RESEARCH REPORT

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Educator experiences of intensive and blended teaching andragogy in UK higher education

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Abstract

Significant shifts in the higher education sector during 2020 required the adoption of flexible learning modalities. In response, the University of Suffolk implemented a blended learning approach, incorporating both online and face-to-face delivery. Notably, the university became the first UK higher education institution to implement an intensive delivery mode for undergraduate courses. We employed qualitative thematic analysis to explore the lived experiences of eight psychology educators through two focus groups, focusing on intensive and blended teaching andragogy. Our findings reveal that intensive delivery positively influences both learners and educators by enhancing knowledge focus and providing rapid, actionable feedback. However, it also presents challenges, such as increased time constraints, limited accessibility, and negative effects on wellbeing and skill development. Similarly, blended approaches yielded mixed outcomes: while it improves educator wellbeing, flexibility and inclusivity, it can also reduce learner social wellbeing and engagement. We offer several recommendations for institutions considering a move to intensive delivery, emphasising the importance of addressing the challenges. However, as our findings are limited to the educators' perspectives, we advocate for future research incorporating learner experiences through both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Context and implications

Rationale for this study: Due to a lack of focus from educators' perspectives, this UK study explores educators' experiences and evaluation of blended and intensive learning.

Why the new findings matter: Findings reveal the importance of educator experiences in blended and intensive teaching models for educators and learners, emphasising the need for well-considered andragogies that support engagement, adaptability and outcomes.

Implications for educational institutions, policymakers, educators and learners: The research informs UK higher education institutions in evaluating and refining teaching structures to align with course requirements and learner needs. Insights can guide institutions in adopting evidence-based best practices to enhance student learning experiences and educator effectiveness. Additionally, findings can guide policymakers in developing appropriate teaching delivery strategies for diverse learners and educators. Well-considered andragogy may also benefit prospective and current learners by fostering engagement, social connectedness, and supporting better learning outcomes. Institutions can use these findings to implement adaptive teaching models that improve flexibility, accessibility, and overall educational quality, ensuring a more effective and inclusive higher education environment.

INTRODUCTION

March 2020 triggered a rapid change in the delivery of higher education (HE) following the COVID-19 pandemic, from traditional in-person delivery to online and hybrid methods. The University of Suffolk capitalised on this opportunity to reform their HE provision from traditional 12-week parallel modules spanning over a semester to an intensive five-week sequential delivery of each module, institutionally known as block delivery. For this paper we will use *intensive* and *block* delivery interchangeably. For the University of Suffolk this five-week model consisted of four weeks of teaching with an additional week dedicated for learners to complete their assessments. As this change in delivery coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a variety of approaches were developed to support blended teaching. Consequently, educators were given flexibility and ownership over their teaching practices to harness the most suitable application of blended teaching based on module requirements. During the height of the COVID-19 lockdowns, all teaching was delivered online with some modules maintaining a fully synchronous online approach, and other modules utilising a 50% asynchronous blended approach, with the remaining 50% delivered synchronously online. Once the lockdown restrictions were eased, all modules returned to 50% synchronous face-to-face delivery, with all modules maintaining their lockdown approach of either synchronous online, or asynchronous blended, for the remaining 50%.

The most common method of HE provision is through in-person concurrent modules spanning the length of a semester, or multiple semesters (Nerantzi & Chatzidamianos, 2020). Although this method is still valid and widely used across the sector, it can be argued to hold limited andragogy value and should be reformed to focus on the learner's development and journey (Helfand, 2013). Reforming the modes of delivery, be that in-person, online, or blended delivery, as well as the timescale of delivery, whether that be over a semester or during sequential modules, can have profound effects on the learner, and the educator. For example, learner engagement, autonomy, and attainment, have all been found to be impacted as well as educator wellbeing, resilience and flexibility (Dixon & O'Gorman, 2020). However, the focus within this literature favours the lived experience of the learners alongside quantitative evidence evaluating teaching methodologies efficiency. Therefore, the needs of the learners often outweigh the needs of the educators. Thus, it is important to explore the experiences of the educators' transitions through these changes. Building upon this field by using thematic analysis, the current paper will examine the lived experience of HE providers during the transition from traditional in-person concurrent semester delivery to an intensive blended sequential approach.

Intensive teaching has many defining characteristics and varies across the sector, yet the primary focus is for the learner to focus on one topic at a time so that they can deepen their knowledge and understanding of the topic (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022; Vlachopoulos et al., 2019). This mode of delivery has become more popular as literature suggests that it enhances learner engagement and attainment, in comparison to traditional methods (Burton & Nesbit, 2008; Davies, 2006; Sheldon & Durdella, 2009). One of the most commonly stated advantages is the widespread belief that intensive teaching leads to higher levels of learner engagement, motivation, focus, investment and enthusiasm (Czaplinski et al., 2017; Davies, 2006; Dixon & O'Gorman, 2020; Dziuban et al., 2011; Harvey et al., 2017; Hermida, 2014; Hesterman, 2015; Huber et al., 2022; Lutes & Davies, 2018; Male et al., 2016; Muscat & Thomas, 2023; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024). These experiences may be in part due to the andragogical shift to the 'flipped classroom' approach often utilised within intensive teaching, which focuses on active learning and learner-led engagement (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024). It also has the benefit of focusing learning into a single topic, as opposed to a learner being required to manage the demands of concurrent modules and assessments within traditional methods (McCluskey et al., 2019; Swain, 2016). Intensive teaching also increases the opportunities for learners to form closer relationships with each other and educators (Dixon & O'Gorman, 2020; Muscat & Thomas, 2023; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024), and fosters an increased level of trust, sense of belonging, and connectedness (Muscat & Thomas, 2023). Further to this, Oraison et al. (2023) found that educators reported increased feelings of teamwork and collegiality between colleagues during intensive approaches.

Additionally, literature has highlighted that due to the condensed timeframe, learners are required to improve their time management skills and autonomy, to successfully complete each module (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022; Swain, 2016). Likewise, intensive teaching also often coincides with longer class lengths which allow greater opportunity for critical thinking and active learning strategies (Muscat & Thomas, 2023). Intensive courses allow learners to fully immerse themselves within a topic for an extended period of time, thus providing the opportunity for more concentrated learning to occur (Muscat & Thomas, 2023; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024; Welsh, 2012). Furthermore, within intensive courses, where one module is delivered at a time, learners are not required to prioritise competing concurrent modules or disproportionately allocate their attention and effort (Muscat & Thomas, 2023). The deeper immersion of intensive teaching can lead to improved knowledge retention between classes and a reduction in the need to recap content, enabling efficiency of learning and use of class time (Huber et al., 2022; Lutes & Davies, 2018; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024). In relation to this, a further advantage is the opportunity to embed robust scaffolding when developing

intensive teaching modules, whereby learner experiences and knowledge are systematically built upon during a module, and between current and previous modules (Muscat & Thomas, 2023; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024).

