



Insights from the ERT Student Experience Survey

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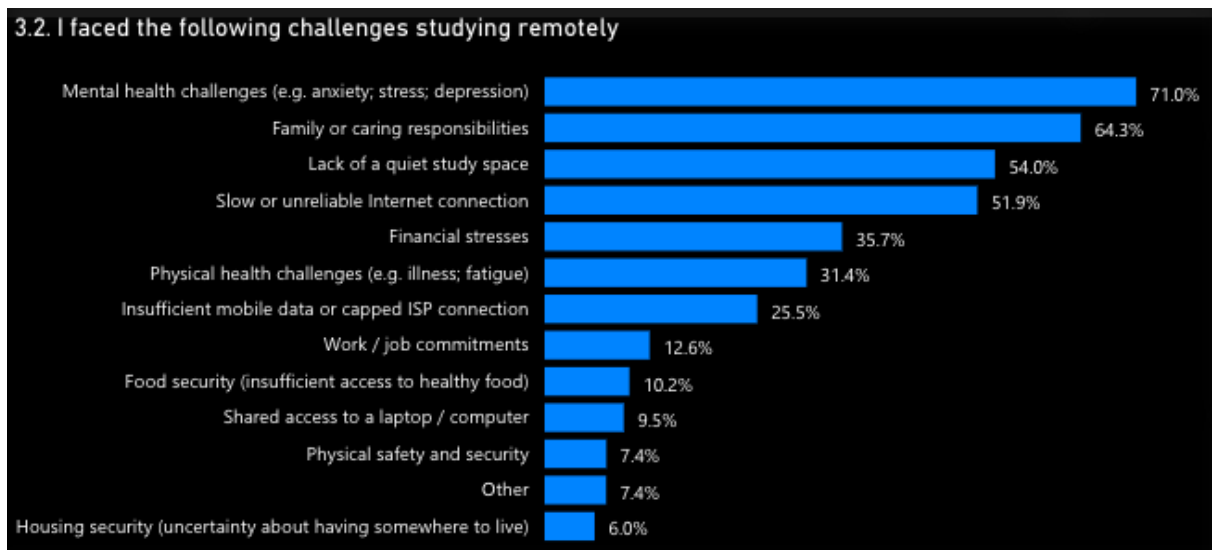


UCT [surveyed students](#) from 2 to 15 July 2020 about their experience of Emergency Remote Teaching, attracting responses from **3818** students. Here are 9 insights from the survey which you can act on for your Semester 2 course:

[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:

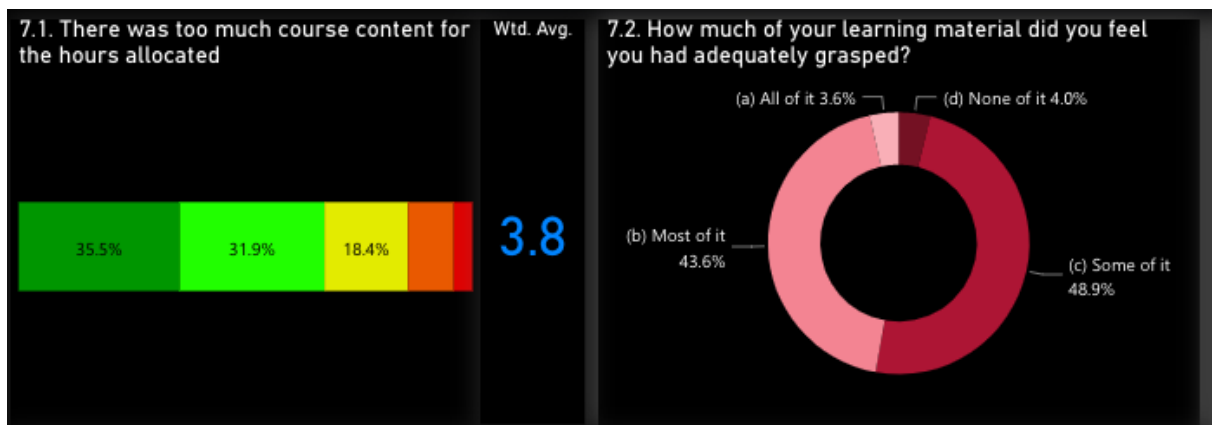


How you can help:

- 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:

