

Feedback from Malaysia

One of the driving forces that pushed online TEE Classes is the uncertainty of when physical classes could be resumed. During the lockdown we will be able to catch up with the lessons and continue from where we left off. One of the main positive factors for online classes is that it is easier to schedule: TEE students can log in from home at a time that is convenient for all participants, regardless of traffic or other issues.

More flexibility

The group as a whole can be more flexible, but the team advises to set a fixed routine and schedule once a week or once per two weeks. Another beneficial factor for online TEE groups is that distance does not limit the learning: two of our TEE classes are located on the East Coast of Malaysia, and normally the facilitator has to travel by air to conduct the physical class, this is now no longer an issue.

Understanding the platform

The team advises on how to make the most of the online settings. First, the students have to be able to use online platforms such as Webex and Zoom, this may require some training or some guidelines given by the group leaders.

Preparation before meetings

Also a reliable internet connection is a must. To run a smooth online class, preparation is key. Group leaders should give advance notices of the time and duration of the class as well as the content that is going to be discussed. In Malaysia they have found that allocating discussion questions to students in advance is a real time saver. When people know what questions they will need to answer it saves a lot of waiting time and false starts in online class.

Extra training for group leaders

For group leaders there are different aspects to consider. Leading an online class is different from leading a real group. Judging how well students understood an explanation is different. It is harder to see body language and to make eye contact. Moreover, facilitators need to learn how to use features such as screen sharing, file sharing and comments.

Testing students

In courses where students need to sit an exam, this can happen on a trust basis. We allocate a day and to work on the exam for an hour. The exam paper is sent to them the day before. This is a trust system – they sit for the exam with the instructions given and it is between them and the Lord who is watching.

Feedback

The TEE team Malaysia asked group leaders to give some feedback on their experience with online training for *The Life of Christ*. They also asked the team leaders for a short reaction. They received about 20 replies. People wrote down their opinions and ideas after several classes. Based on those we made some graphs to visualize the feedback.

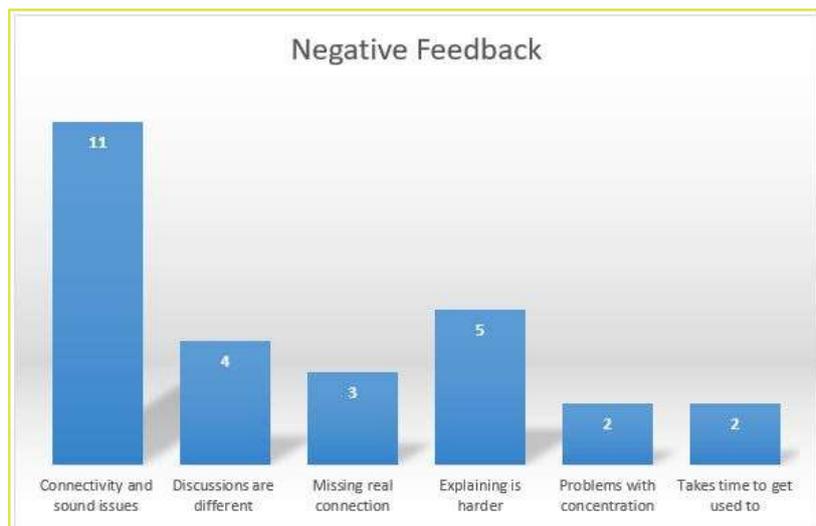


It would be interesting to see if students agree with the group leaders or if they have a different experience. It would also be useful to see similar surveys carried out in different contexts.

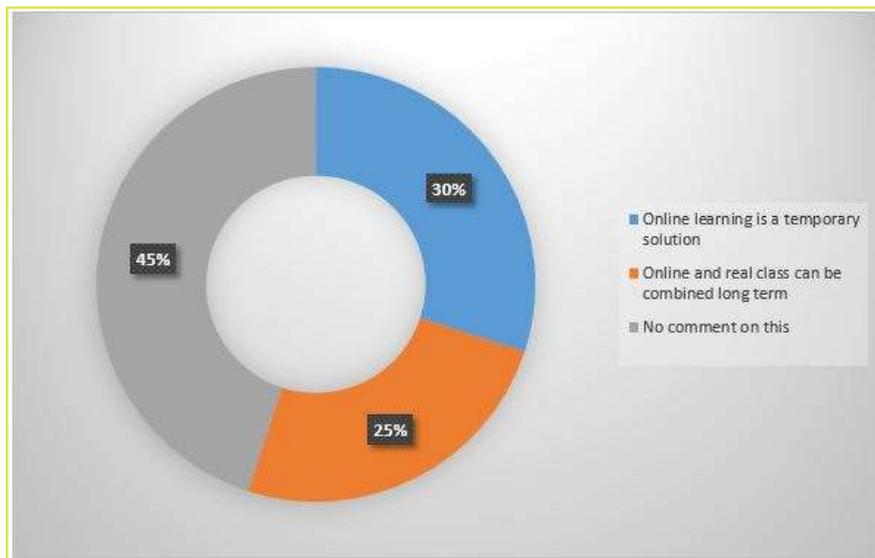
The first graph shows the positive comments people made. Many people enjoyed the time saving aspect as well as attending the group from the comfort of their home. The reasons for convenience differ from person to person. Some experience less stress while others are glad not to spend so much time on 'getting ready'.



The negative feedback deals largely with connectivity issues: not everyone in the group always has a good internet connection. However, more importantly, a large proportion of tutors also feels that the way they can explain things is affected by having to do it online. Although they can use PowerPoints and screen sharing, it is quite different than using a white board if you are used to that. The way students respond to each other is also affected, a real life discussions feels quite different from an online discussion to many people.



Just over half of the respondents commented on the future. Many respondents said that although online learning is the best solution for now, there is nothing like meeting face to face. But there is also an almost equal part that says it is possible to keep having virtual group meetings, but ideally in combination with face to face meetings. This will give the Malaysian team (and hopefully the other members too) food for thought.



Blended TEE courses for the future

What this survey tells us that blended learning is a very possible way forward. Yes, explaining things is very different when you are in a zoom meeting, but it is not impossible. Yes, discussions are different, but it does not mean that fruitful, interactive and transformative group meetings are impossible.

It does mean that group leaders learn new skills and learn a new way of doing TEE. **Good training for Group leaders is essential if blended learning is to stay.** This is an issue all members need to think through for their specific trainers and their specific context.

If other teams have asked feedback from students and group leaders (tutors) we are very interested in hearing from you! Please send an email to increaseassociation@gmail.com to let us know about it!