A further advantage is the time affordance educators perceive for intensive teaching grants. Intensive teaching often provides a predictable schedule with greater periods of time allocated to non-teaching, such as research-related activities (Burton & Nesbit, 2002; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024; Welsh, 2012). The immersion in one module at a time can also allow educators to concentrate on one activity at a time, which can lead to improved enjoyment of teaching (Huber et al., 2022). However, it should be noted that if intensive and/or semesterised teaching were to be present in the same semester this can be detrimental to the ability of educators to manage their own time requirements (Welsh, 2012).

Consecutive teaching delivery affords the opportunity for learners to receive summative feedback and grades, prior to submission of work, for future modules. Interestingly, feedback has been reported as one of the most influential factors at improving learner attainment, if it can be returned to the learner in a timely manner (Gibbs, 2010). Furthermore, shorter turnaround times for feedback due to modifications to assessment (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024) may also lead to increased learner experience. From a learner's perspective—receiving feedback prior to the submission of the subsequent modules—the summative assessment promotes learning development and academic achievement. However, from an educator's perspective, this can provide additional challenges within an intensive block approach. For example, an educator may be preparing for the next module while simultaneously providing feedback for the previous module. Thus, this reduced time frame and additional pressures of time must have profound effects on the educator, yet this has not been accounted for in the literature.

Some disadvantages to intensive teaching experienced by educators are also evident within the literature. One of the most commonly stated disadvantages is a reduction in well-being for both learners and educators. There are concerns that compressing the time for teaching would place increasing demands on learners and educators to remain focused and engaged for long periods of time, thus increasing the cognitive burden (Czaplinski et al., 2017; Harkin & Nerantzi, 2021; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024). Tied to this is the increase in fatigue and difficulty in concentrating experienced by both learners and educators towards the end of an intensive module (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024; Welsh, 2012), which is known to be detrimental to learning and performance (e.g. Kahol et al., 2008). Indeed, Czaplinski et al. (2017) found that some learners had difficulty meeting deadlines at the end of the day. Intensive teaching also places increased demands on educator workloads, both in the development (and re-development), planning and subsequent delivery of intensive teaching modules, often within a short time frame (Bunney, 2017; Huber et al., 2022; Lutes & Davies, 2018; Oraison et al., 2023). This is coupled with faster turnaround times required for marking and feedback during intensive teaching which further exacerbates educator workload (Czaplinski et al., 2017; Dixon & O'Gorman, 2020; Huber et al., 2022; Konjarski et al., 2023; Muscat & Thomas, 2023; Oraison et al., 2023; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024) and can contribute to educator burnout, particularly if educators feel pressure to maintain their research activity during the delivery of intensive teaching (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024).

Concerns have also been raised that intensive teaching may have a negative impact on an individual's learning and experience. For example, educators perceive that intensive teaching leads to shallower learning (Dixon & O'Gorman, 2020; Huber et al., 2022; Lutes & Davies, 2018; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024; Welsh, 2012). This is accompanied by the perception that learners also read less during intensive courses (Welsh, 2012), have less time to consolidate their learning (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024), and insufficient time to reflect (Welsh, 2012). In support of this, Burton and Nesbit (2002) state that intensive teaching forces learners to read in advance. However, this is only feasible when learners are not engaged in consecutive intensive

modules. Czaplinski et al. (2017) also highlight that learners may struggle to adapt to a more independent approach, particularly with regard to the online, blended components. There are also concerns that intensive teaching may lead to a reduction in academic rigour (Hyun et al., 2006). Specifically, some educators feel compromises are made to learning outcomes (Muscat & Thomas, 2023; Scott, 2003); assessment type, complexity and frequency (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024; Welsh, 2012); and the amount of feedback provided (Lutes & Davies, 2018).

Intensive teaching can also present logistical problems. The fast-paced nature of intensive teaching can leave little time, and opportunity, to adapt material in response to learner feedback (Burton & Nesbit, 2002), as well as time to review, improve and update materials (Muscat & Thomas, 2023; Oraison et al., 2023). This can be particularly problematic for new educators or experienced educators transitioning to intensive teaching (Burton & Nesbit, 2002). Challenges with timetabling can also occur, particularly for those learners who are employed or have family commitments (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024). In addition, arranging cover for educator absences can be problematic, given the compressed nature of the teaching and thus the volume of cover that would be needed in a short period of time (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024). Furthermore, learner progression can also be negatively impacted if learners miss an intensive module (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024).

As previously outlined, a variety of blending teaching andragogies were also implemented at the University of Suffolk alongside intensive delivery. Blended approaches offer many benefits, for example educators can guide both directed and independent learning as well as not being restricted by time constraints (Akçayır & Akçayır, 2018). These approaches also enhance the flexibility of an educator teaching andragogy, so that they can adapt to the differentiated needs of the learner (Lage et al., 2000). There have been a plethora of studies exploring blended learning, which have been systemically reviewed and meta-analysed. For example, Ashraf et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of systematic reviews on blended learning which included up-to-date systematic reviews undertaken during COVID-19. They found that blended learning supports and improves self-regulation, satisfaction and engagement. Blended learning also supports learning performance, can enhance skills, and can encourage cooperation between students (see also Means et al., 2013). Ashraf et al. (2021) note that the majority of systematic reviews did not list any challenges. However, the most significant barriers within blended approaches related to Information Technology (IT) and infrastructure. This is supported by Ramírez et al. (2014) who state that IT skills and infrastructure, including hardware, software and internet connection are the largest barriers to blended andragogy, which can disadvantage some learners (Bergdahl, 2022). However, technology-enhanced blended approaches can also facilitate learner experience when considering widening participation (Bergdahl, 2022) and, when accounting for the perspective of the educator, creating effective asynchronous resources requires a significant initial investment and an enhanced level of IT literacy and creativity (McCarthy, 2016). As a result, competing pressures within an educator's workload can restrict and offer challenges when creating effective asynchronous resources (McCarthy, 2016), such as unfamiliarity with technology which can result in a resistance to fully investing in the creation of online materials (Åkerlind & Trevitt, 1999; Holley, 2002; Laurillard, 2002). Means et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis and found a performance advantage for blended learning compared to face-to-face learning; a finding which is supported by Bernard et al. (2014). However, Means et al. (2013) found that online learning by itself was no more effective than face-to-face learning. Consequently, this paper will explore the lived experience of educators during the transition to a blended teaching approach, alongside the implementation of intensive teaching andragogy.