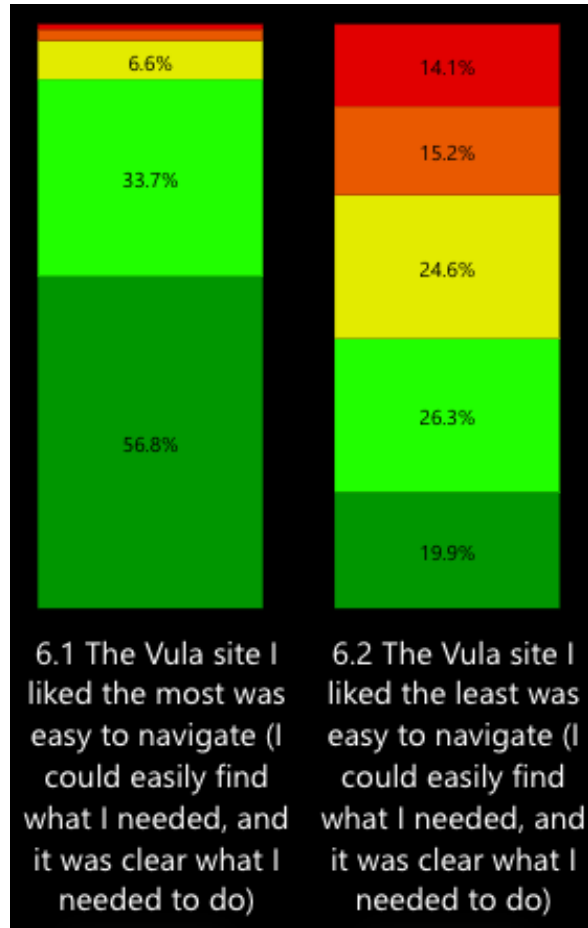


What you can do:

- 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:

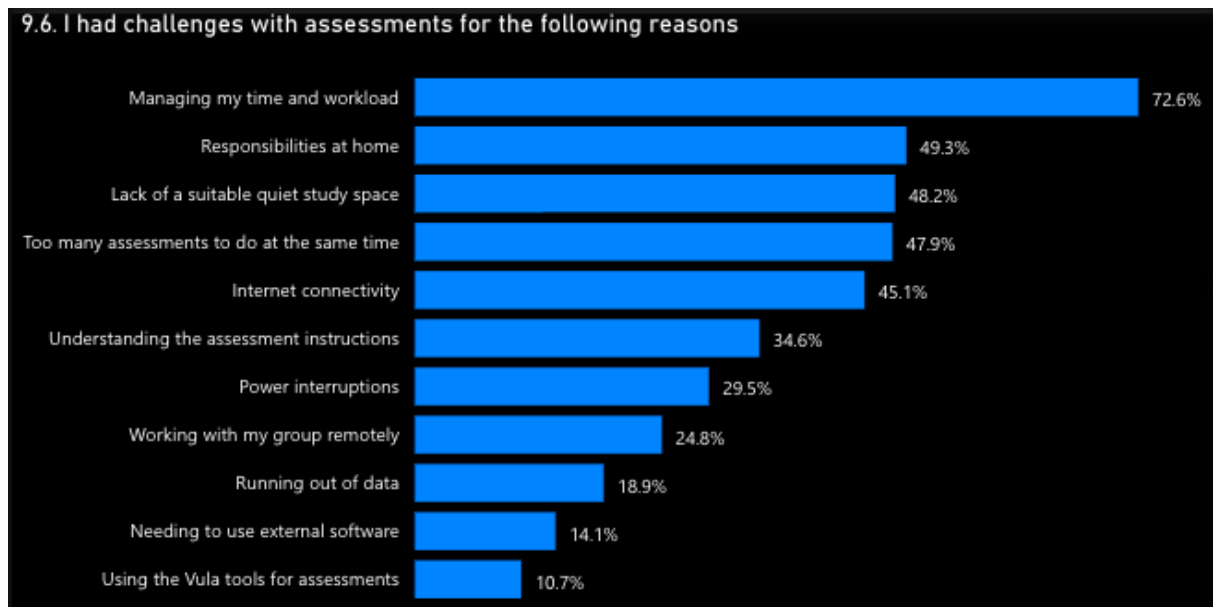


What you can do:

- 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**.

