinics to transform students’ confidence and motivation when faced with challenging material.

Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, The University of Western Australia, 28-30 September 2022, page 30, ISSN 2653-0481