

opportunities of remote delivery for culturally and linguistically diverse migrant and refugee (CALDMR) students and university staff.

We identified many changes to teaching and learning that we should strive to keep. Students and teachers told us they got to know each other on a more personal, human level. Being essentially inside each other's homes led to higher levels of care and engagement.

But the disruptions of COVID also highlighted existing educational disadvantage caused by "the digital divide." Online delivery made it worse for equity cohorts, especially [refugee students](#). As one student recalled: "[...] at one point my laptop stopped working, and then I couldn't do Zoom meetings. That was a bit of an issue, and then coordinating that with the university."

A lecturer told us: "[...] there's that extra language barrier. I can't see their confusion like I could see it in person."

While looking to return to in-person learning, universities must still plan for possible disruptions in 2022. However, after two years of "pivoting" to emergency remote delivery, the time is right to proactively prepare for equitable online engagement.

We need to embed equity in our framing of teaching and learning to ensure we aren't leaving groups of students behind.

Policies offered support but left gaps

Our research explored the impacts of government and institutional policies and of the move online.

We reviewed national, state and institutional policy statements in the year to March 2021. A range of financial supports from [governments](#)

and universities provided a financial lifeline for many students.

However, our findings highlight the need to provide other resources to support culturally and linguistically diverse students in their studies.

Limited attention was paid to planning for equity in the sudden shift online. There was nothing that explicitly targeted the issues that migrant and refugee students faced, including limited access to technology and wi-fi.

Care and engagement came to the fore

COVID also exposed the stresses and workloads for staff who had to respond to CALDMR students' needs during remote learning. They include lecturers and tutors, student-facing support staff (equity officers, student advisers, learning advisers, counselors) and educational designers, who support teaching and learning design and delivery. One lecturer told us: "I just didn't have any time or space to be able to make big changes to my approach. I felt really pressured [...] stressed [...] definitely a question of survival."

Despite the negative aspects, our research captured hopeful changes, which benefited culturally and linguistically diverse students in particular.

Emergency remote delivery led to a greater focus on the importance of more [caring and engaged](#) teaching and learning practices. Educators gained an increased awareness of students' complex lives and needs.

However, this came at a cost for these educators: "I felt to give students a good experience I really had to over-service them—drop-in sessions [on Zoom] [...] play the [pre-recorded] lecture and sit on Zoom and answer everyone's questions over the chat box [...]"

Three recommendations

Paying attention to students' needs in ways that are reasonable for educators requires careful planning. Based on the experiences of the past two years, we make three recommendations for sustaining the gains in equitable [student](#) learning.

Recommendation 1

Course delivery must be more flexible.

Culturally and linguistically diverse students need time and space to manage the linguistic load of their studies. But many migrant and refugee students also have work and caring responsibilities. That leaves them with less time to engage with course materials.

One support staff member told us: "There were quite conflicting activities that they had [...] Some of my younger students really struggled. I'm talking 18- to 20-year-olds with [family responsibilities](#), not their own families, but looking after their parents because they were home, or they got thrown into domestic duties."

Hence the need to plan online or hybrid instruction that allows students to review learning materials at their own pace and enables meaningful interactions to build community.

Recommendation 2

Design online learning with CALDMR students in mind.

Successful and equitable online education is not simply a matter of uploading materials used in face-to-face instruction. Careful planning is

needed to maximize interaction and support within the digital space.

This means taking care not to assume students have equal access to linguistic and cultural resources, including digital literacy. One lecturer said: "A lot of [CALDMR] students [...] often, in the class, you could tell that they weren't getting something. You can see. I miss that with the online. [...] A lot of them are probably falling through the cracks because they don't feel they could ask."

Explicit planning and modeling of literacy requirements—linguistic, academic and digital—will help ensure online learning is accessible and engaging for all students.

Recommendation 3

Support educators to embed inclusive practices in their teaching and engagement with students.

Universities need to invest in staff professional development, including casual staff. Around 90% of the educators in our study indicated they want to learn more about supporting CALDMR students.

Universities should also invest in dedicated liaison staff to help these students navigate university systems and assessment requirements. A developer involved in moving teaching online told us: "It'll be good to have some greater understanding of their needs and ways to address them in teaching and learning, assessment design and emotional well-being."

Let's build on the lessons of the pandemic

The disruptions of the pandemic added to existing educational

inequalities. Left unaddressed, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as refugees, are more likely to miss out on learning.

However, the shift to online delivery has also highlighted opportunities for sector-wide commitment to teaching and learning practices that are more responsive to issues of equity.

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