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Online Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic

A research study on what international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen need to successfully follow online education.

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What is needed to prevent study drop-out among international students from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen with cognitive and/or mental health problems due to online education during the Corona crisis?

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Preface

Dear reader,

Before you lies a thesis about what is necessary to prevent study drop-out among international students from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen with cognitive and/or mental health problems due to online education during the Corona crisis.

This research study was conducted on behalf of the Research & Innovation Center for Rehabilitation of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, the Netherlands. This study is part of a larger research study conducted by the Research & Innovation Center concerning support and guidance for students regarding online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research study that I conducted focusses on international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems from the Hanze. Throughout this study I worked with Jorien van der Velde and Jacomijn Hofstra from the Research & Innovation Centre.

I very much enjoyed conducting this research study as it was a fantastic opportunity to put the knowledge and skills I have acquired over the past four years into practice. Not only that, but it has been extremely intriguing to be able to contribute research on something as cotemporary and colossal as the COVID-19 pandemic.

On that note, I would firstly like to thank Jorien van der Velde and Jacomijn Hofstra from the Research & Innovation Centre for giving me the opportunity to conduct this research study. I would also like to thank them both for the impeccable support they have given me throughout this thesis trajectory. I was able to contact them on a regular basis and they always made time to answer any questions I had.

Furthermore I would like to thank my supervisor Lynette Germes for all of the great support I received from her. She always provided me very useful feedback and I was able to contact her whenever I needed to. She was extremely helpful and supportive throughout this entire trajectory.

Finally, I would like to give a special thanks to my parents. Without them, none of this would have been possible.

Pom Jacobs

Abstract

Since the 13th of March 2020 online education has become the foremost form of education at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen. According to pre-existing research conducted in the first few months of the pandemic it is evident that Dutch students, and particularly students with cognitive and/or mental health problems are struggling with online education. Several difficulties reported by students such as a lack of motivation and concentration, a decline in the quality of education, and several other factors regarding online education have impacted students and their ability to follow online education.

Organisations concerning international students conducted similar research, however a small group of students have been underrepresented: international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems. A group that the Research & Innovation Center for Rehabilitation UAS plan on developing tools for to support the students in continuing their without letting online education hinder them. Hence the research question, *What is needed to prevent study drop-out among international students from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen with cognitive and/or mental health problems due to online education during the Corona crisis?*

The results of this research study were collected through eight in-depth interviews with international students from all around the globe. Each student had been suffering from cognitive and/or mental health problems for at least six months. These students were interviewed either online or physically and they were asked several questions regarding their opinion of the advantages, disadvantages, the impact online education has had on their ability to study and on their psychological wellbeing, the strategies they have implemented to follow online education, and the sorts of skills and resources they need in order to follow online education to the best of their ability. These interviews were then transcribed and analysed.

In these interviews both negative and positive experiences were shared by the students, but the vast majority of the experiences were negative. Several difficulties the students face generally correspond to the difficulties that national students face. However, there are also some fundamental differences. One of the differences is the desire for mental health support, yet also the lack of mental health support these students receive. The students lack knowledge on where or who to go to for help, which has formed an obstacle in getting the help that they need. If this continues, the target group is likely put at a greater risk of study drop-out.

To conclude, it is important that the Hanze do further research on what is necessary for its international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems to receive the mental health support they need, taking into account factors such as cultural sensitivity, language barriers, and any other factors that may hinder international students. Once this has been improved, the research centre can focus on conducting research on how they can be of help to this group of students.

Samenvatting

Sinds 13 maart 2020 is online onderwijs de belangrijkste vorm van onderwijs aan de Hanzehogeschool Groningen. Uit eerder onderzoek rondom de eerste maanden van de pandemie bleek dat Nederlandse studenten, met name studenten met cognitieve en/of psychische problemen, moeite hadden met online onderwijs. Verschillende problemen die door studenten werden gemeld, zoals een gebrek aan motivatie en concentratie, een afname van de kwaliteit van het onderwijs en verschillende andere factoren met betrekking tot online onderwijs, hebben invloed gehad op studenten en hun vermogen om online onderwijs te volgen.

Na het verzamelen van deze gegevens hebben organisaties met betrekking tot internationale studenten een soortgelijk onderzoek uitgevoerd. Echter is hier een groep studenten ondervertegenwoordigd, namelijk internationale studenten met cognitieve en/of psychische problemen. Dit is een groep waar de Innovatiewerkplaats (IWP) Begeleid Leren van het lectoraat Rehabilitatie van de Hanzehogeschool Groningen hulpmiddelen en interventies voor wil ontwikkelen om de studenten te ondersteunen bij het volgen van online onderwijs. Vandaar de onderzoeksvraag: *Wat is er nodig om te voorkomen dat internationale studenten van de Hanzehogeschool Groningen met cognitieve en/of psychische problemen als gevolg van online onderwijs tijdens de Corona-crisis hun studie voortijdig afbreken?*

De resultaten van dit onderzoek werden verzameld door middel van acht diepte-interviews met internationale studenten uit verschillende landen. Elke student had al minstens zes maanden last van cognitieve en/of psychische problemen. Deze studenten werden zowel online als fysiek geïnterviewd en er werden verschillende vragen gesteld over hun mening over de voordelen en nadelen van online onderwijs, de impact die online onderwijs heeft gehad op hun vermogen om te studeren en op hun psychologisch welzijn, de strategieën die ze hebben geïmplementeerd om online onderwijs te volgen en welke hulpbronnen en vaardigheden ze nodig hebben om online onderwijs goed te kunnen volgen. De interviews zijn vervolgens getranscribeerd en geanalyseerd.

Tijdens de interviews worden zowel negatieve als positieve ervaringen gedeeld door de studenten, maar het overgrote deel van de ervaringen was negatief. Verschillende moeilijkheden waarmee de studenten te maken hebben komen over het algemeen overeen met de moeilijkheden waarmee de nationale studenten te maken hebben. Er zijn echter ook enkele fundamentele verschillen. Een van deze verschillen is het verlangen naar ondersteuning van de geestelijke gezondheid, maar tegelijkertijd ook het gebrek aan ondersteuning van de geestelijke gezondheid van deze studenten. De studenten weten niet waarheen of naar wie ze moeten gaan voor hulp, wat een obstakel vormt voor het krijgen van de hulp die ze nodig hebben. Als dit zo doorgaat, loopt de doelgroep waarschijnlijk een groter risico om de studie voortijdig te staken.

Tot slot is het belangrijk dat de Hanze verder onderzoek doet naar wat nodig is om internationale studenten met cognitieve en/of psychische problemen de ondersteuning te bieden waar ze behoefte aan hebben, rekening houdend met factoren zoals culturele gevoeligheid, taalbarrières en andere factoren die internationale studenten kunnen hinderen. Als dit eenmaal is verbeterd, kan het lectoraat zich richten op onderzoek naar mogelijke ondersteuning voor deze groep studenten.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and relevance

On March 11th 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic (WHO, 2020). Since then, the Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu (RIVM) has put several measures in place to prevent further spread of the virus. On March 12th the government made the decision to close all schools and universities across the country (ScienceGuide, 2020). Following this decision the Hanze University of Applied Sciences closed its doors on the 13th of March (DVHN, 2020). Within a few days, education was almost completely digitised and available to most students.

