

BUILDING ONLINE COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS WITH MICROSOFT TEAMS

ONLINE COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

Online learners often report feelings of loneliness and isolation when studying online courses (Palloff & Pratt, 2007). In contrast, interactions between students on-campus, at a social and collaborative level, typically cultivate and develop communities of learners. The premise of this pilot is grounded in the Community of Inquiry framework, first introduced by Garrison et al in 2000, which was in turn based on Dewey's concept of 'practical inquiry' from the 1930s.

PLATFORMS

Blackboard Learn permits the signposting and scaffolding of course content and learning activities, and it is an effective environment for alignment of content with learning outcomes and assessment tasks. It permits asynchronous discussion, however it does not permit real-time discourse. Furthermore, it focuses on course-level interactions and does not grant students access to programme-level avenues of communication.

We wish to explore MS Teams as a means to augment Learn. Can MS Teams serve as a platform to grow online cohorts as communities of learning and communication?

PILOT TEAM:

MSc Pain Management Team: Dr Valentina Ferlito, Dr Chris McKenzie, Veronica Davey, Olga Paterson, Dr Sarah Henderson

Digital Education Unit, Edinburgh Medical School: Ute Barrett, Kacper Lyszkiewicz

EVIDENCE

Evidence from literature suggests that the creation of an online community of learners will encourage student engagement and enhance student experience (Waugh & Su, 2016; Fiock, 2020). But how best to facilitate this?

A previous pilot using MS Teams on the MBChB programme at UoE yielded promising results (Figures 1 and 2).

