W08 Utilizing Best Practice in Forensic Education and Remote Learning

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Learning Overview: After attending this workshop, attendees will be able to utilize established methods and techniques recognized as best practice to enhance their approach to forensic science education. Attendees will actively engage with digital tools and practice classroom exercises designed for in-person, hybrid, and remote learning. Drawing on a range of international perspectives, all aspects of the workshop are intended to translate directly into the forensic classroom, regardless of whether that classroom is in-person or virtual.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This workshop will impact the forensic science community by providing tools that will improve the educational content and experience of future forensic scientists. In addition, these tools can be adapted for continuing education, training, and professional development of current forensic practitioners. It is hoped that improved pedagogical approaches will strengthen the academic backbone of the forensic community and support greater cross-institutional collaboration.

In March 2020, the educational landscape changed almost overnight. Schools, colleges, and universities were forced to move all instruction into a remote, online environment. For those with minimal online teaching, the sudden shift was extremely disruptive. Educators adapted as best they could. In some instances, remote content delivery mainly mirrored traditional content delivery. Due to a range of pressures, many instructors recorded their usual lectures or delivered them via Zoom or other conferencing platforms unaltered from their original format rather than adapting instructional content to best suit online learning. The result was often frustration for both instructors and students as well as questions as to whether learning objectives were met, particularly in classes requiring in-lab or hands-on activities that were no longer feasible.

This workshop provides an opportunity for forensic science educators to reflect on and revisit evidence-based pedagogical practices with the aim of improving instruction in the new modes of instruction now commonplace across institutions. In addition, new approaches to instruction and assessment in an online environment will be presented as well as specific applications for forensic science content delivery. Throughout the workshop, these methods and activities will be modeled by the presenters, and attendees will have the opportunity to test out the various tools and techniques presented.

The workshop will cover three main themes: (1) Effective Teaching Practices; (2) Best Practice for Remote Teaching; and (3) Digital Teaching Tools. Theme 1 will take attendees back to basic course preparation, including how to craft measurable learning objectives and how to align assessments to learning goals. Also addressed will be transparency in grading, including the creation of rubrics and how to facilitate active learning online. Finally, this theme will explore the spectrum of academic freedom and professionalization of teaching within higher education.

Theme 2 will dive deeper into the best methods and models of remote instruction. Various tools that enable accountability for reading and other asynchronous material consumption will be presented. This workshop will also cover how instructors can rethink assignments in an environment where laboratory access is restricted or prohibited. Finally, under this theme, ethical considerations when utilizing conferencing platforms and/or proctoring software will be discussed.

The final theme will present to attendees digital tools and how they can be incorporated into forensic instruction. Some tools such as the suite of Google® apps can be leveraged in new ways. Other tools will be new to attendees and have specific applications ideal for forensic content.

The move to remote instruction was dramatic; this workshop is designed to make the move less traumatic for forensic educators and the students they serve. By leveraging recognized best practice and the available digital tools, remote teaching cannot only be successful but can exceed the outcomes of traditional, lecture-based content delivery.

Education, Pedagogy, Remote Instruction