For a large amount of students, this development has caused a lot of stress (Adrichem, Kappe, & Muusse, 2020). The unpredictability of the Corona crisis is cause for uncertainty among students. Many are worried about the impact the Corona crisis will have on the progress of their study and a large portion of students expect a study delay because of this (Crabbendam & Goes, 2020). Additionally, many students are struggling with this new form of education due to several factors such as reduced concentration and motivation (Warps & van den Broek, 2020). The loss of concentration can be linked to the fact that studying at home causes a blur between study, work, and private life. Students are forced to sleep, work, eat, and relax in (often small) student accommodation. This causes an overlap in activities and makes it more difficult to concentrate on one task (Sporrel, 2020). According to Sporrel, students also experience it as motivating to see their fellow students at work as this stimulates them to get to work themselves. Due to online education, students lack this form of motivation.

The Landelijke Studentenvakbond (LSVB) has conducted research on the experiences of students with online education as a result of the Corona crisis (Crabbendam & Goes, 2020). 427 students from 32 different educational institutions participated in the study through the means of a questionnaire. The research showed that more than half of the students are concerned about the Corona crisis and the impact it will have on their study progress. The research also identifies the successes and difficulties of online education. Students experience both the teachers and the education as being accessible, and report that they experience being able to schedule according to their own time as pleasant. However, the

vast majority of the results focus on the negative aspects of online education. Students are not satisfied with technical difficulties (such as a bad Wi-Fi connection), studying at home (lack of structure), the uncertainty of the situation (unclear communication from educational institutions about where students stand), lack of social contacts, and the quality of online education. Students feel that in online education there is little room for interaction and that the material is taught more superficial (Crabbendam & Goes, 2020). The students in the study also report that classes often lack depth.

Furthermore, there is a group of students that seem to have been hit particularly hard by the Corona crisis. These are the students who are struggling with cognitive and/or mental health problems (Crabbendam & Goes, 2020). The study conducted by Crabbendam and Goes shows that 22% of this group of students normally feels hindered by their problems, and that currently a staggering 54% reported feeling hindered by their problems. This goes to show that the Corona crisis has a significant impact on the daily life of students with cognitive and/or mental health problems. Additionally, these students also report feeling less heard since the outbreak of the Coronavirus (Adrichem, Kappe, & Muusse, 2020). According to Adrichem, Kappe and Muusse (2020), the students feel that their educational institution is currently not taking their supportive needs into account. Not only that, but students with cognitive and/or mental health problems often receive treatment for their problems, but this too has been altered due to the pandemic (GGZ nieuws, 2020). As a result, these students lose two importance factors in their life. Attending physical lectures can have a positive impact on the treatment of psychological problems as it provides one with structure and social contact in daily life (Lee, 2020). Online education can lead to isolation and worsening of psychological problems for some students (GGZ nieuws, 2020). In contrast, there are also people with psychological problems who express that some of the effects of the pandemic have impacted them positively. GGZ nieuws reports that these people experience more peace in society and also feel like less of a minority because many people are struggling with the current situation. Nevertheless, in general students with cognitive and/or psychological problems have been negatively affected by the Corona crisis.

Moreover, there is a large group of students who have not yet been mentioned. This group consists of the international students who have come to the Netherlands to study. There are

more than 85,000 international students in the Netherlands and the Corona crisis has had a major impact on this group (ISO, ESN, & LSVb, 2020). The Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO), the Landelijke Studentenvakbond (LSVb), and Erasmus Student Network (ESN) publish 'the Annual International Student Survey' (AISS) every year. The target group of the questionnaire is international students studying in The Netherlands. The goal of the survey is to identify the experiences of international students regarding education, work, social inclusion, the Dutch system, housing, welfare, and reasons for (not) staying in the Netherlands. This year 558 international students filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was published between February and March (before the first lockdown), so there are no references to the pandemic.

Based on a combination of the results of the AISS and input from international students regarding the Corona crisis (collected by the LSVb and the ISO), a separate document was developed that addresses the corona crisis-related problems which international students in the Netherlands face. Almost 30% of the AISS respondents indicate that they experience "lonely to extreme feelings of loneliness". Half of the respondents indicated that they experienced "above average to extreme feelings of stress". This document shows that the aforementioned feelings have increased among internationals since the outbreak of the Corona virus. Furthermore, international students have been found to be somewhat neglected during the Corona crisis (ISO, ESN, & LSVb, 2020). ISO, ESN and LSVb mention the fact that information about the Dutch COVID-19 measures only became available in English later on. This resulted in confusion among international students forcing them to be dependent on Dutch people for information. The lack of attention for international students is especially problematic as research has shown that students from different cultural backgrounds sometimes find it difficult to ask for help (Cheng, 2020). According to Cheng, many international students do not reach out for help when a crisis occurs.

Students experiencing cognitive and/or mental health problems seem to be experiencing many extra difficulties as a result of the Corona-crisis and the same goes for international students. So what if you belong to both of these groups?

International students with cognitive and/or mental health problems. This group of students has to deal with all (Corona) difficulties that international students often experience, such as

feelings of stress and loneliness due to the lack of integration and social inclusion (ISO, ESN, & LSVb, 2020). But in addition to this, they have a cognitive and/or mental health problem. Research has shown that the corona crisis has a major impact on Dutch students with cognitive and/or mental health (Crabbendam & Goes, 2020). However, little research has been done on the experiences and needs of *international* students with cognitive and/or mental health problems regarding online education in the Corona crisis. By identifying these needs, means of guidance and support can be developed to prevent this group of students from dropping out of their study programme.

Furthermore, it is important to do research on what these students need as it is unknown how long the COVID-19 measures (including online education) will be enforced. Most higher education institutions have made the decision to continue offering only online education, or in some cases hybrid (partially online, partially physical) education until at least 2021 (Poortvliet, 2020). This is why it is important that all students are able to follow this new form of education to the best of their ability.

This research study will contribute to a new research program that focuses on a group of students who are often underrepresented in existing studies on online education in the Corona crisis (LSVb, 2020). This study focuses on international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems. For the purpose of this study, these are students that have been experiencing cognitive and/or mental health problems for at least six months. With this study, the aim is to identify what is needed in order to prevent this group of students from failing online education.

1.2 The Research & Innovation Centre for Rehabilitation, Supported Education

This research study is being carried out on behalf of the Research & Innovation Centre for Rehabilitation, Supported Education of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen. The Research Centre has developed several means to aid and support students with cognitive and/or mental health problems in following and maintaining courses at a regular educational institution.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus, the Innovation Centre Supported Education has been working on a new program 'S.O.S. Online' aiming to support students from the Hanze UAS

with online education. Within this program they would also like to develop interventions to support international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems. This is a group that the research centre has previously not yet focused on. Thus the Research Centre would like to receive advice and recommendations on how they can best support these students and consequently make online education inclusive¹ for international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems.

1.3 The purpose of the study

As a result of this qualitative research study, advice and recommendations have been generated for the research centre on what international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems need to prevent study drop-out due to online education as a consequent of the Coronavirus.

The research centre will be able to build on these advices, with the underlying aim of ensuring that online education is inclusive for *all* students studying at the Hanze UAS.

1.4 Research questions

Research question

What is needed to prevent study drop-out among international students from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen with cognitive and/or mental health problems due to online education during the Corona crisis?

Sub questions

1. *What difficulties does the target group face now when it comes to online education in comparison to before the corona crisis?*
2. *What sorts of strategies does the target group apply in order to follow online education to the best of their ability?*
3. *What skills and resources does the target group need to be able to successfully follow online education with satisfaction?*

¹ By inclusive education what is meant is that there is no increase in study dropout when following online education in comparison to following regular education and that every student is able to participate to the best of their ability (van der Wegen, Jansen , & Stad-Ogier, 2020).

