

FSIF Part-1

Summary of Responses

Following are the categories in which we saw a **majority** of the responses are as follows, where some are followed by example comment IDs (these IDs are as mentioned in the ID column of the response sheet, where suffix 'c' stand for the **comment column** and 'i' stands for the **issue column** | you can find the referenced ones at the bottom of this document as well):

1. Workload (Assignments/ Quizzes/ HWs/ Projects etc.)

- a. Quantity: It has increased considerably (227c)
 - i. Further, in some courses, quizzes are equivalent to Mid Sem exams in terms of content/ preparation required.
- b. Course wide Calendar: The courses across the college have not been in synchronisation more than ever. Some days/ weeks are more dense than others and suggestions for a course wide calendar to synchronise have come up.
- c. Family/ House environment (second most non-academic issue raised):
 - i. **Family Time**: Despite being with family, people can't spend enough time with family in general.
 - ii. **Responsibilities**: Household responsibilities (as reflected in the above stats) have been an additional load
 1. And **Surprise quizzes** in the middle of chores/ family time have been a problem (44i). (where recorded lectures were meant to be of help)
 - iii. **Efficiency**: has been decreased because of other reasons and the environment.
- d. The New Grading Scheme
 - i. **Bias towards lower grades**: Students feel that due to the removal of intermediate grades, (A-, B- etc.) there is a bias towards awarding more Bs than As and so on (as A- could be shifted to either) (46c)
 - ii. **P***: Like last semester, due to unchanged conditions, bringing P* back seems to be of some relief (43i)
- e. Team Collaboration (175c): Collaborating on Projects etc. in teams has become tougher, due to different time zones and schedules, inconsistent network for calls etc.

2. Semester Duration

- a. Revert to normal: As course content covered is the same, shortening the semester is causing some courses to have denser (instead of lesser) content. (101c)
- b. Break: A semester break during these times, A long one in the middle/ short but regular ones would be helpful.
 - i. Some students noted that the Midsem exam week was the equivalent in the offline semester (71c)

3. Health Issues

- a. Mental Health (396i):
 - i. Loss in **Concentration**/ Depressive feelings (225c)
 - ii. Creation of a **Student Support Group** was a good suggestion by (102c)
 1. **Interaction with peers** has decreased and there is a lot of **loneliness**.

b. Physical Health:

- i. There is a potentially harmful increase in **Screen Time**
 1. Especially in courses which have surprise assessments/ attendance where one cannot take a screen time break.
- ii. Some students are also concerned with overuse of **Earphones**

4. SMAI (most mentioned course specific issues)

- a. Issues 102i, 262i summarise the major problems, mentioned very frequently.
- b. The course has also taken up more time than allotted in terms of various regular assessments/ pre-lectures out of the class (24c)
- c. Shiksha being a buggy platform, further adds to this as a non technical issue. (391c)

5. Positive reviews

- a. There were a lot of Good reviews appreciating how well the transition was handled quickly, some others are 90c, 225c
- b. As a special mention 97i was a very positive and constructive review.

6. Logistics

- a. Approaching Faculty: is now more difficult than ever. Students have mentioned communications being tougher now, as they cannot keep up with the faculty's schedules/ communication modes.
- b. Off-schedule class timings: Some classes were scheduled on Public Holidays/ other non-scheduled times, the explanation given is that these classes were being recorded. (54c, 209i)
 - i. There are also Surprise quizzes during lectures. Some students think that this voids the attendance policy by the institute for this sem(64c)
 - ii. There are also late night labs in some courses (363c)
- c. Posting resources, assignments, quizzes etc. has been unmanageable spread out on multiple platforms apart from Moodle and Teams (432c, 86i).

7. Requests for calling students back to campus

- a. Research students, in phases (37c, 140c)
- b. PG students (95c)
- c. PhD and MTech students (112c)
- d. Last year students (125c)
 - i. They have further asked for extension of BTP submissions till December, like last semester, as the situation hasn't improved.