STATEMENT OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The literature within intensive teaching to date has been predominantly focused on learner experiences and/or attainment with less focus on educators' experiences. The majority of published research has been located within Australia, and often focused on one academic year group (such as first year or master's level) as opposed to university-wide, such as the University of Suffolk in the UK, and often does not share the five-week block format employed within this university. In addition, for several institutions, learners can decide to undertake intensive teaching, with this self-selection possibly leading to differential characteristics between learners who opt to undertake traditional teaching. Furthermore, some institutions utilise intensive teaching within the summer (e.g. Huber et al., 2022), allowing learners who have failed or dropped out to catch up, rather than as a direct replacement for traditional teaching. Thus, there remains a need to consider the effects of intensive delivery formats with traditional delivery formats (Czaplinski et al., 2017; Davies, 2006). Indeed, Czaplinski et al. (2017) highlight that experiential studies with intensive teaching are scarce (Male et al., 2016); there is a lack of research focusing on the application and effectiveness of intensive teaching delivery within science disciplines (Harvey et al., 2017; Randler et al., 2008), and a lack of focus on educators' experiences of intensive teaching (Czaplinski et al., 2017). We therefore seek to add to the current intensive teaching literature by exploring educator experiences of the intensive and blended teaching andragogy in HE. It is hoped that findings from this research will inform other UK HE institutions to review their teaching structures and teaching delivery methods to ensure best practice for the type of course as well as the educators and learners on those courses.

> RQ1.   What are the educator experiences of the block (i.e. intensive) teaching structure for learners and educators in higher education?
>
> RQ2.   What are the educator experiences of the blended teaching andragogy for learners and educators in higher education?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative thematic analysis approach was adopted for this study (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Two focus groups were conducted with a sample of eight psychology lecturers from the University of Suffolk. This research aimed to explore educator experiences of block and blended teaching andragogy. The focus group schedule created for this study therefore aimed to answer the research goals by asking participants to discuss the following areas in relation to block and blend delivery methods: (1) learners' ownership of learning, (2) impacts on learners' emotional and social wellbeing, (3) impacts on learners' personal development and learning habits, (4) experience of educator ability to deliver content, (5) experience of work life balance for educators, and, (6) experience of provision of support for learners across delivery.

Participants and recruitment

The study was conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics (BPS, 2021) and approved by the University of Suffolk Ethics Committee on 19th April 2023 (Approval Reference RETH(S)22/055). This ensured the safeguarding of both

researchers and participants while proactively addressing any ethical risks. All participants were assigned a number to ensure their anonymity and the data was stored on password-protected servers to maintain confidentiality.

Eight participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure that the participants were best suited to answer the research questions and had sufficient experience and knowledge of the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). The selection criteria were based on the individual's role as an educator within the Psychology team at the University of Suffolk, UK. Within the sample there three female lecturers, three female senior lecturers, one male lecturer, and one male senior lecturer. No subsequent demographic specifications were imposed to allow all individuals to share their voices and experiences, and to create a more comprehensive range of data. To protect anonymity, participant sex and role has not been matched to the participant number used in the findings section.

Data collection

Blended learning approaches were adopted in March 2020 and intensive delivery modes were implemented in September 2020 (for Level 4/first year undergraduate students). Data collection for this research was undertaken in May 2023. Data was collected through focus groups to obtain a comprehensive and diverse understanding of the participants' views and experiences. The focus groups were semi-structured, allowing participants to feel comfortable in speaking freely about the topics presented among each other, to stimulate discussion (Wilson, 2013). The researchers used available literature to develop a semi-structured focus group schedule regarding 'block' and 'blend' delivery methods in HE. The questions were intended to encourage participants to focus firstly on blend andragogy, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of synchronous and asynchronous techniques for the participants, both as educators (for example, 'How has asynchronous learning affected your ability to deliver the content that is needed to the students?') and as learners (for example, 'In what ways does asynchronous learning influence students' ability to take ownership of their learning?'). Subsequently, the discussion moved on to focus on experiences of the block style with the same focus on the participants as educators (For example, 'How does the block style of teaching affect the support you can provide for your students?') as well as learner experience (for example, 'In what ways does the block style impact your student's personal development and learning habits?').

Data analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data, a method of qualitative analysis which centres around describing common patterns within a set of data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). As well as utilising a descriptive approach to analysing data, thematic analysis involves explicating data to devise codes and themes; this was the most effective type of analysis to enable the researchers to explore the experiences and views of the participants. In the present study, the themes and sub themes are related to the two formulated research questions based on block and blend teaching andragogies.

After the focus groups were conducted, the recordings were transcribed verbatim by the research assistants and then coded manually by the researchers in Atlas.ti Version 24. Data was analysed using inductive reasoning, using observations from the data to generate broader themes and generalisations (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Initially, the researchers immersed themselves in the data to become acquainted with the transcripts.

During this first step of analysis, initial codes were created. The second step involved organisation and grouping of these codes into four main themes with fifteen sub-themes (*all of which informed and added value to the analysis and research questions*; see Table 1).

Through reflexivity, the researchers acknowledge their positionalities and subjectivities which include being an educator at the university and being involved in HE teaching. The researchers argue that this has added value to the analysis by utilising the in-depth experiences of educators to help support the questions and research focus. It is not uncommon for researchers to be embedded in the research process; however, to ensure due diligence and integrity, the researchers have reflected upon their roles during their meetings and acknowledge their positionality as adding value to sharing the block and blend experience.

FINDINGS

Through the analysis of the two focus groups, four themes were created which addressed the research aim of the study and the research questions related to block (RQ1) and blend (RQ2) teaching. Please note that for the following findings section and subsequent discussion section, asynchronous delivery refers to learners accessing online teaching materials in their own time, synchronous refers to both online and face-to-face live delivery (contingent on COVID-19 lockdown restrictions), and blend refers to the combination of asynchronous and synchronous delivery.

It was evident that for both block and blend, educators believed that there are both positive and negative impacts in relation to educators' and learners' experiences. The four identified themes were further informed by 15 subthemes which outlined both the specific positive and negative impacts relating to experiences such as academic processes, skills and wellbeing (see Table 1).

