

Putting The Human First: Challenging The Student-Centred Approach To Work And Learning On The Covid Frontline

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At Swansea University, we provide part-time work-based learning programmes to registered healthcare professionals with at least 2 years' experience in healthcare. At the outset of the pandemic, our learners were thrown onto the frontline of the biggest public health crisis of the modern era. Many were redeployed to new roles, trained to manage critically ill patients, and manage new teams in new workplace settings. All the while, their wellbeing suffered as they worked long hours in covid-positive environments, living in fear of carrying the virus home to their family. Annual and study leave were cancelled across NHS Wales. To summarise, they had every reason to quit their studies and so we waited for the suspension requests to come in.

Yet, the opposite happened. Far from being disposable, their studies became a lifeline. Supervision meetings became their only opportunity to decompress outside of the workplace. It became a sanctuary, a space to reflect on their 'unprecedented' situation and for personal and professional growth. As a result, our approach changed, adapting to the evolving needs of our learners.

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Within this talk we will critically reflect on our new approach, reviewing the ways in which our practice changed to provide a more inclusive learning environment for our learners on the covid frontline. We will outline the new humanistic approach we adopted and discuss how compassionate leadership played a key role in supporting both our learners and one another. We will discuss the role of both structure and flexibility in inclusive practice when considering how we can best support part-time learners. Finally, we will reflect on our own journey as a team, how our approach to facilitating learning has developed, and how we progress going forward with the human at the centre of everything we do.

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