1.5 Definition of terms used

International students from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences (UAS) Groningen

When referring to International students from the Hanze UAS Groningen in this research study, it concerns students who do not have the Dutch nationality nor do their parents live in the Netherlands. Students must also be enrolled at the Hanze at the time of the study and students must be actively² following courses at the Hanze.

Online education.

When referring to online education, this concerns the education given at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, which has been digitised due to the Corona crisis since the 13th of March 2020.

Study dropout

Preventing study drop-out means that every student should be able to follow online education to the best of their ability, regardless of whether the student comes from abroad or because of cognitive and/or mental health problems. Online education must not form an obstacle in completing a study course.

² Actively following educations is defined by participating in online lectures/tutorials at least 2 days per week.

2. Method

Qualitative research was conducted in order to answer the research questions mentioned in chapter one. Initially, the chosen method was to conduct a focus group. By conducting a focus group, the goal was to gain more insight into the experiences of international students from the Hanze UAS with cognitive and/or mental health problems. The decision to conduct qualitative research instead of quantitative research was made because a qualitative method such as a focus group is better suited to the purpose of this study. Conducting a focus group to gather data provides more depth than most quantitative methods (Brinkman & Oldenhuis, 2016). For example, during a focus group, the moderator is able to probe topics he wishes participants to elaborate on. This is something that is often not possible when using a quantitative research method such as a questionnaire. Furthermore, due to the exploratory nature of this study it was undesirable to work with a fixed list of questions or a list of things to observe. By conducting a focus group participants are given the opportunity to respond to each other's statements on the subject, enabling deeper insight into perceptions, motives, attitudes, information processing and the choices made by the participants (Ketelaar, Hentenaar, & Kooter, 2011).

2.1 Development of the discussion guide

A discussion guide to guide the focus group discussion was developed beforehand. The discussion guide was developed using information gathered through literature review conducted and based on the research questions. Furthermore, the discussion guide was presented to the research centre to confirm that the topics corresponded to their wishes. The topics covered in the discussion guide were: the experienced advantages and disadvantages of online education, the impact online education has had on the students' ability to study, how the students have been affected psychologically, strategies students use to help themselves study, advice they would give other students in their position to help them with online education, and the sorts of skills and resources the students feel they need to successfully follow online education (see appendix 1 for the discussion guide).

2.2 Recruitment of participants

After the discussion guide had been developed, the recruiting of participants took place. The recruitment process consisted of several different recruiting methods. In order to aid this

process, a recruitment flyer was developed (appendix 2). This flyer consisted of a brief description of the research study, the inclusion criteria (international students currently studying at the Hanze who have been experiencing cognitive and/or mental health problems for at least six months), and practical information such as the location of the interviews. For more elaborate information about the research study, students were able to scan a QR-code on the flyer (appendix 3). Students could sign-up to participate in the focus group by clicking on the 'sign-up' button on the flyer which would take them to a Hanze SharePoint Google-Forms document where they could choose a preferred date and time to participate. Via email the students received a confirmation with details about when and where the focus group would take place. The decision to use a *Hanze SharePoint* Google-Forms document was made to ensure that only Hanze students could sign up to participate in the interviews. This way, students who don't study at the Hanze, and thus do not fit the target group were filtered out.

The flyer was first shared with the Research Centre to ensure they were satisfied with the information provided on the flyer. Once they had given the green light, the recruitment process started.

The flyer was spread using several online platforms. The decision to spread the flyer exclusively online was due to the Corona measures at the time. Most students and teachers worked from home which motivated the decision to spread the flyer online only. The primary platform used was email. Using the Hanze website (www.hanze.nl) as a starting point, teachers from English-taught study programmes were contacted via email, in the hope that these teachers would share the flyer with their students. Their contact details were taken from the Hanze website. Organisations such as study associations, the Hanze International Student team, and the Hanze Student Support were also contacted.

Social media was also used to spread the flyer. The flyer was shared in relevant groups on Facebook, such as the 'ESN-Groningen' group and the 'New International students in Groningen'. These are groups for international students studying in Groningen. Likewise the flyer was shared in WhatsApp groups of several sports-associations in Groningen.

As the target group is quite specific, the goal was to try and spread the flyer to as many international students from the Hanze UAS as possible, assuming that it would reach the students from the target group. The aim was to conduct at least one focus group between

the 16th and the 29th of November 2020. However, by the end of November only two students had signed up, ideally a focus group consists of 6-8 people (Ketelaar, Hentenaar, & Kooter, 2011). Thus, after consulting with the research centre, the decision was made to conduct individual in-depth interviews instead.

The flyer was edited (appendix 4) so that students were able to indicate when they preferred to do the interview and whether they wished to do it online via Microsoft-Teams or physically (on campus). This flyer was then shared again to the aforementioned platforms. Additionally, flyer was shared with contact-persons for the international master programmes. This was effective because within two weeks several students had responded. Along with the aforementioned recruitment methods, the snowball-technique was used. After an interview, participants were sent an email with the flyer attached to it requesting the participant share it with any other international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems from the Hanze they know.

2.3 The Interviews

The recruitment process resulted in the sign-up of ten students. Two of these students did not respond to the email to set up the interview, resulting in eight students that participated in an interview. These eight students were second, third and fourth year bachelor-students as well as a few master-students. No first year students participated in the interviews. Two of the students were male and the remaining six were female. The students came from Asia, East-Europe, West-Europe, the UK, and Central America.

The eight interviews were held either online via a private Microsoft Teams channel or physically on campus at the faculty of Social Studies. The interviews lasted 45 minutes on average. The interview topic-list used was an adapted version of the discussion guide (appendix 5). During the interviews only the participant and the interviewer were present. When conducting the interviews, the interviewer made use of paraphrasing and regularly gave summaries of what the participant said. By doing this, the interviewer gave the participant the opportunity to confirm whether or not the interviewer had understood them correctly. Additionally, this gave the participant a platform to reflect on what they had said and possibly add to it. This way the interviewer has assured that complete and correct information was gathered, contributing to the validity and reliability of the data.

Each interview was recorded with a voice-recorder and was then transcribed. Once the recordings had been transcribed, they were deleted to safeguard the privacy of the participants. The methods used to safeguard the privacy of the participants will be elaborated on in 2.4 (Ethical accountability).

2.4 Analysis of the interviews

As mentioned previously, the interviews were audio-recorded. This was done to increase the validity and reliability of the data. By audio-recording the interviews no valuable information was lost or forgotten. The interviews were then transcribed. This was done clean verbatim. Clean verbatim transcription means that the transcription is lightly edited for easier readability (Rev.com, n.d.), words such as 'um' and 'yeah' and 'uhuh' have been left out of the transcription. Also stuttering or unintentional word repetition has not been included (Rev.com, n.d.). Clean verbatim transcription is appropriate when research is being done on what is said and not the way it is being said (Boeije, 2016).

The transcriptions were analysed using the software Atlas.ti. Atlas.ti is a software that facilitates the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio and video data (atlas.ti, n.d.). The decision to use this software was made because it is a relatively simple and structured way of creating and managing codes, this in turn also simplifies the process of drawing conclusions and making comparisons between groups of codes.