TABLE 1   Data structure: Breakdown of themes and subthemes related to each of the research questions.

RQ's	Theme	Subthemes
RQ1	Block positive impacts	Learner experience
		Knowledge focus
		Actionable summative feedback
	Block negative impacts	Time pressures for learners
		Time pressures for educators
		Learner wellbeing
		Educator wellbeing
		Learner accessibility
		Learner skills
		Assessment and feedback
RQ2	Asynchronous, synchronous, and blend positive impacts	Educator wellbeing
		Flexible and inclusive
		Development of personal skills
	Asynchronous, Synchronous, and blend negative impacts	Learner social wellbeing
		Learner engagement

Block positive impacts

Learner experience

When discussing the experiences of block teaching, participants consistently mentioned the positive impacts on learner experience. One participant specifically mentioned how the intensiveness of the block approach allows learners to develop greater social connections and bonds:

> The intensity of block increases social connections.
>
> (P4)

> The kind of intensive nature of it, I think is quite bonding for them [learners].
>
> (P3)

The importance of the social connection and bonding experience for learners during their modules, their courses overall, and the institution is something that is a focus for academic educators. Therefore, it appears to be felt that the intense method of block teaching helps to foster this more so than the traditional semester-based delivery.

Knowledge focus

When discussing knowledge focus, it was clear that all participants felt—based on their own experiences—that learners were better able to focus on learning the content presented during each of the modules in the block method. It was alluded to that in the traditional method with multiple modules being presented at the same time, learners were unsure what to focus on in terms of content and would get confused with the content across the modules and how it fits. One participant highlighted this particularly in relation to the research methods modules:

> At least in block they [learners] know "here we're learning about this, and here we're learning about that" and there was less confusion among them, especially between qual and quant, where when it was semesterised they [learners] were constantly asking me about qualitative research methods and I would have to say "thats not this module, that's the other module".
>
> (P3)

This was also discussed in relation to individuals' ability to multitask. With participants mentioning the usefulness of block delivery for learners who struggle to multitask. This was highlighted by Participant 7:

> If you're not good at multitasking, you are only focusing on one module at a time.
>
> (P7)

'The evident experiences of the difficulty learners appear to have in learning [is to] learn more than one topic at the same time with [the] traditional method [highlighting] the benefit of the block delivery method. This is particularly the case for those who are neurodivergent. It is important to consider all types of learners when exploring appropriate delivery methods

and the knowledge focus aspect of the block delivery method may help to support those learners learning.'

Actionable summative feedback

Within the discussions around block delivery, feedback was discussed. While there were some controversial discussions in relation to the difficulty in giving feedback to the educators, there was acknowledgement of the importance of actionable summative feedback for the learners. This was mentioned in relation to all levels across all blocks, but was particularly mentioned in relation to first year learners and their first block:

> At least with block, after block one they [learners] will get some kind of feedback.
>
> (P7)

It was discussed that it is important that learners are provided with timely feedback so that they can action any relevant points in their next submission. The marking turnaround time within the institution is three weeks and therefore the feedback they provide can be actioned by learners for their next submission in the block they are currently on. As mentioned, this is of importance for those who are in their first year, and first block, to enable them to get a sense of what the HE assessment expectations are.

Block negative impacts

Time pressures for learners

Time pressure for learners was mentioned by all the participants across the two focus groups. Concern was raised over the panic that learners appear to have in relation to time during each block, mentioning specifically, 'That is one of the elements of block because they [learners] do feel like they've got no time' (P3). There was mention of the intense nature of the four weeks of teaching and one week of assessment before going straight into the next block. One participant mentioned:

> It's four intense weeks of lectures, seminars, workshops, a week of assessment. Then if they submit on that week. Bang onto the next block… For the five weeks I don't think they come up for air.
>
> (P8)

There was specific mention of learners' difficulty in engaging in module-reading as a result of the intense nature:

> Less time for reading e.g. chapter a week was achievable.
>
> (P7)

It was consistently noted that during the traditional semester-based teaching, learners had more time to read the content before each of the module sessions. However, it appears that in block delivery, and the intense nature of the teaching hours required each week, learners struggle to be able to read the associated session reading. Participants all brought up the importance of reading around a topic in relation to attainment and this is a matter of concern.

There was also mention of less time to socialise, with one participant specifically mentioning the intense nature of the block delivery and the issue with learners having no time to relax:

> Also less time to socialise – the days are so "jampacked" and "intense" – they [learners] don't have time to relax.
>
> (P5)

It appears that the intensity of teaching days—combined with non-teaching days being heavily focused on imminent assessment preparation—leaves learners with limited time to relax. However, this does not suggest that learners are unable to form meaningful bonds or social connections, which were highlighted as a positive aspect within the learner experience subtheme. Rather, it points to the idea that opportunities for casual socialising and downtime are reduced, as learners are primarily engaged in academic activities throughout their week.

Time pressures for educators

Alongside the time pressures for learners, participants consistently mentioned that time pressures for educators is of concern. Participants discussed how the intense nature of a five-week block meant they felt a constant sense of urgency, which was mostly related to providing support for learners:

> Because of the urgency of block, as we've said, it's almost like 'I need to know that answer now because I've got like six days and counting before I have to submit my assignment.'
>
> (P1)

This was further expanded on in relation to feeling time-pressured to support and respond to learners while on annual leave:

> I do feel like I need to respond, or if I'm on annual leave I feel like I can't not respond because actually… it's due in, in this period of time.
>
> (P5)

It appeared that the educators are aware of how quickly the modules are dealt with and how quickly assessments need to be submitted, and therefore delays in responding to learners could result in issues with submissions. As well as stating that while they can still provide support, they feel as though the support they are able to give is more limited than it was during the traditional teaching method.

Time pressures for educators was also linked by many participants to covering the content for the module they are teaching. It appeared that they felt the intense nature of the block delivery meant that the depth they could go into on the topics they covered was not as great as they would like. One participant said:

> If you're doing a four-week block you're having to give them this quick overview of each of those.
>
> (P5)

It appeared again that the worry for educators was related to the time pressure they felt in relation to being able to provide the best teaching they could for their learners,

highlighting again that learners are at the forefront of educator concern in relation to the delivery method. There was further mention of the restrictive nature of the block in exploring options around developing cohesive lecture and seminar combinations as well as practical sessions to be able to enhance knowledge. Participants also discussed that they felt as though preparing for the teaching for each block led them to rush as they are trying to prepare a whole block while teaching a block and potentially marking the previous block.