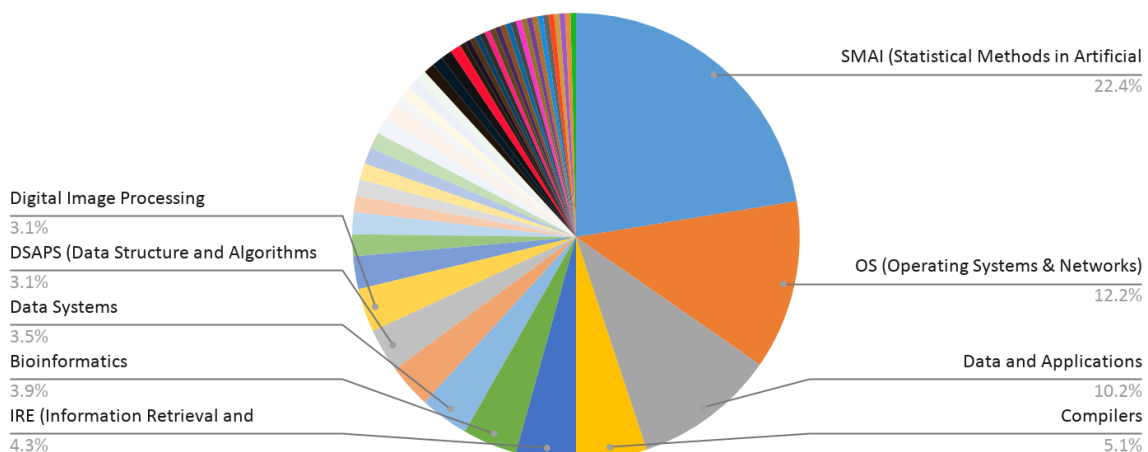


Fig 1. Courses Deemed as Particularly Stress Causing / Time Consuming

Analysis of the Effects of Online Mode on Time & Stress

For the following analysis, only UG2, UG3, UG4, PG1 and PG2 were analyzed. This is because of the lack of data from other batches.

452 responses were collected, with an even spread among UG2, UG3 and PG1, and lower responses from UG4 and PG2.

Non-academic activities: Time spent on non-academic activities has gone down more than it has gone up across batches. Notably, for PG1 it has gone down by 72% (*this may be because they've just joined college, and their reference point is different from others*). This may be because people misunderstood the question as time 'devoted' instead of 'required', it could also be because people do not have the overhead of living in a hostel with access to the comfort of their homes.

However, the response to this question was clearly very polarized. In UG3 & UG4, almost 40% students say the time spent on activities outside academics has increased, while 45% say it has decreased.

Stress about Acads: 44 students reported that time spent on acads had decreased even though stress about acads had increased. As an explanation, almost all of these also said that the *time required for other activities increased*.

Stress levels have increased unanimously with 75-80% voting for the same across batches. While this is expected in unprecedented times like these, it is also important to consider the role of academic workload (as we have shown above in the summary from the responses received).

Time Spent on Acads: 63-71% students across batches feel the time spent on academics has increased. There are multiple possible reasons for this:

- A. Students are packed all the day- Among respondents for whom time required for other activities has gone down, 80% feel time they devote to academics has gone up. Among those for whom time required for other activities has gone up, 50% **still feel** the time they devote to academics has gone up.
- B. Students are less efficient due to stress
- C. *These are reflected by the summary of issues listed above as well.*

Research/ Honors Students: 43% of respondents who are involved in Honors/DD think they can devote less time to research now (including 50% from UG4, the only batch which has experienced balancing the academic workload with research before). Since we noted an overall decrease in time spent on non academic activities and saw an increased academic workload, it might possibly be dampening the progress of student research at the institute.