Throughout the analysis, inductive coding was used to formulate codes. Inductive coding is the process in which codes are formulated based on the information gathered from the interviews (Baarda, 2014). This was done in three steps. Step 1 was 'Open coding' where fragments of the transcription dealing with the same theme have all been given the same code (Baarda, 2014). These themes were derived from the literature review conducted prior to the interviews, as well as the topics from the interview topic list. The second step was 'Axial coding', as Baarda mentions in his book, this step consists of organising the codes, the related fragments are grouped under the same theme. The following codes were generated in this step: Advantages of online education, Needs, Negative influence on ability to study online, Negative influence on psychological wellbeing, Strategies for online studying, and Difficulties international students (appendix 6).

Finally, step 3 'Selective coding', the aim of selective coding is to bring further structure to the codes and to discover relationships between codes or different participants (Boeije, 2016). The codes contributed to finding four main themes which will be presented in chapter 3.

2.5 Ethical accountability

The participants that were interviewed had signed up completely voluntarily. The researchers had no knowledge beforehand of exactly who would receive the flyer and thus had no way of influencing the participants. Furthermore, at the start of every interview the participants were given a detailed explanation of the research study and the steps that would be taken in order to safeguard their anonymity. A detailed explanation of the research study and informed consent adapted from the form for the focus group (appendix 8) was given verbally before each interview so participants were aware of the exact reasons they were being interviewed and what would be done with the interviews afterwards. Thus participants were fully informed.

The steps that were taken to safeguard the privacy of the participants were as followed: the audio-recordings of the interviews were kept safe in a locked file and were deleted as soon as the recordings had been transcribed. Moreover, whilst transcribing the interviews, any information that would allow the participant to be linked to specific statements was removed. For instance, the names of participants were not included. Instead the participant was referred to as 'interviewee'. Any other information that could jeopardise the anonymity of the participant was also left out of the transcription.

Participants were also explicitly told that they could end the interview whenever they liked and that if there were any questions that they did not want to answer, they did not have to do so.

To assure the researcher would be dealing ethically with the participants throughout this study, the researcher made use of the 'Zorgvuldig omgaan met proefpersonen' form (appendix 7). This is a form that filters out any red-flags in regards to dealing ethically with participants. No red-flags were found when filling out the form.

3. Results

Theme 1: Difficulties experienced regarding online education.

In order to answer the first sub-question, *‘What difficulties does the target group face now when it comes to online education in comparison to before the corona crisis?’* the following topics were handled during the interviews: the experienced advantages and disadvantages of online education, and the impact it has had on the target group. These topics led to the development of this first theme ‘Difficulties experienced regarding online education’. The psychological difficulties that the target group faces will be presented in theme 2.

The students have experienced both negative and positive sides to online education.

However to most students the negatives outweighed the positives. The greatest negative aspect named by students was the lack of interaction with teachers and other students due to online education. The students feel that because there is less room to interact with one another, they are disadvantaged in several ways. Most of the students note that they are missing ‘positive peer pressure’. They have come to realise that students motivate each other. Seeing and hearing about others studying, motivates them to study themselves and keeps them organised. Through interaction they are reminded of assignment deadlines, and they can easily discuss coursework they don’t understand. Not only that, but they also note that the lack of interaction with fellow classmates prevents them from blowing off steam. A student notes that it can be reassuring to hear that a classmate also found the lecture difficult instead of pondering about it on your own.

The lack of interaction has another downside to it. Many students reported online education to be more superficial due to the inability to interact easily with other students and teachers. The students mentioned there is often little room for discussion as this disrupts the class, leaving questions unanswered and possibly preventing depth to the material.

“I think maybe what it is as well is sort of peer pressure or something like that? Like when you talk with fellow students like about assignments like you can see their body language and you can hear the way they speak so they might be a bit stressed, or they might be a bit like I don't know like it highlights the importance of it more, versus like if you're texting with them that might not come across. So yeah, that's probably something about it as well, like peer pressure and like a general atmosphere amongst students.”

On the other hand, almost every student mentioned the recording of lectures to be greatly advantageous. General opinion is that the lecture-recordings aid one in sufficiently completing their courses. The lecture-recordings allow the students to go back and (re)watch the lecture at their own pace. This contributes to a better understanding of the material and ensures that students who are unable to follow class do not have to miss anything. For one student in particular online education has come to be a great advantage as this student no longer experiences the stress and pressure of mandatory (physical) attendance.

“Because for me the physical attendance was a big problem for some time because I couldn't really get up, I was sometimes feeling really bad and I was sometimes looking really bad and would not want to see anyone. And I didn't want to be there because I would feel bad because other people would be around and I would feel uncomfortable.”

Not only that, some students report that they value the freedom that comes with online education. The recording of lectures allows students to manage their own daily schedule. For example, one student explained she often suffers from lack of sleep making it difficult for her to focus during class. As most lectures are now recorded, students are no longer confined to school hours and are able to work on their studies when they are fit to do so.

In contrast, disadvantages mentioned by almost all of the students, are the loss of concentration, motivation, and lack of productivity as a result of online education. Several students attribute this to the fact that they are forced to follow online education in their student housing, almost every student explained they do not feel it is a suitable environment for studying. One of the students explained that in their home they have a relaxing mentality which hinders motivation (this will be further elaborated on in theme 4). Other students explained that along with the many distractions at home, the repetitiveness of their days, and staring at a computer screen for 8-10 hours takes a toll on their ability to concentrate. This in turn also has an impact on students physically. A few students mention trouble sleeping, one of them attributed this to excessive exposure to blue-light. Additionally, several students mention the development of unhelpful habits as a result of online education. One of these habits is skipping class. The students explain that it feels easier to skip online classes as opposed to physical classes. They also point out that online

classes often feel less serious. Another bad habit discussed by several students is following lectures in bed.

"Paying attention, getting out of bed as well, I don't know like I think sometimes you're like 'oh it's online so I can do whatever I want' so like when you have a nine in the morning class you're just sort of still groggy... still sleepy so you open the laptop next to you in bed, but I feel like that's a really bad habit because then you're not really paying attention at all. But concentrating on what's being said... I think in general is a lot more difficult online."

Not all students agree that this habit is solely negative however, several students mention that this can be an advantage of online education. The students agree that it can be pleasant to wake up a few minutes before class starts instead of rushing in the morning.

Theme 2: effects of the Corona crisis and online education on psychological wellbeing

This theme also contributes to the aim of answering the first sub-question. The topic handled in the interviews was how the Corona crisis and online education has impacted the psychological well-being of the students. As so much was said regarding this topic, it has attained its own theme.

With the exception of one student, every student reported predominantly negative effects of the Corona crisis and online education on their psychological wellbeing.

Almost every student mentioned how a lack of information regarding online education was often stressful and at times even anxiety inducing. Most of the students expressed they often missed clarity from the Hanze about the COVID-19 situation and how it would affect them. An example given by multiple students was the stress that came with online examinations, the instructions were often perceived as vague and nerve-racking.

"I wanted someone to tell me that to chill and that it's not so bad but instead, they told us that we have to record ourselves from three angles. It made me anxious, the way the [online supervision] was described in the emails. It didn't turn out to be as bad or as strict as it was described in the rules. If I could suggest an improvement, it's the arrangement of the exams because it was a bit messy and a bit anxiety-inducing."

Every student also considers the loss of freedom due to COVID-19 restrictions as something that has negatively affected their psychological wellbeing. Students report feeling trapped

as there's not much to do or anywhere to go. Some students explain that they are left at home alone with their thoughts resulting in overthinking, sometimes leading them to spiral and dwell in negativity. The loss of freedom also caused physical changes such as loss of energy and lessened interest in activities.