Learner wellbeing

Concern was raised about learners' wellbeing during the block delivery. There was consistent mention of this across all participants with terms such as 'stress', 'anxiety' and 'burn out' being presented. One participant said:

> Thing I've noticed about the learners' stress and burn out, is if one of their blocks has gone badly, then it has a knock on effect, they'll have something go wrong in the module before yours and then they won't turn up to yours because they're still dealing with that one, and then they'll fall behind on yours, and that will affect the next block.
>
> (P1)

This was an important point to make, particularly in relation to how issues in one block can have a further effect on the next block. Given the intense nature of how close the assessment deadlines are to the teaching and how the next block rolls on from the previous without any break, it can have a detrimental effect on learner's ability to actively engage in the current and future blocks if they have had something happen. There was mention of some of these experiences across the teaching team with one participant saying that there was a learner who had issues during one block which then affected them being able to attend the entire next block, thus a missing a whole module worth of content in only four weeks of absence. This, therefore, has the potential to further affect the learner's wellbeing and their ability to perform on the course.

Participants mentioned that they have a lot of stressed and panicked learners that are overwhelmed and do not know how to manage the workload associated with the intense demands of the block delivery. One participant specifically said:

> I've had learners break down in class, I've had learners leave cause they're overwhelmed with the amount of work they have to do, in some of the blocks.
>
> (P5)

The participants expressed their awareness of how to ensure appropriate signposting for the learners in times of need as well as mentioning that their team have developed a Learner Mindfulness VLE area. However, it was clear that the participants felt as though more support is needed for learners specifically related to block delivery and that the support needs to be provided at a quicker speed due to the intense nature of the delivery of teaching and assessment deadlines.

Educator wellbeing

Educator wellbeing was discussed throughout the two focus groups and was a point of concern for all the participants. There was mention of wellbeing in relation to when block was initially introduced that mental wellbeing was affected:

> I would say that when this was introduced that was devastating to my mental wellbeing.
>
> (P3)

The rationale behind this devastation during introduction of the block approach was due to the redesigning of the module content as well as amending assessments to ensure that they are appropriate for the shorter time frame:

> It's been a lot of hard work at a cost of my wellbeing, and a cost of where I direct my attention on things.
>
> (P2)

It took a lot of time and energy for educators to manage the redesign and the development of amended materials to best support the learners. This concern however has continued during the ongoing nature of the block delivery design. It was consistently mentioned that participants felt as though they do not have time to rest between teaching, assessments, marking and teaching on the next block:

> You need, actually, time to take a rest, and you feel like you can't do that.
>
> (P2)

Many participants alluded to the fear of having to take time off sick. One participant specially mentioned:

> I'm terrified if I have a block on my own… If I'm going to be sick or no.
>
> (P6)

It appeared that many participants continued delivering their teaching duties despite being unwell, with some opting to teach online during periods of illness. There was a shared understanding among educators of the limited time available for content delivery within a module. As a result, missing even one or two sessions due to illness was perceived as a significant loss in teaching time, prompting many to work through illness rather than take time off.

Additionally, participants noted that diminished wellbeing has negatively impacted their overall job satisfaction:

> Hence satisfaction is lower cause, part of the satisfaction is to give your best self in what you're doing, and the purpose based on positive psychology.
>
> (P6)

It was clear that educators wanted to do the best they can for their learners, and they want to provide as much as possible in terms of teaching and resources. However, because of the block delivery method this is not always possible and therefore affects their wellbeing and their ability to do the best they can in their roles.

Learner accessibility

An important focus of HE is the inclusion of all individuals, as well as those with diverse and wider participation needs. There was consistent mention of the issues around block for those who are neurodivergent. One participant said:

> There's no ability for people who are neurodivergent for example, apart from to give them an extension, to actually have the time to work on an assessment. Not everyone can write an essay as quickly as everybody else.
>
> (P7)

Learner accessibility in relation to block was further mentioned in relation to widening participation learners, where there is a high part-time learner demographic. It was clear that the block delivery does not fully work for these learners:

> Part-time learner, they actually have issues with having an intense module and then nothing.
>
> (P6)

Widening participation can cover a wide range of individuals, including those who have ill-health whether that is physical or mental. Concern was raised over the block delivery for individuals who have ill-health:

> We've got some learners here who are quite severely unwell, and if they're un-well for a week or two, they're gonna completely miss out on a module or two blocks.
>
> (P5)

There was specific mention of cases where learners have been hospitalised for an illness and therefore missed out on two blocks. The implications of this could be tenfold in terms of further issues around learner illnesses and having to rearrange attending modules and potentially having to extend their studies. This could have financial implications for learners in terms of learner finance and additional fees. This leads on to the concern on block delivery for those learners who need to work. It was mentioned that a large proportion of the learners within the participant courses need to work. One participant said:

> Learners need to work, they need money, cost of living crisis as we know. And actually, block stops them from actually being able to get a consistent job.
>
> (P5)

As mentioned, block can impact on learners being able to get a consistent job. The blocks do not align with school holidays for example and the timetable changes with each new block.

Learner skills

Across discussions in both focus groups the topic of learner skills was mentioned. Participants spoke of the importance of learners developing the skills they need during a degree to be able to continue to further study or enter the workplace. It appeared that block delivery hinders learners' ability to develop certain valuable skills. One participant stated:

> For when our learners go out into employment, and they cannot multitask.
>
> (P1)

Learner's inability to multitask appeared to be a consistent observation across the various modules and levels in the courses. This further related to learners' difficulty in managing their time. Participant 1 mentioned this in relation to a final year learner and handing in drafts for their final year dissertation project report:

> I don't think there's been one learner who's handed in a section on time, because they had that exam, just because they couldn't compartmentalise…. They said it's because of block.
>
> (P1)

The participants clearly outlined that learners themselves have said that their issues with time management are because of block and therefore highlights some of the negative impacts which the mode of delivery provides.

Alongside this, it was noted that participants felt as though learners ask more questions now than they did before and that learners are less confident. It is important for learners to be able to develop skills in learning about a range of topics and then selecting the most appropriate content for their assessment. However, it appears that learners are less concerned with learning that skill, which could see them in good stead in further education or workplaces but now are wanting to only learn what they need to, to specifically be able to complete their assessment.

> They've [learners] become not caring about learning, 'is this on my assessment, no.'
>
> (P7)

While some participants acknowledged that this could also be the case in traditional learning structures for some learners, most participants felt that this was a new emergence from learners because of the block demands.