Some References as Quoted above

- **227c:** *"I would prefer coming to college and having a regular semester over this stressed academics any day and everyday. We have quizzes, assignments, project deadlines almost everyday, many times multiple deadlines in a day. It would be in the best interest of students to reduce some workload. Online semester does not change the fact that everyone still has 24 hours in hand and we need to eat, sleep and do daily activities. It's not like since we are not on campus, we can extract 3 days out of one day. For the next semester, please try to avoid this "EACH DAY EVERY DAY QUIZ-ASSIGNMENT-PROJECT" attitude towards us."*
- **44i:** *"Professors in courses like OS and Probability are taking surprise attendance and quizzes. Marks are being lost due to issues related to work at home, slow internet etc. My grandparents had to shift to our home recently due to a bad scenario in their area w.r.t the pandemic, and my house is not exactly big enough to support this. Finding silent areas during timed quizzes has become impossible."*
- **46c:** *"The removal of A-, B- etc grades has not been a good decision I feel - most professors have not decreased percentages for A grade, so what would have been A- grade has just been dropped down to a B, causing major issues. B- was alright but a C significantly impacts CGPA, and same for A- and B."*
- **43i:** *"Please bring back the option of taking a P* grade, the burnout we're facing this sem, and the lack of onsite collaboration in projects and discussions are taking a toll on not only the academics part of the sem, but even the research part of it. It's just too hectic. My main suggestion would be to reduce SMAI's course load primarily, given the online nature of the course and the sem in all. It's far too hectic as far as the prof's requirements for the course go."*
- **175c:**
 - ◆ *Team collaboration has become a nightmare, due to (1)internet irregularities (2)not being able to agree on a common time to meet as everyone has different things going on at their homes etc (3)Debugging help has been difficult to come by*
 - ◆ *Difficult to get an atmosphere for study at home sometimes*
 - ◆ *Having peers/batchmates around helps to keep things in perspective, which is not the case at home as we're isolated from other students"*
- **101c:** *"Due to pandemic the semester duration has decreased but the syllabus has remained the same due to which it creates a lot of pressure to complete the course in such short duration. So i would suggest to either decrease the syllabus or increase the sem duration."*
- **71c:** *"Most courses are using long quizzes for a heavy portion of the evaluation. Multiple courses had a single quiz (on the entire syllabus covered) for 40% of the grade. These quizzes are effectively midsems and endsems, just without any relief from lectures and assignments. This severely affects our performance in such quizzes which make up the bulk of our final grade. Even in an offline semester, this would be a huge source of stress. All lectures should be limited to 60 mins or various measures to ensure attendance should be lifted. Schedule a separate week for quizzes and suspend all other academic activities for that period."*
- **396i:** *"I am not at all comfortable with online mode. Home is now not a place where I can be at peace. It's been mentally frustrating for me that I have to spend almost 22-23 hrs sitting in the same room at the same place. The gap between college work and personal time has vanished. All I do is stare at my laptop almost the entire day till I go to sleep. Also it's been a struggle to connect with professors and batchmates in online mode. Apart from personal issues, there are technical issues like network lag, low voice quality during lectures from both ends. "*
- **225c:** *"The utility of recorded lectures is highly under-appreciated. We can rewind, rewatch, speed up, etc. This should continue in an on-site semester as well. In addition, instead of classes, we can maybe*

have interactive/feedback doubt sessions after watching lectures maybe once a week. This might increase interaction with the professor as well, which is good. ”

- **102c:** “It has become highly stressful because of the lack of student support groups we usually have in college. Since this is new to everyone, it would be really nice to have a few days of no classwork each month.”
- **102i:** “SMAI has become haunting. The pre-lecture videos are scattered over the topics, in the sense multiple topics are covered parallelly. This makes it difficult to understand the transition between topics. There are review questions 30 mins prior to every class (every alternate day) and a short deadline of 40 mins, and the timing is pretty harsh on students not in India. Along with this, there are homeworks (the next one comes before the previous one finishes) and pre lecture videos. The contact class time is itself 6 hrs. Considering I'm doing honors along with 5 courses, this timeline is impossible to handle. The course content is not impossible to handle and the prof delivers solid theory, but the way it is being executed in this online mode is mentally taxing. I would really like it to return to the way it was taught all through the years, with no pre lecture videos, regular homeworks after class and reasonably long deadlines.”
- **262i:** “1. Almost every course has been conducting quizzes in the midst of assignments/classes, and on very different dates. It would be better to have a quiz week for all courses with no classes that week. This will also encourage better academic performance. 2. A semester break (a week) may prove very useful (other institutes have followed this).”
- **24c:** “SMAI classes are 7 hours per week as opposed to the institute's allocated 3 hours per week. I simply do not understand how he's allowed to continue like this.”
- **391c:** “The portal for online quizzes (Shiksha) is not working properly. It faces several server error and has many issues. Class review quizzes before the classes make the classes upto 2 hours on the class day. There are total 3 classes in a week. The tutorial sessions are not being recorded and are at different times each day. It is difficult to follow up. This also makes less time for self study as there is bulk of homework with deadlines and class quizzes.”
- **90c:** “Most courses were handled beautifully. I would like to mention that DIP and IRE courses evaluations, classes, etc are beautifully managed. I think all courses should be conducted this way. They extremely well organised and run. I think having mornings classes as 1 hour and thrice a week was not a bad idea, but I feel that the SMAI course, which has extensive mandatory self-study material and review qs early morning before every lecture, became even more stressful because there are more lectures per week.”
- **225c:** “The utility of recorded lectures is highly under-appreciated. We can rewind, rewatch, speed up, etc. This should continue in an on-site semester as well. In addition, instead of classes, we can maybe have interactive/feedback doubt sessions after watching lectures maybe once a week. This might increase interaction with the professor as well, which is good. ”
- **97i:** “
 - ◆ # 100% Effective Attendance Requirement In pursuit of high classroom strength, a lot of courses have resorted to surprise quizzes. While the intent is understandable, there is a lot of pressure that falls on students to continuously study - even those that attend classes regularly. In a regular semester, we have a single examination week which ends with a massive payoff - a sense of calm to relax for a while. This semester, due to continuous evaluation there is barely any break afforded to students. To remedy this, I suggest the following:- A week of no academic work. Rather than reducing the semester-length, providing a mid-semester break may help students catch up on concepts and take a breather. - No surprise quizzes or pre-informed surprise quizzes (like within a week span). This is primarily to help with stress. # Take home exams As a TA, and partly as a student, I've noticed that the theoretical parts of my courses are lacking at times. While plagiarism is a concern with exams, I believe that when students are”