Almost every student mentions struggling with the fact that they are no longer able to see their social network as they did pre-Corona. Students describe having lost an element of support. When meeting up physically was still the norm, the students felt they could easily converse with friends and family about difficulties. Now that it has become uncommon to meet physically with friends from another household, they are less inclined to share their problems. They don't want to burden friends with their difficulties on the rare occasion they are able to meet physically.

Similarly, some students note the difficulties of reaching out for help as a result of online education. It forms an extra obstacle for students. They explain that it's easier to approach a teacher discreetly in person, often in class, as opposed to emailing back and forth trying to explain their situation and organising a time to meet online.

"It's quite difficult to reach out to someone, even to my teacher sometimes because they're busy whereas when being non-online, face-to-face gives me an opportunity to tell them 'hey I really need help'."

A few of the students also mention the negative impact of the Dutch way of communicating. They point out that the Dutch have a direct manner of communicating. The students explain that when one is already in a vulnerable state of mind due to mental health problems this can be upsetting.

"The strict way it's communicated makes you pay more attention to it but at the same time, it made me panic all the time and it did not contribute to my productivity but made me doubt myself and made me anxious. I know this is also because I am an anxious person so this made not be the same for everyone. But if we're talking about mental health I think it's important that these messages are formulated more gently."

Several students also discuss the difficulties of emotions and other non-verbal communication getting lost in digital translation. Certain cues and the expression of feelings

are often misinterpreted. A minority of the students felt misunderstood by teachers because of this. One of the students also mentioned feeling less supported by teachers because they feel that online education prevents them from forming a connection.

“...Also not knowing who your lecturers are kind of puts you at a disadvantage. Not having that same connection, I feel like they're less inclined to help you at a later point. You know how if you speak to your lecturers more during classes, you make the effort to interact with them, then they like you more and then they're more willing to help you. I think that when you don't get to see them at all they don't care very much about helping you.”

A small number of students also feel there is a lack of understanding from the Hanze when it comes to mental health problems.

“They need to kind of understand that at that point that you're really, really struggling and need a little bit more support or even extensions or something, I guess that's what I wanted from it.”

There were however also a small number of students who are highly pleased with the support they've received from the Hanze and feel very connected to the educational institution. The majority of the students do not receive mental health support from the Hanze (this will be elaborated on in theme 4).

Furthermore, a few students mentioned feeling lonely more often due to the lack of physical interaction that comes with online education and the COVID-19 restrictions.

“...you just feel the need for like physical interaction, or like human interaction. And I feel like online education doesn't really provide that in the same way...”

One student explains how the uncertainty of COVID-19 is very stressful. This student is unable to freely travel to their family as there is an uncertainty of being able to return back to the Netherlands.

"...I meet my family twice a year because I'm here now, but it's not only because I can't physically meet them, it's because I know I can't physically meet them. Last year I knew it was a long ride, but I knew deep inside if I really wanted to I could go worst case scenario, but now for example I'm going to Spain in December and I have to take a PCR test before I go to Spain and I'm also scared, like what if I get put into quarantine on my way back to the Netherlands?"

Theme 3: Strategies used to study online.

To answer the second sub-question 'What sorts of strategies does the target group apply in order to follow online education to the best of their ability?' questions based on this theme were asked in the interviews.

The students mentioned several different strategies they use to study online. The vast majority of the students explained that they try to study with other people when possible. The students explain that by doing this they can easily motivate each other and at the same time prevent loneliness. One student also emphasised that keeping in touch with classmates also helps keep updated with their studies.

"Just having somebody to talk to is nice and knowing that maybe you're not alone in struggling with a specific subject or an exam or something like that. Like I said in the beginning talking with them about assignments, like reaffirms like the importance of the deadline, like how quickly it's coming up and how much work it might be."

One student explained that organising (pub)quizzes with fellow classmates is a creative way of studying as well as interacting with other people.

Furthermore, almost every student points out the importance of physical activity and taking plenty of breaks when studying online. They explain that this is a good way to clear one's head and ensures that students are not sitting, staring at a laptop screen for hours on end. Several students also discuss that they find it useful to make a schedule for themselves when studying online. They mention this as important because everything tends to overlap and feel similar when sitting in a room following classes on a laptop almost daily. A minority of the students explain that it's helpful for them to write down what they have

accomplished at the end of the day as they can reflect and tend to realise they have done more than they initially thought motivating them to continue doing so.

The majority of the students also touch on the necessity of having an adequate environment to study. One student explains that it's helpful to remove any distractions from the room one uses to study. Several other students bring up the fact that the environment in which one study's should not be too relaxing as this negatively impacts students' ability to concentrate.

One student advises students to write notes from class down on paper instead of on a laptop. The following quote gives an explanation of this:

"And it also feels a little bit more... I mean now since everything's... it feels a little bit detached, like everything is online, everything feels kind of far away, if you have it like tangible in your hand, I don't know, it feels a little bit more real."

Another student advises students not to set the bar too high for themselves. They explain that it's alright to slow down a little bit and to give oneself a break during these tough times. Similarly, one of the students explains that it's important not to completely isolate as a result of the Corona restrictions put in place.

"...Keeping safe obviously, like a movie night or something and then you can sit distances apart from each other. I think that it's important that you do stuff like that because I feel like if you don't... if you lock yourself in your room for like a week or two weeks or something that in the end you'll be so lonely and desperate..."

Finally, almost every single student mentions that their social network functions as a protective factor for mental health problems during COVID-19. They are able to use their social network as a means to cope. Examples students gave were things like going for walks with friends to clear their head, or confiding in friends and sharing difficulties.

Theme 4: Skills and resources needed to successfully follow online education with satisfaction.

Theme 4 contributes to answering the final sub-question, *“What skills and resources does the target group need to be able to successfully follow online education with satisfaction?”*

To answer this question, the students were asked about the resources they need, and how the Hanze could be of help to aid them in successfully following online education.

Although the students gave a wide variety of answers to these questions, there were several things that came up frequently by almost every student that was interviewed. One of the topics every student mentioned during the interviews was the need for clear and consistent communication from the Hanze. Students explained that informing them properly of things such as protocols for online examinations gives students the opportunity to mentally prepare for situations and prevents negative psychological reactions such as anxiety. Another matter a small number of the students touched on was the need for guidance and understanding regarding online examinations.

“Online exam supervision was also anxiety-inducing. I feel so much calmer during a real exam. Then you don't have to set up the camera and everything. I also don't like filming myself in general and being behind the camera. I even skipped one of my exams partly because I was scared and uncomfortable with the online supervision.”

A large majority of the students also express a lack of knowledge on who to turn to for mental health support at the Hanze. These students expressed a desire to speak to a professional about difficulties they face.

“... I don't know if it exists already or not, if it does I haven't seen it... but a specific person or specific people that you can reach out to. Because if it's just 'don't hesitate to reach out' you know, it's still like to who? what do I do? So maybe just specific people, but I don't even know because I think for me what I just need is, or what I would want is somebody to talk to knowing it's okay to talk to them.”

Similarly, a high number of students explain they also lack information on how to find mental health care in the Netherlands in general. Often students are unaware of who to

turn to resulting in the absence of mental health treatment. A few students felt the Hanze could be of help to them regarding this matter, but that this is not the case at present.