Assessment and feedback

Assessment and feedback were intertwined throughout the discussions related to block delivery. There was a variety of views in how block impacts on assessment and feedback for both educators and learners. It appeared that the participants felt as though learners want everything to be structured around the assessment, with one participant saying:

> They [learners] react very loudly when not everything is structured around the assessment.
>
> (P3)

While it could be argued this is the case for all learning, it is particularly mentioned as a concern for block delivery due to the intense nature of the learning. Therefore, learners need to know what is important for the assessment straight away as they have limited time to be able to complete the assessment, compared to traditional semester-based learning. Amendments were made by the participants during modules to try and accommodate the intense nature of learning for the assessments, but this appeared to be difficult:

> Some of them [learners]….wanted the assessment questions week one, others found it overwhelming.
>
> (P1)

It was implied that it is harder to assess everything in one single assessment during the block delivery method and that feedback is often more centred around the concern of 'breadth and depth'. Feedback was a point of concern for the participants. While there appeared to be a consensus on how feedback is provided across the course team for consistency, there was mention that feedback has been impacted because of the block delivery:

> The feedback I give on assessments, isn't as detailed as it used to be cause I haven't got the time to do that.
>
> (P5)

This does relate to the earlier theme of time pressure but also in relation to how this has impacted on participants' ability to be able to give detailed and useful feedback to the learners. Giving feedback is an important part of providing learners with a positive overall course and experience, and as learners like actionable feedback to improve future submissions, it is important that there is enough time for markers to give detailed feedback.

Asynchronous, synchronous, and blend positive impacts

Educator wellbeing

There was consistent mention of the positive impacts of asynchronous and blended teaching on educator wellbeing. Participants mentioned that asynchronous saved them [educators] mentally. One participant mentioned this:

> I would say it's the only way I survived this year to be honest.
>
> (P3)

This connects to an earlier discussion about the pressures of course delivery in the event of educator illness. Participants consistently expressed that their mental health had improved overall, largely due to reduced anxiety around potential absences. They felt reassured knowing that if they were unwell, their content could still be delivered without burdening colleagues or disrupting learners' access to essential material:

> My mental wellbeing is so much better….I feel much more confident if someone went off sick.
>
> (P7)

With content being online or there being a blended version, it allows educators to take time off if needed when they are unwell. This further increased and supported their physical and mental wellbeing. It means that learners will also still get the materials that they need during this time and can engage in the content when the educators are off.

Importantly, participants mentioned the difference in their work-life balance with the adoption of asynchronous delivery. One participant, who would regularly need to work late nights and weekends said that:

> My work-life balance is way better because of it.
>
> (P7)

It was clear that the participant felt as though the use of asynchronous or blended andragogies allowed them time to have their own personal life, as well as think about other opportunities such as research or enhanced teaching activities. This would thus further enhance their own wellbeing as they feel as though they are doing their job to their best ability as well as enhance the learning experiences of the learners.

Flexible and inclusive

Flexibility was mentioned several times throughout the focus groups in relation to the employment of asynchronous learning. Participants mentioned the usefulness of being able to work in the evenings and at weekends when they have time free as well as allowing learners to have more ownership of when they work. Two participants mentioned this specifically:

> I think asynchronous can work really well, because you have that flexibility.
>
> (P2)

> Have more ownership over what they look at…How and when they do that.
>
> (P5)

This was particularly important to participants, who mentioned the increasing widening participation within their learner cohorts. They discussed the varied needs of their learners, including individuals who are carers, parents or employed alongside their studies. Flexibility in course delivery was seen as essential in enabling these learners to balance their academic responsibilities with personal and professional commitments:

> The asynchronous element allows them to engage in the content, even though they've got other commitments, they've got children, they've got illnesses for example, they would have been able to engage in the content if they were in the same space.
>
> (P5)

There was consistent mention that the asynchronous or a blended approach has inclusion at the forefront of teaching delivery not only in relation to other commitments but also those individuals who have additional needs. One participant specifically mentions this in relation to empowerment:

> Can really empower a learner, especially if there's someone who has maybe additional needs.
>
> (P1)

Empowerment is a key focus of teaching andragogy across HE and therefore, the notion that asynchronous learning or/and blended learning helps to foster this as well as flexibility and inclusivity provides a great strength for the approach.

Development of personal skills

In contrast to the discussions about block delivery, participants consistently mentioned the usefulness of asynchronous andragogy for the development of learner's personal skills. One participant mentioned that:

> If they [learners] go through their entire degree where they're told when to learn and where to learn and how to learn then they'll finish and not have that time management, that independence, so…I think that the aim behind it is for them [learners] to develop them.
>
> (P3)

This point highlights that by allowing learners to manage their own learning, independence in study, and time management (through asynchronous learning), they are developing skills that other learners (who learn through only synchronous learning) may not have.

It was mentioned further on from this that asynchronous learning encourages learners to develop initiative and foresight:

> It's almost like you're flipping it on the learners, the learner has to be the one that's active, to seek help.
>
> (P1)

With a consensus across the participants that the blend approach, where learners have both asynchronous online content and synchronous online and in-person teaching, encourages them to take ownership of their own learning:

> In general, the blend aspect encourages them to take ownership of it.
>
> (P1)

This would mean that learners must manage their own time, their own learning, how they engage in the learning, and how they bring forward the learning from the online content to the synchronous session. Again, these are skills that learners, who only learn through synchronous or asynchronous delivery methods and not a blended approach, may not have developed. These are also skills which are invaluable in further studies and in workplace environments.

Asynchronous, synchronous, and blend negative impacts

Learner social wellbeing

Concerns were raised by several of the participants around the negative impacts of asynchronous learning, particularly related to learner social wellbeing. One participant mentioned that:

> They're [learners] getting issues with their wellbeing, …we know that from psychology, if we don't have interaction, you don't learn as well… as productively… you have issues with your social connectivity, connections and mental health.
>
> (P6)

This was further supported by another participant in relation to learning independently:

> Learning independently is never going to be good for your social wellbeing.
>
> (P7)

It was discussed that if all content is presented online and there is little or no synchronous (in-person) learning, that learners will become somewhat disconnected in developing social friendships and thus social wellbeing will be negatively impacted.

However, it is important to note that in some instances participants mentioned that asynchronous learning could encourage social connection and thus social wellbeing. Participant 2 mentioned that learners may be 'in the library sitting next to each other' working on their asynchronous content. Therefore, a consideration in relation to this was a blended approached to foster social wellbeing where possible.