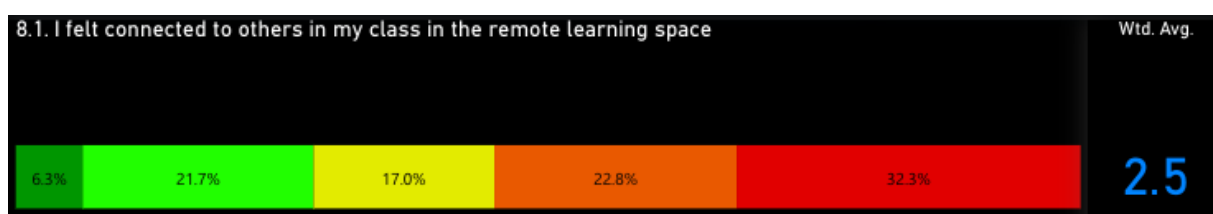


What you can do:

- 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.

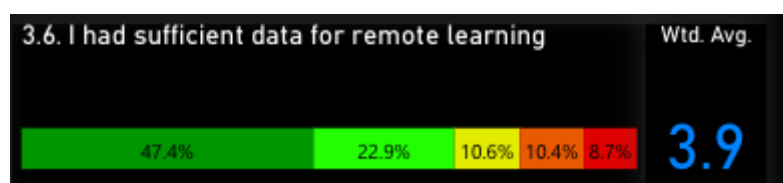


What you can do:

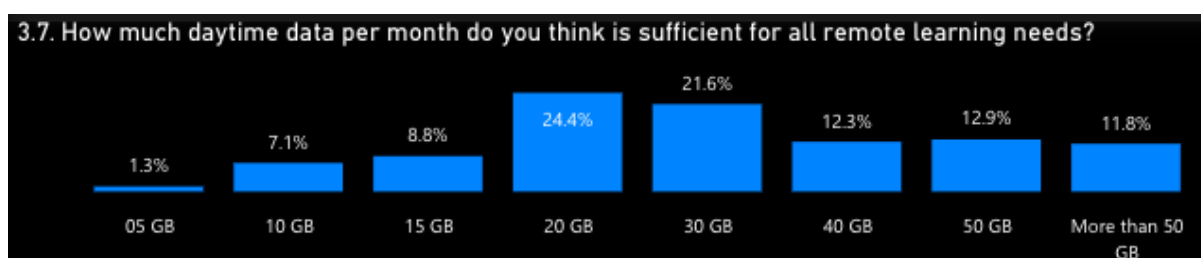
- Establish a peer-buddy system in which students can check on each other and offer moral support where necessary.
- Suggest that students connect with each other through WhatsApp groups or other social media platforms (respecting that not all students may wish to do so).
- Use group activities so that 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:

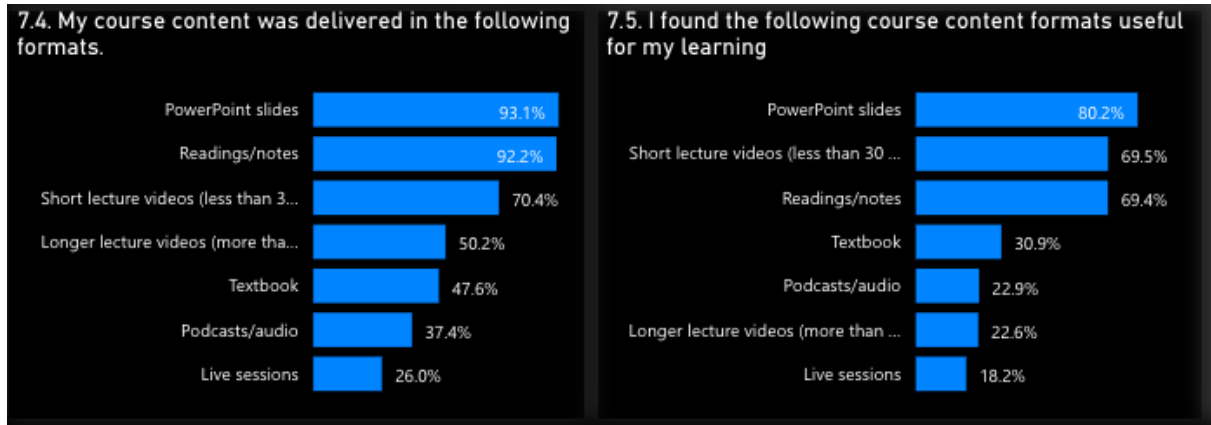


What you can do:

- 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.