Moreover, as mentioned in previous themes, study environment is a topic that came up in every interview. The vast majority of the students expressed a need for access to a better environment to study in. The students mention missing being able to go to study in libraries with other students. Every student agreed on this with the exception of one student. This student explained the following:

"I know that for some people studying at home is really difficult, but I'm really used to it. It's just that when it's quiet I feel so much better concentrated. When I was at school I was also kind of spacing out because I see other people, I just watch them do their thing and at study places such as libraries or cafes or place like that, I just get distracted by everything and here when it's quiet and I don't have anything on I feel like I can draw my attention to the study."

Another point that has come up in previous themes is interaction. Almost every student feels that interaction is lost when following classes online. Several students mention that there is room to make online lessons more interactive by creating smaller groups allowing for room to discuss the material.

Finally, a small number of students who expressed having an overall positive experience explain that feeling connected and understood by the Hanze has really contributed to their positive experience with education at the Hanze both online and offline.

"I have a more personal connection with the university than I would if I didn't tell them anything. I used to neglect that we were social creatures and that we need other people in our lives to feel better. I think that it's a universal thing that communication makes you feel better. It's important to involve other people and let them help you and especially not be afraid to ask for help. I learned this the hard way. It is more important to be honest about needing guidance or help than being super productive."

Other results

The following results cannot be categorised under the previously mentioned themes and do not directly contribute to answering the sub-questions. However, these results have been

regarded as important information aiding to provide thorough recommendations on how to help the target group.

A small number of the students talk about the pressure of having to obtain at least 30EC's per year to prove to the Dutch government that they are studying here. The students explain that if they do not obtain the 30EC's they may face deportation. One of the students expressed how this puts extreme pressure on them as they are unable to study due to severe mental health issues.

Furthermore, one student mentioned a negative experience with a school psychologist from the Hanze because they couldn't speak adequate English.

Additionally, there was one student who struggled in particular with the fact that they were being bounced back and forth by the Hanze and the Dutch mental health care system as nobody knew exactly where this student could go to for mental health care, leaving the student lost and confused.

One of the students also touches on the cultural difference in communication in the Netherlands:

In [deleted to safeguard anonymity] we use English words slightly differently from you guys as well, so what I say may not be how it actually comes across, like just to quote an example... When a doctor comes and speaks to me 'do you have any complaints?' this is what it's like in the Netherlands. But if I was in [deleted to safeguard anonymity] they would be like 'what is wrong, how can we help you?' so it comes across very differently.

Finally, one student mentions in the interview that they often find themselves in an online class with classmates who have decided to stay abroad in their country of origin, often in a different time zone halfway across the world.

4. Conclusion, Discussion, Recommendations

In this chapter a conclusion is drawn based on the results. The significance of the results attained from this research study will be discussed, and recommendations are made.

Conclusion

The research question is *“What is needed to prevent study drop-out among international students from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen with cognitive and/or mental health problems due to online education during the Corona crisis?”* Based on the results obtained in this study, it can be presumed that international students from the Hanze UAS with cognitive and/or mental health problems require certain circumstances in order to successfully follow online education and consequently prevent study drop-out.

International students studying at the Hanze UAS with cognitive and/or mental health problems face many difficulties in light of the Corona crisis and online education. Difficulties mentioned such as lack of interaction with peers and other students, the absence of a stimulating study environment, loss of concentration and motivation, and missing one's social network are all difficulties which correspond to the results of the research study carried out by Het Landelijke Studentenvakbond (LSVB) as mentioned in chapter 1. This shows that the target group does not deviate from Dutch students when it comes to the aforementioned difficulties. Similarly, every student interviewed touched upon a lack of clear communication from the Hanze. Crabbendam & Goes, 2020 also concluded that Dutch students struggle with an absence of clear communication from their educational institutions.

Although the difficulties that international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems face due to online education are similar to that of national students without cognitive and/or mental health problems, there are some significant distinctions. The loss of freedom is experienced negatively by both the target group as well as the national students from the study carried out by Crabbendam & Goes, 2020. However, for the target group this has led to an increase in pre-existing psychological distress such as dwelling in negative thoughts. In that sense, the loss of freedom has most likely had a greater impact on the psychological wellbeing of the target group in comparison to the students from Crabbendam

& Goes' study. The same goes for the many other similar difficulties that both groups face, although the difficulties correspond with each other, the impact it has on the student is probably different for these two groups.

A difficulty mentioned during the interviews by several students is reaching out for help. As mentioned in chapter 1, research carried out by Cheng, 2020 shows that students from other cultural backgrounds may find it more difficult to ask for help during a crisis. This result somewhat corresponds to that of Cheng, 2020. The topic of reaching out for help is something that is found back in each of the four themes in the results. It can be seen as something that has become more difficult due to online education, it is mentioned as a strategy to cope, and it has been named as something one needs in order to successfully follow online education.

In contrast there was also a result that unexpectedly did not strongly correspond to the literature; loneliness. Only a minority of students mentioned feelings of loneliness in the interviews. According to the document containing data from the AISS and input from international students published by ISO, ESN, & LSVb, 2020 as mentioned in chapter 1, a majority of international students reported experiencing severe feelings of loneliness since the pandemic. However, this topic rarely came up during the interviews.

In order to cope with the aforementioned difficulties, the target group named several strategies they adopted to follow online education. Almost every student mentioned trying to study with other people where possible as this is experienced as more motivating as opposed to studying alone. This corresponds to the findings of Sporrel, 2020 as mentioned in chapter 1. Sporrel explains that it is motivating for students to see other students studying as it functions as positive peer pressure.

Moreover, contacting people from one's social network as well as structuring one's day (as though you're going to attend class physically) is a strategy named by several students in the interviews. This corresponds to the research study carried out by Lee, 2020 about mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19. Contact and structure have been found to be protective factors for psychological problems during the Corona crisis.

Finally, the skills and resources the target group feel they need in order to successfully follow online education have been identified. Firstly, the target group needs clear information on the following: protocols concerning online examinations, who to contact for psychological support, and clear information on the type of psychological support which is available for them. A lack of knowledge on where to go for mental health support corresponds to the findings of (van Gastel & de Wildt, 2019). Van Gastel & de Wildt did research on the psychological wellbeing of Chinese students in the Netherlands. They not discuss the fact that finding psychological help is more difficult for international students studying in the Netherlands, but also go into detail about factors such as language barrier and cultural differences preventing students from getting adequate psychological help. Some of the students interviewed also mention this. Furthermore, the lack of clear information on what type of psychological help the Hanze provides for students is confusing and functions as an extra obstacle in getting help.

Not only is it important to know where to reach out for mental health support, the target group also needs to feel as though they are heard, understood and taken seriously by the Hanze. An example is acknowledging that a student is struggling with mental health problems, guiding them in finding the right help, and showing understanding by being slightly more lenient with deadlines.

The students who reported feeling heard and supported by the Hanze also describe feeling more connected to the Hanze and having an overall positive experience with online (as well as offline) education. It should be noted that the experienced support from the Hanze differed depending on the study programme a student was enrolled in.

To conclude, in order to prevent study drop-out due to online education during the Corona crisis among international students from the Hanze UAS in Groningen with cognitive and/or mental health problems the connection between the target group and the Hanze must be improved. Students need to feel as though there are essentially no obstacles in the way of them reaching out for support from the Hanze. Not only that, but cultural differences in communication, norms, and values need to be taken into account. In some cases students have come from countries where mental health is seen as a stigma resulting in these

students to probably be less likely to reach out for help in comparison to most national students. These are all important factors to bear in mind when offering help and guidance to these students.