Learner engagement

Learner engagement was a topic of discussion across both focus groups in relation to asynchronous and synchronous delivery methods. It was mentioned that attendance is lower if learners have asynchronous content timetabled to be first in the day or even in the week and then synchronous in-person content afterwards. This was specifically mentioned by one participant in relation to learners not attending synchronous sessions if they have already had asynchronous content to cover:

> Many of them don't turn up because they've already had a heavy day.
>
> (P2)

There is concern over how much of the online content learners are engaging in and expecting to be there for them and that they do not have to engage in independent exploratory learning:

> It's not only that they are not doing it, it is that they are getting lazier because they think that whatever they need to study is there.
>
> (P6)

There is further concern over how asynchronous content engagement is tracked. The participants mentioned that they have no idea what the learners are engaging with and at what level they are engaging with the online content:

> I worry with asynchronous that…I've actually got no idea whether [I am] engaging with what they're doing.
>
> (P2)

This also gave rise to discussions around engagement in a synchronous in-person session, with some participants saying that even though learners attend the face-to-face session they do not engage with the activities or discussion and therefore attendance does not equate to engagement.

DISCUSSION

Using data from two focus groups conducted with Psychology educators at the University of Suffolk, this study has explored educator experiences of block and blend delivery methods.

Specifically, the research aimed to explore how block and blend andragogy impacts learner experience with a focus on wellbeing, ownership, personal development, and learning habits as well as educator experiences focusing on work-life balance, delivering content, and provision of support for learners. The findings from a thematic analysis helped to answer our two research questions by illustrating that there were positive and negative impacts for learners and educators across both educational delivery methods.

Block delivery

Our findings resonate with previous literature which has identified that intensive teaching can improve learner experience because the intensity increases the likelihood of forming relationships (Dixon & O'Gorman, 2020; Muscat & Thomas, 2023; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024). Educators suggested that the vigour required of students, due to the time pressures of intensive delivery, encouraged a bond between learners which is a critical component of engagement and connectedness to their learning experience (Muscat & Thomas, 2023).

Our findings are also consistent with previous research which suggests that the ability to have a single knowledge focus is beneficial for learner experience and synonymous with intensive delivery. This mode of delivery allows learners to immerse themselves in one module at a time thus promoting greater knowledge and understanding (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022; Vlachopoulos et al., 2019). Learners have fewer competing demands for attention in relation to what they focus on, thus engagement and attainment increases when compared to traditional methods (Burton & Nesbit, 2008; Davies, 2006; Sheldon & Durdella, 2009). Educators felt that learners had a clearer objective of what to focus on and were less confused as to what was required for each module compared to traditional delivery. Educators also felt that learners who have difficulty with multi- tasking are able to perform better when they only have to focus on one module at a time, compared to learners who have to focus on multiple modules at a time. However, in contradiction to previous literature, which has suggested that block delivery increased learners' time management skills (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022; Swain, 2016), educators implied that block delivery negatively impacted learners' time management skills as they do not have to balance competing demands across multiple modules. Additionally, educators highlighted heightened anxiety within learners when undertaking the final year-long research dissertation, alongside additional taught modules, which would be a common expectation for learners within traditional simultaneous module delivery. Building upon this insight, educators further highlighted the impact that this may have on learners' ability to multitask within future employment. This concept is yet to be explored in the literature and would be a valuable extension for the field.

Additionally, a finding which is believed to improve learner experience and appears congruent with implementing block delivery, is that students receive actionable summative feedback earlier and more frequently during their academic journey (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024), which has been linked to improved learner attainment (Gibbs, 2010). Educators acknowledged the importance of feedback for students to enhance their academic skills; however, the time constraints associated with intensive delivery has exerted greater pressure on educators and increased the difficulty of providing detailed feedback. Our findings support previous literature which also highlights that intensive teaching can contribute to a reduction in the amount of feedback provided (Lutes & Davies, 2018).

The most common disadvantage of intensive delivery which is discussed in previous literature relates to a reduction in wellbeing for both educators and students due to an increase in time pressure and cognitive burden (Czaplinski et al., 2017; Harkin & Nerantzi, 2021; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024). Educators consistently reported that they do not have time to rest between teaching, assessments, and marking combined with teaching during the next block which has a negative impact on their wellbeing. Similarly, educators worried that students

were at greater risk of stress, burnout, and heightened anxiety due to the intensive nature of block teaching which due to the lack of rest time, could extend into subsequent blocks and have a lasting negative impact on learner experience (Czaplinski et al., 2017; Harkin & Nerantzi, 2021; Testa & Van Dyke, 2024; Welsh, 2012). Analogous with time constraints contributing to a decrease in wellbeing, educators discussed that learners were less likely to engage with learning materials due to lack of available time. Specifically, learners have less time to read for each session during intensive delivery compared to traditional methods (Welsh, 2012), coupled with less time to explore concepts in depth and consolidate learning (Testa & Van Dyke, 2024), resulting in learners having a shallower learning experience.

Interestingly, findings highlighted that block teaching has negatively impacted learners with additional accessibility needs. Educators expressed the needs of neurodivergent individuals relating to the lack of time they have to work on an assessment, as it may take them longer to complete an assignment and this, combined with the additional time pressure may contribute to stress and the feeling of being overwhelmed (Earnest & Crowley, 2025). As an institution of widening participation, educators felt that it was important to support individuals with all needs. They highlighted that the current block mode of delivery (four weeks of teaching and one assessment week) makes it arduous for learners with caring needs, working responsibilities, and disabilities, as the change in timetable every five weeks creates instability, making it difficult to have a consistent routine. This unstable routine may be particularly difficult for individuals with autism who can find change difficult (National Autistic Society, 2020). Additionally, if learners are unwell and need to take time off, the amount of content they miss for each module is much greater in block delivery compared to traditional delivery as one week off is equal to a quarter of the teaching for one module, consequently having a negative impact on learner experience. This concept has not, to date, been discussed in academic literature; thus, further research on this would be valuable for the field. However, Wilkinson and Merry (2024) and Nseibo et al. (2023) discuss how block teaching can adopt universal design for learning (UDL) to meet the needs of disabled students.

Asynchronous, synchronous, and blend delivery

In contrast to the concerns regarding flexibility for block teaching, educators expressed asynchronous blended learning increased flexibility for learners as it can be adapted for their individual needs (Lage et al., 2000). It was recognised that asynchronous learning allows learners to study at a time of day which suits them which is important for encouraging ownership of learning as well as logistically for learners who may also be carers, have children, need to work, and/or have additional needs. This is paramount for institutions of widening participation (Bergdahl, 2022). Wilkinson (2022) and Wilkinson and Merry (2024) highlight the importance of continuing to provide access to online learning, particularly for those students with disabilities to increase access to learning opportunities.

