

Adaptation of practice-based learning during the pandemic and beyond

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In response to the threat imposed by the spread of covid-19, throughout the planet, university faculties adapted their teaching and learning approaches to accommodate the hygiene and health precautionary requirements. While in each country some differences existed, most measures included non-contact teaching using distant learning modalities.

In Greece the EU directives were adopted in all levels of education. In March 12 2020 the first lockdown meant that all University classes were suspended. Within a week the online platforms that became available to Hellenic Universities allowed faculty to employ asynchronous (E-class) and synchronous learning (MSTeams, Webex). This first lockdown was followed by a reopening of the Universities only for senior student projects and clinics in May and June. Then the 2020-2021 academic year opened with live classes only for the laboratory practicals and only in small groups and distant synchronous teaching for the 'lecture' format. Quickly however a second lockdown in Oct 2020 meant again practicals had to be implemented in a distance learning approach. This approach covered the remaining of that academic year as well. In the year 2021-2022 centrally imposed and University implemented measures, (including face masks, access only to those vaccinated or with negative test results, tracing of cases, hybrid or online committee meetings, extra cleaning staff, small group teaching for practicals, short-term hires of assistants, etc) meant that the academic year has been so far implemented with students on campus, with a backup of online platforms for hybrid sessions should need arise.

In this talk, after a brief overview of the usual teaching approaches some examples of adaptation of exercise physiology practicals during the pandemic will be given, negative and positive aspects of distance learning during the pandemic will be discussed and a proposition of lessons learned, that could be implemented in the post-covid era, will be made. Within this 3-yr time period, various approaches were used to maintain the teacher-student interaction and to preserve a continuity of learning. Adaptation strategies adopted during the strict lockdown periods gave new directions which may, in the long term, benefit the overall educational provision in physiology and overall science education.