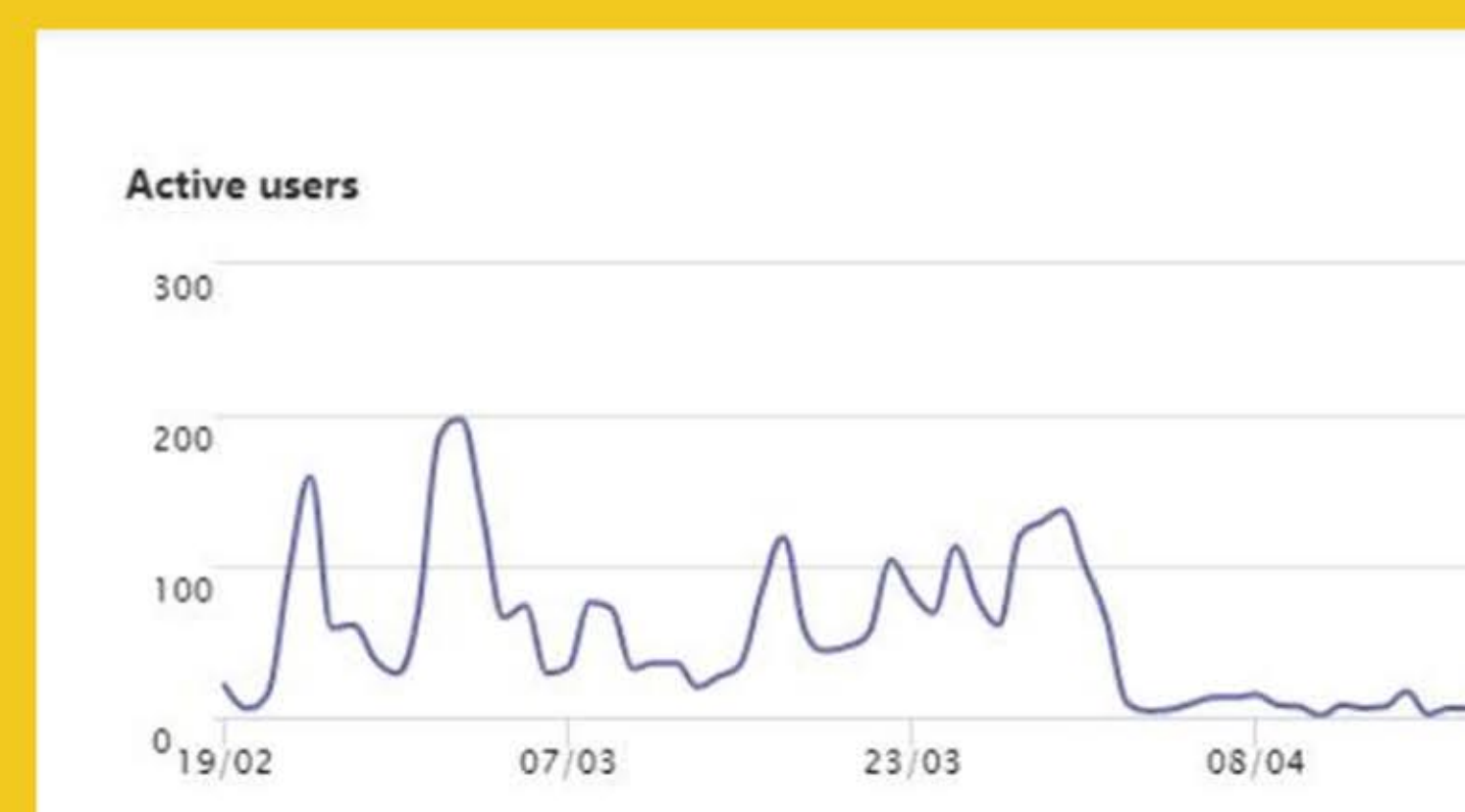


Figure 1

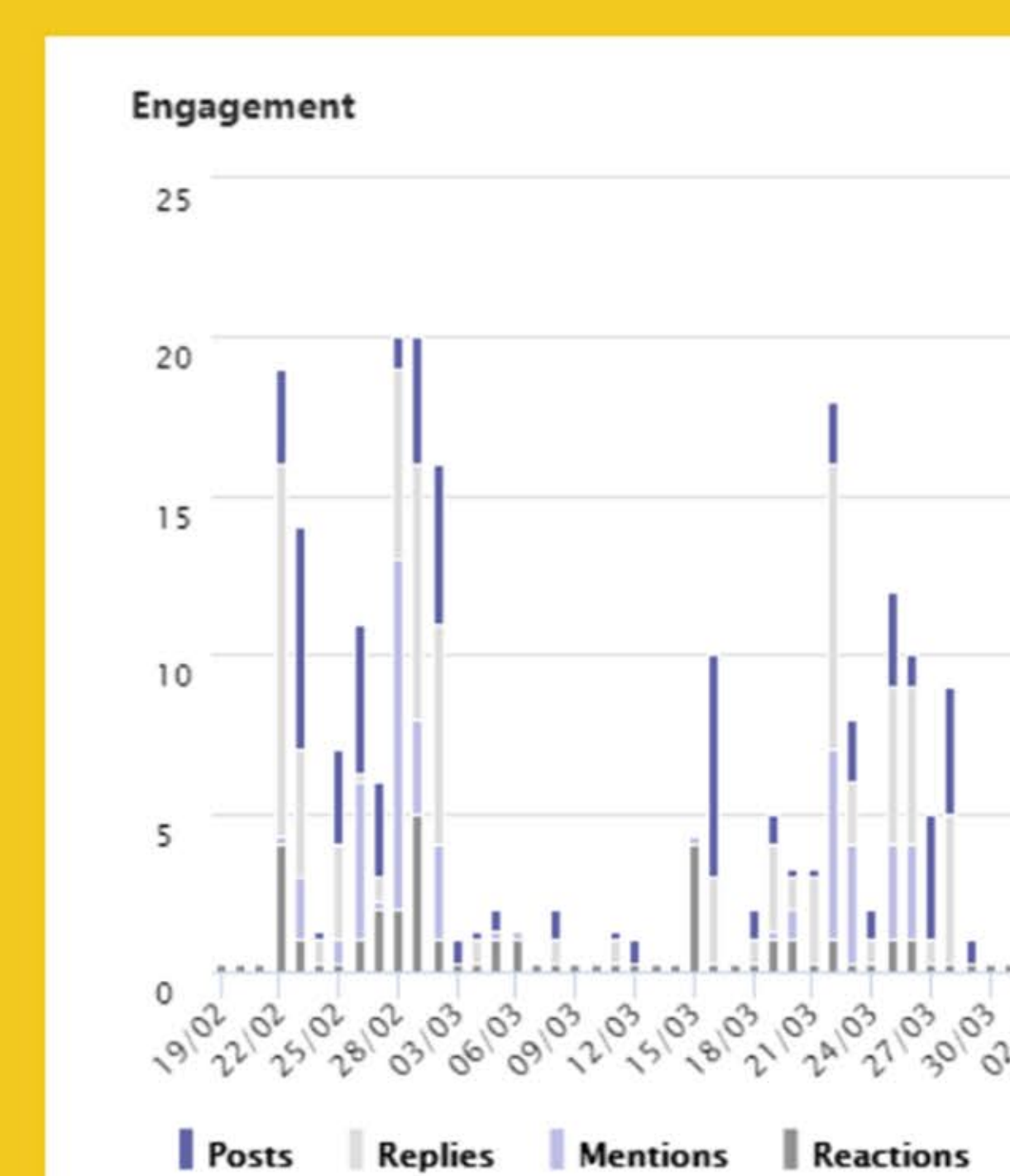


Figure 2

WHY TEAMS?

It is proposed that this additional dimension of interaction at a programme-level will enhance student engagement through:

- Creation of distinct student channels
- Inter-and intra-communication between student cohorts and with staff
- Better accessibility features (e.g. live captions)
- Integration of other MS Office applications

PILOT

MS Teams will be piloted as a platform for engagement for all students on the online MSc, Clinical Management of Pain (80 students) during semester 1 of AY 2021/22. Student and staff impressions will be gathered using qualitative and quantitative measures (questionnaires and analytics available on MS Teams)

The aim is to explore the impact of MS Teams as a platform for student community-building. This may permit consideration of its wider application across online, face-to-face and hybrid learning.

REFERENCES

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- Waugh, M. and Su, J. (2016). Student perceptions of a successful online collaborative learning community. *Journal of interactive online learning*, 14(1), pp.1–16.