Furthermore, online education is a cause for psychological and/or cognitive issues to be magnified in some situations. It is important that the target group can identify these situations and find ways to cope. In some cases, these issues can easily be solved by creating special conditions for students where needed, such as an extension for a deadline for example. Nonetheless, before action can be taken, these issues need to be expressed by the students and thus the platform to signal for help must be improved.

With the absence of the aforementioned circumstances, the target group is likely put at a greater risk of study drop-out.

Discussion

This section will critically examine the implications in areas of the study and explore where possible improvements could be made.

The first topic of discussion regards the representativeness of the target group. The reader should bear in mind that eight students from the target group were interviewed for this research study and that this means that the results from this research study cannot be deemed representative for *all* students from the target group. However, in this case it is not problematic as this is an exploratory research study. Furthermore practice has shown that with a well-considered selection of material, theoretical saturation can occur after about six to eight sources (Baarda, 2018).

Another aspect that may have affected the representativeness of this research study is the means of recruitment. It is possible that self-selection bias may have occurred when recruiting students as students were able to volunteer for the study. Participants whom opted to sign up are most likely students who feel strongly about online education and thus it could be possible that the students with less outspoken opinions are not represented in this study.

Furthermore, it should be noted that no first year students signed up for the research study. If first year students had been included in the research study it may have altered the results as a first year students' perspective may vary from that of other students'. An explanation

for this could be that first year students do not have previous experience in higher education to compare the current situation to. It could mean that first year students are less affected by online education (*one doesn't miss what one never had*). Not only that, but international students that are currently residing in their country of origin, but still attending online classes at the Hanze were not included in this research study. This group of international students could have a very different perspective of online education. They could for example have a very positive look on online education as it is the reason they are able to continue following education regardless of the pandemic.

Another variable the reader ought to bear in mind are the dates on which the interviews were conducted. The interviews were held between November 20th and December 10th. This was the period in between the first and the second lockdown. This means that the conditions which students faced at the time of the interviews were different to the conditions they face now (during the second lockdown) and this may also have influenced their perspective. This factor could result in varying results if this research study were to be repeated. The reader should keep in mind that this second lockdown could result in a bigger impact on the target group as more restrictions were put into place. For example, students who were already struggling could experience the second lockdown as another blow to their future prospective.

Moreover, the interviews were held both online and physically. Participants were given the option to be interviewed either online or physically on campus in order to also give students who did not feel comfortable meeting physically due to the pandemic the opportunity to partake in the study. There are some factors that set an online interview apart from an interview conducted physically. For example, it should be kept in mind that it is more difficult to pick up on non-verbal cues and to incorporate interviewing techniques such as making use of silences (one often associates a silence with poor Wi-Fi connection). Additionally, it can sometimes be more difficult to make a connection online which could impact the depth of the conversation. Students may not feel as comfortable sharing difficulties as they would with someone they have made a connection with. In order to minimise this as much as possible, time was made at the beginning of the interviews to make small talk and to try and make the interviewees feel at ease.

As mentioned in chapter 2, initially the planned method for this research study was to conduct a focus group as opposed to individual interviews. In retrospect it has been advantageous to conduct individual interviews because it has allowed for more depth. The students that were interviewed were likely more open to sharing their personal experiences, something which may have been prevented in a group.

Another factor that may have influenced the results of this study is the fact that the researcher is also the one who conducted the interviews. Without consciously being aware of it, the researcher may have been slightly suggestive when conducting the interviews due to knowledge of pre-existing data on the research topic. In order to avoid this as much as possible, the researcher stuck to interviewing techniques such as mainly asking neutral, open-ended questions.

Additionally, the reader must be mindful of the fact that the data was analysed by the researcher alone and that the interviews have thus been interpreted solely by the researcher. If multiple people independent of one another had analysed the data this would have been beneficial for the reliability of the results, however this was not done. In order to safeguard the reliability of the results, the researcher incorporated three stages of coding into the analysis of the data (open coding, axial coding, and selective coding). Further steps were also taken to assure the reliability of the results. When developing the topic-list for the interviews a combination of information gathered from the literature review, and the wishes of the research centre were used so that it would be possible to make a comparison to pre-existing literature. The questions on the topic-list were covered in each of the interviews to enhance the reliability, with the exception of one interview. In one of the interviews the participant was struggling with acute mental health problems and thus the decision was made to steer away from the topics on the topic list as they were not relevant for this particular student. The data from this interview (other results) has however been included in the results because it has been deemed as important information for the research centre.

Likewise, the researcher attempted to ensure valid data by making use of paraphrasing and giving short summaries of topics discussed during the interviews. This allowed for participants to confirm that the interviewer had understood them correctly, and as a result avoid misinterpretation.

Recommendations

Hanze

The conclusion that can be drawn from the results is that the target group has a desire for mental health support yet lack knowledge on who or where to go to for this. The tools that the research centre provides to support students with cognitive and/or mental health problems in completing their education can be seen as a step that comes *after* students have signaled and received the mental health support that they need. Thus, before the research centre is able to identify and develop the necessary support for the target group, the platform to signal for help and guidance must be improved. This is however not the responsibility of the research centre, but of the Hanze as an institution. Therefore, the first recommendation is directed at the Hanze, and in particular the Hanze Student Support, as the Hanze Student Support is the department responsible for providing support and guidance on matters such as psychological support.

Thus it is recommended that the Hanze Student Support do further research on how they can become more recognised and accessible to international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems. Furthermore, the Hanze Student Support must be aware of the different laws and regulations that may apply to non-national students which could hinder them in certain respects. An example of this being the regulation that non-national students residing in the Netherlands on a student visa must obtain at least 30EC's per year to prove to the government that they are indeed in the Netherlands for the purpose of studying. Being aware of these implications is not only a relevant recommendation for the Hanze Student Support but for any persons dealing with international students at the Hanze. This also applies to persons such as the 'Aandachtsfunctionaris', 'SLB'er', and so forth. This is important as it shows that a 'one size fits all' approach to helping students with mental health problems is not be effective. An advise to a national student to lessen the workload to give them more room to focus on their mental health may not be applicable to an

international student who needs to obtain 30EC's for example. This is also something that the research centre must bear in mind when eventually developing tools to support international students.

It has also become apparent that there are several international students that have a desire to seek mental health treatment or speak to a professional about their struggles, however students are finding it difficult to figure out how to do so. The Dutch mental health care system can be confusing to foreign persons who have no experience with it and do not have a national caregiver or Dutch friend for example to turn to for help as most national students do. In that sense, the Hanze has a greater responsibility to international students. Thus, a recommendation to the Hanze Student Support is to provide guidance to international students in finding the mental health care that they need, and to make it clear that they can receive guidance on this from the Student Support.

From the results, it can also be concluded that cultural sensitivity is something that needs to be practiced when it concerns international students. Therefore, it is recommended that departments within the Hanze concerning 'SLB'ers', the 'aandachtsfunctionaris', the Hanze Student Support, and any other departments that have a responsibility in the wellbeing of students are schooled in signaling students from different cultures that may need help as this can differ per culture. In the Dutch culture it is considered to be the norm to be proactive in asking for help for oneself. For a student coming from a country where mental health issues are seen as a stigma, one may be hesitant to ask for help for example.

Finally, it is noteworthy that almost all of the participants were enrolled in different study programmes. The support that each participant received from the Hanze varied significantly. Some of the students reported feeling supported and understood whereas other students felt completely neglected. This is something that could be further looked into as it is unclear if this is due to a difference in perception between students or that the support offered to students indeed differs per faculty.