In line with research by Means et al. (2013), it was acknowledged that blended learning improves learner skills, specifically when focusing on an improvement in time management and independence which further enhanced initiative and foresight. These skills were recognised as invaluable for future employment and was considered an influential benefit of asynchronous learning.

Although previous research has established that blended learning is advantageous for engagement (Ashraf et al., 2021), concerns were raised around monitoring engagement as it is difficult to keep track of the extent to which learners are engaging with asynchronous content. However, it was also mentioned that even if learners attend synchronous face-to-face sessions, they often do not engage with activities and class discussion, therefore measurement of engagement is ambiguous. It was alluded to that for engagement to be high, learners need to be

aware of the expectation that although there is content available for them to explore during their asynchronous activities, they also need to engage in independent exploratory learning.

Another potential consequence of asynchronous delivery is that learners' social wellbeing may decline due to a decrease in interaction. Concerns were presented that if the majority of content was presented online, learners' may feel a disconnect from their course and social networks. However, asynchronous learning could encourage social connections by motivating students to work together to explore their asynchronous content. Considering the design of asynchronous content is integral to promoting social connection by incorporating features that foster a sense of community, such as polls or gamified activities or creating groupwork activities whereby students have to co-operate and form social bonds (Cain et al., 2024). In support of this, Nseibo et al. (2023) found that discussions via online forums fostered collaboration among students. It was also noted that blended delivery encompasses the positives of independent asynchronous learning while also providing time for synchronous learning to support learners' social wellbeing and connectivity.

Although the focus of asynchronous and blended delivery was mainly focused on learners, educators discussed how blended delivery impacted themselves. Although staff recognised the significant initial investment of implementing asynchronous activities which align with research by McCarthy (2016), educators consistently mentioned that the impact of asynchronous and blended teaching was positive for their wellbeing. Educators believed that their mental health improved and that utilising a blended approach was significantly beneficial for their work-life balance during term-time as activities can be prepared in advance (Bokolo, 2021). In addition, Bokolo (2021) indicates that greater utilisation of blended learning approaches was associated with increased job fit, which can lead to improved pedagogy and enrichment of their teaching experience. This created some time for educators to engage in research and other academic activities which increased their job satisfaction and overall wellbeing. This is also beneficial for institutions to recognise given the importance around ensuring they support the mental wellbeing of their educators as well as educator retention.

Recommendations

During the focus groups the participants proposed recommendations to reduce the negative impacts discussed in relation to block structure. There was a consensus over lengthening blocks from four to six weeks with an assessment week as week seven, or a double block method (with two lots of four teaching weeks and one recovery week) to allow learners to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding over a longer period. The second recommendation was related to supporting educator wellbeing and time pressures, with the need for a 'recovery/enrichment' week after each block before the next block commences to allow educators time to mark and prepare materials. This would also allow learners to be able to relax and recharge before the next block or get ahead with reading or developing key skills related to feedback from the immediately preceding block or for the subsequent block(s). It is important to note that it was acknowledged that block delivery structure specifics will be dependent upon the courses that adopt it. The current suggestions for solutions are based on a non-practical based course, this may differ for practical courses.

Recommendations were also proposed to reduce the negative impacts and enhance the positive impacts of asynchronous, synchronous, and blend delivery – with a consensus that 'Blend is optimal'. It was acknowledged that adoption of any delivery method (asynchronous, synchronous, or blend) should be considered in relation to the discipline requirements. It is therefore important to be mindful that the usefulness of an asynchronous, synchronous, or a blended approach will vary depending on the course considering implementation. More practical courses, for example, may benefit from synchronous, face-to-face delivery.

Whereas a more theoretical based discipline may benefit from a greater proportion of online content (asynchronous) supplemented by synchronous aspects.

Implications and future directions

The authors acknowledge that experiences of both block and blend vary across educators depending on individual module requirements and the number of learners present on those modules; as well as varying across learners, dependent on their prior experiences, widening participation characteristics, and the course they are enrolled on. While this current work has identified a range of themes related to educators' understanding of their own, and learners' experiences of block and blend in HE, the research does not directly explore the experiences of the learners themselves. The authors acknowledge that the current findings are limited in transferability (thus generalisability) due to the methodological approach employed (Nassaji, 2020). Findings may be transferable to similar contexts; however, they cannot be unreservedly transferred to all contexts given the uniqueness in characteristics (Nassaji, 2020). Therefore, future work would benefit from building upon the current work, which explores educators' experiences for learners and educators by qualitatively exploring the experiences of the learner themselves across both block and blend models. This work should ask learners how block and blend impacts their ownership/independence of learning, emotional and social wellbeing, personal development, and learning habits. Additionally, future research would benefit from capturing quantitative data around learner experiences including, but not limited to, wellbeing, burnout, resilience, and motivation, particularly in relation to the block learning methods. The authors acknowledge the advantages of the increased generalisability of quantitative data (Mohajan, 2020).

Finally, it is suggested that HE institutions contemplating changes to their modes of educational delivery consider the findings from the current research and the recommendations provided to ensure that they implement the most appropriate forms for both educators and learners. It is imperative for HE institutions to consider block and blend as separate entities as well as integrated andragogy practices which can enhance experiences for both educators and learners.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the current research found that from experience, block delivery method impacts learners and educators both positively (learner experience, knowledge focus, actionable summative feedback) and negatively (time pressures, wellbeing, learner accessibility, learner skills, assessment and feedback). Additionally, from experience, it was also found that synchronous, asynchronous, and blend delivery methods impact learners and educators both positively (educator wellbeing, flexible and inclusive, development of personal skills) and negatively (learner social wellbeing, learner engagement). Alongside this, there were several recommendations made for both block and blend delivery which institutions should consider if they are thinking about initiating a change in delivery. Although noted that this research focuses on the experiences of educators and their perceptions of experiences of their learners, it does shine a light on the impact that differing andragogy has on experiences and how that may impact teaching and learning in HE. This research demonstrates the importance of consideration of learners and educator experiences and outcomes in HE. Future work would benefit from expanding on our findings using a variety of methodologies, such as qualitative methods, to explore experiences of learners, as well as quantitative methods to capture data on learner experiences.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT
The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ETHICS STATEMENT
We confirm that the research presented in this study was approved by the University of Suffolk Research Ethics Committee. All participants in the study provided informed consent.

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