

## COVID-19 and Journalism Education

WJEC 2022 Online Conference

*Stream meeting summary and expert/background report (see [wjec.net/2022-online-conference/](http://wjec.net/2022-online-conference/) at conference streams tab) by rapporteur Karen Fowler-Watt, Associate Professor of Journalism and Global Narratives, Centre for Excellence in Media Practice, Bournemouth University, UK; panel chair Pascal Guénée, Professor and Director, Institut Pratique du Journalisme de l'Université Paris-Dauphine, France; and additional team members (below).*

This stream, a very international group with a high number of contributors, addressed a wide range of issues connected to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on journalism education. Such issues included ways in which teaching and assessment methods were adapted for permanent faculty and part-time colleagues bringing industry practices into the academy, student recruitment, internships and professional development. The stream also debated the future of such adaptations, such as whether, when things return to somewhat normal again, will the training of journalists be permanently modified?

The contributors shared practical approaches and their reflections on the processes that they had developed as rapid responses to this crisis. Questions about building resilience – for journalism education and journalism practice – were overarching. The themes of equity, access and inclusivity were common threads through many of the discussions. It is important to upgrade competencies so that everyone has an equal experience, wherever they are based. This was represented globally and seen particularly in remote communities where there is poor internet connection. People need to be able to access information, education wherever they are.

Linked to this was the importance of collaboration and building community – especially interculturally. The idea of “engaging in dialogue in a moment of crisis” was very striking as a way of bringing students an understanding of their own lived experience. This led to conversations about wellbeing and notions of precarity. Several speakers noted the ways in which students are looking for links with communities and other parts of the world. This was a very powerful message emerging from the session and is also potentially a way of building resilience and a sense of community and mutual understanding, particularly in remote settings.

The need for information specialties was another theme – especially concerning health information and media literacy – and could point to future developments for journalism curricula. This was seen as another potential route to building resilience. For example, students learning journalistic media literacy practices could feel more confident about verifying information and navigating their way through it.

Styles of teaching and assessment also formed a central theme, with many different approaches shared. For instance, blended learning emerged as a powerful idea across many discussions, along with looking forward to promoting autonomous work and refining face-to-face interactions within online spaces. There was a consensus that blended learning and hybridity are here to stay. In terms of student wellbeing, building understanding was

considered to be important, with perhaps formative feedback as a way of achieving it. The pandemic seemed to have increased journalism educators' engagement with formative feedback, a way of supporting students by better understanding how they developed their work and could improve it prior to submission of final assignments.

The stream concluded with a discussion about the importance of a renewed focus on trauma literacy, along with the duty of care that we have as educators, that journalists have to interviewees and our students have to themselves and to others. It also discussed not just the threat but the opportunity coming from being "always on" in a digital environment and how to adapt to this new reality. Looking forward, it is important to consider how new tools and lessons learned during the Covid pandemic could more effectively equip the next generation of journalists to build resilience and engage with the post-Covid world.

### **Recommendations**

1. To upgrade digital competencies and bridge the digital divide as soon as possible in order to ensure equity and access.
2. To develop collaborative projects focused on building community, including intercultural exchanges.
3. To develop curricula that offers teaching in journalism specialties, such as those related to health and science, media literacy and trauma training.
4. To retain the advantages of blended learning, such as promoting autonomous work through asynchronous teaching materials.
5. To focus on student wellbeing and support progress through building confidence, understanding and resilience, through formative feedback, etc.
6. To renew focus on promoting wellbeing, a duty that we have as educators and students have to themselves and to others, through teaching trauma literacy, etc.
7. To acknowledge opportunity (new digital tools) as well as threat ("always on") in the post-pandemic world.

### **Conclusion**

It is hoped that this stream's vibrant discussion and creative ideas about what teaching during the pandemic has taught us will spark further conversations among journalism educators globally to help strengthen journalism education and practice in the post-pandemic world.

*Additional team members included: Archana Kumari, Central University of Jammu; Carlos A F de Azevedo Filho, Universidade Federal da Paraiba; Dali Osepashvili, Black Sea University; Rasha El-Ibiary, Future University of Egypt; Maha Attia, Ajman University; Jasmine Joy Roscele B. Salanga, Jeremiah M. Opiniano, Tyrone Jasper Piad and Ralph Edwin Villanueva, all of University of Santo Tomas; Ben Parsons, University of Brighton; Sandra Raquew dos Santos Azevedo, Universidade Federal da Paraiba; Arly Faundes, Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile; Maud Blose, Durban University of Technology; Maria M. Lukina and Elena Vartanova, Moscow State University.*