# UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

# Breakout-room Discussions: for the greater good

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TeachECONference 2021: Lessons Learned from Teaching in a Pandemic

# The challenge

What am I going to do?

Teaching in times of COVID was hard

- Engagement

- Learning

- Student experience

- Inability to plan ahead

# Student Feedback

"I had 6 members in my group, and the discussion was all-encompassing, ranging over different opinions. Everyone was open-minded and friendly, and I really appreciate the lecturer's openness about the new tutorial structure and willingness to solve potential problems and try new things; it was very stress-relieving and helpful. Thank you"

"It helps me connect with new friends and study/discuss together, I like it."

"Changing our minds makes me learn more."

"Thanks a lot for providing us with engaging ways of interaction with fellow classmates. It was a great opportunity to be able to listen to others viewpoint and as well as share mine in the group."

# Peer learning through groupwork

Benefits of peer learning (collaborative learning)

- Deeper learning of subject material

- Student skills (teamwork, critical enquiry, reflection)

- Psychological benefits (improved experience, reduced drop-out rates, longer term mental health benefits)

- Reduced pressure on staff time (academic & support staff)

# Breakout rooms: online groupwork

Logistics:

- 1$^{st}$ years: 1 lecture recorded, one live, 1 tutorial live = Breakout rooms

- MSc: 2 lectures recorded, added live session to support learning = Breakout rooms

- Blackboard Collaborate breakout groups (Rooms in Teams)

- Pre-prepared handouts

- Randomised groups weekly

- 1 hour session: 15min intro / 30min groupwork / 15min debrief

# Lessons to take forward

- Importance of peer networks for collaborative learning
- Importance of persevering in spite of initial teething issues
- Role of module lead in facilitating collaborative learning
- Ability to accommodate peer learning in face-to-face and online settings
- Generation of positive externality for the entire student journey... and for myself