paired up, and given sufficient time, only discussions will take place - rather than blatant copying. These take-home exams or assignments will likely be written theory-heavy tasks - a mid sem of sorts.

- ◆ # Late day policy Considering that all courses have more assignments and other micro assessments, it would be great if a universal late day policy was adopted. This way, those with a particularly bad set of elective assignments can plan their activities accordingly.
- ◆ # Inability to attend other courses Unfortunately, recordings for other courses are not accessible at the moment. It would be great if this could be removed for the IIIT organization at least. This isn't possible in a regular sem, but it's one of the few upsides of an online semester. "

- **54c:** "Please insist on profs respecting holidays (we had classes on Gandhi jayanti also, with the logic being "just watch the recording later")."
- **209i:** "Due to the shift to online semester, we have to study from home which is very difficult. Some professors are taking attendances and random surprise quizzes which are difficult to attend given that my network is not that good to attend *live* classes without lag. Time spent in other (non-academic) activities have increased and also the time in academic activities which has increased pressure a lot. The group projects are also a huge problem because all of us are at home and it's very difficult to find an intersection of time when each of one us is available to discuss group assignments/projects. 2 or 3 students are still ok, but for more than that it's very difficult to discuss at some time given our different family conditions."
- **64c:** "Some professors (Bioinformatics) take quiz after every class, this totally defies the logic of abolishing the attendance policy. If someone cannot take a class online due to some reason the whole quiz is messed up."
- **363c:** "Sometimes it gets very hectic. Some labs were conducted during late nights. Difficult to reach out for help to seniors or friends due to online mode."
- **432c:** "Sharing of Resources and other materials should be done on a single platform and it should be uniform across all the subjects. It creates so much confusion due to various portals for e.g. elearn.iiit.ac.in, teams, moodle, etc."
- **86i:** "There has been a ridiculous distribution of resources and portals. In my case, for five courses I need to individually check 9-10 different locations for updates and uploads. In addition, we can no longer see all the deadlines up on the Moodle calendar, which makes it easy to lose track of completed/upcoming work and miss it. A few additional locations is understandable, as Moodle lacks some functions, but so many at once are extremely difficult to manage. Would suggest that at least the deadlines are all added to the Moodle course pages so that the calendar reflects the reality."
- **37c:** "Yes if possible, could IIIT-H call the student phase-wise as it would be more effective to be on campus and do the research work."
- **140c:** "Please call fourth year students back if possible. It is our last semester together as a batch and it would be very much appreciated."
- **95c:** "(new)PG students would immensely benefit by being present in the campus. We have less strength and can be sparsely accommodated in the campus."
- **112c:** "Like many other IITs are calling the PHD and Mtech students back on campus, even we should implement the same. PHd and Mtech students are less in numbers and social distancing can be easily implemented."
- **125c:** "Is it possible for last year students to return to campus for Spring 2021 semester? For the BTP-2 is it possible to extend it till December just like the last online semester?"