The research centre Rehabilitation, Supported Education

Although it is evident that before the research centre is able to focus on how to support international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems with online education, these students first of all need to know where to go for treatment, there are also several recommendations that apply to the research centre.

For example, from the results it is clear that international students are also really struggling with staying concentrated and motivated when it comes to online education. The research centre is already working on a project, called 'Move aHead' that focuses on developing an intervention for educational professional to support students with cognitive problems in completing their studies (Research & Innovation Center for Rehabilitation of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, n.d.). It is recommended that the research centre looks into the possibilities of applying this intervention to support international students struggling with cognitive problems such as loss of concentration and/or motivation due to online education.

Additionally, it has been recommended that the research centre bear the following in mind when they go on to develop tools and interventions for international students; be aware of differing laws and regulations for the target group, make sure that the professionals implementing the interventions have adequate mastery of the English language, and take possible cultural differences into account.

Finally, as the research centre usually perform a 'resource assessment' of students to identify which sources they already have which aid them in working on mental health problems, it may be meaningful to point out that the vast majority of the international students that were interviewed had more than adequate informal resources such as good friends and/or family that they can turn to for help. However, they severely lacked formal resources such as professional help for mental health problems.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Discussion guide (Focus group)

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to take part in this focus group. You have been asked to participate as your point of view is important. I realise you are busy and I appreciate your time. My name is Pom and this is [note-taker]. We are here to find out about your experiences regarding online education during COVID-19. Your experiences will give us insight into how students such as yourself are coping with this new form of education. Using these insights, I will construct an advisory report for the Research Centre Rehabilitation 'Supported Education' from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences. The research centre for Supported Education develops and tests interventions to support students with cognitive or mental health problems with their studies. They also want to support international students with cognitive or mental health problems. This report will contain advice on what is necessary to ensure that international students with mental health and/or cognitive issues are able to follow online education to the best of their ability. The best way to find out about these experiences is to talk to international students with mental health and/or cognitive issues who are currently following online education at the Hanze. In our discussion today we want to talk about your experiences with online education, the difficulties you may face, what sorts of strategies you use to cope with those difficulties, and what sorts of skills and resources you feel you need to be able to successfully follow online education with satisfaction.

I would like to point out that although the Research Centre Rehabilitation 'Supported Education' is part of the Hanze, we are collecting information for the Research Centre and not for the Hanze. So we hope you feel comfortable to share with us what your genuine experiences are regarding online education during COVID-19. In a minute I will go into more detail about anonymity.

The focus group discussion will take **1,5 hours**. Is there **anybody who needs to leave earlier?** Then I will make sure I ask the most important questions whilst everyone is still here.

Is it OK with everyone if I record the discussion to facilitate the transcription process for myself?

Anonymity

Despite being taped, I would like to assure you that the discussion will be anonymous. The recording will be kept safe until it has been transcribed word for word, after this it will be deleted. The transcribed notes of the focus group will contain no information that would allow individual people to be linked to specific statements. So in the transcription no names will be noted. Instead you will be referred to as 'participant 1' or 'participant 2'. So anything you have to say about a certain course or a teacher will never be linked back to you.

Please try to answer and comment as accurately and truthfully as possible. As stated in the confidentiality agreement you all signed, you will not be allowed to discuss the comments of other group members outside of the focus group. **If there are any questions or discussions that you do not wish to answer or participate in, you do not have to do so.** Furthermore, I would like to state that **you are allowed to leave whenever you like.** Do you have any questions regarding anonymity?

Ground rules

- The most important rule is that only one person speaks at a time. There may be a temptation to jump in when someone is talking but please wait until they have finished.
- There are no right or wrong answers
- You do not have to speak in any particular order
- When you do have something to say, please do so. There are many of you in the group and it is important that I obtain the views of each of you
- You do not have to agree with the views of other people in the group
- Does anyone have any questions? (answers).
- OK, let's begin

Opening questions

- Can everybody write their first name on the piece of paper in front of you.
- Let's go around and introduce ourselves (first names) and tell the group where you are from and which study program you are enrolled in. ← **keep very short!**

Introductory questions

It's been a couple of months since the decision was made to close universities and convert to online education in most countries... for the Hanze it was March 13th to be exact. A lot of things have changed since then and now most students at the Hanze are making use of a combination of online and on-campus classes.

- **How are you guys experiencing this?**

Key topics & Specific questions

- Outcome 1: *What difficulties does the target group face now when it comes to online education in comparison to before the corona crisis?*
 - **What are some of the advantages of online education in your opinion?**
 - **What has become more difficult for you since most of your lessons are now taught online?**
 - **What kind of impact has this had on your ability to study?**
 - How has your **motivation** been affected?
 - Probe: Self-discipline?
 - How has your **concentration** been affected?
 - Probe: Study environment?; Lack of good learning attitude?
 - How has 'effectiveness' been affected?
 - Probe: 'study routine' e.g. more or less time needed to get the same result (as pre-corona)?
 - **How has this affected you psychologically?**
 - How has this affected you **positively**?
 - Probe: less pressure; less stressors.
 - How has this affected you **negatively**?
 - Probe: isolation/loneliness (loss of social contacts); stress; anxiety; social adjustment; loss of structure in daily life; stigmatisation; uncertainty; fear.

- Outcome 2: *What sorts of strategies does the target group apply in order to follow online education to the best of their ability/as effectively as possible?*
 - **What sorts of things do you do to help yourself study online?**
 - **What advice would you give other students in your position to help them with online education?**
 - Online education has been implemented for a few months now... if you were to go back in time, what advice would you give yourself on studying online?

- Outcome 3: *What kind of skills and resources does the target group need to be able to successfully follow online education with satisfaction?*
 - **If you had to name three resources that would significantly help you in regards to following online education in the corona crisis, what would they be?**
 - **Who do you normally go to for help?**
 - **What do you 'normally' do, which is no longer possible now?**
 - **How can the Hanze be of help to you in successfully following online education?**
 - Extra support?
 - What kind of support? (student psychologist, etc.)
 - Clarity?
 - Involvement?
 - In what ways do you think your peers could be of help?
 - **Earlier on we discussed a few of the difficulties you face studying online. What do you think you would need to make these difficulties go away or at least make them a little easier for yourself?**

Closing question

- Considering all the things that we've discussed today, what would you say are most important issues you would like to express about online education during COVID?
- What tips would you want to give students like yourselves regarding online studying during COVID?
- If the Dean of the Hanze were here right now, what would you advise him to do in order to make online education manageable for students like yourself?

Conclusion

- Thank you for participating. This has been a very successful discussion
- Your opinions will be a valuable asset to the study
- We hope you have found the discussion interesting
- I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this report will be anonymous
- Before you leave, please leave me your email-address. It is common practice to send the report to the participants, so they can check whether everything that has been said is stated in the report and whether the researcher has interpreted the answers correctly. So I hope you are all willing to give me feedback on the report.
- As a token of my appreciation for your participation on this focus group, I would like to give you a gift card.

- Have a nice day guys!

Wanted!

Participants for a group discussion.

Are you an International Student experiencing cognitive and/ or mental health problems?

We are looking for you!

Why? The Research Centre for Rehabilitation from the Hanze UAS is conducting research on how to support international students with cognitive and/ or mental health problems with studying online due to the Corona-crisis.

Who? International students currently studying at the Hanze who have been experiencing cognitive and/or mental health problems for at least 6 months.

Where? Marie Kamphuisborg (Hanze faculty of Social Studies) or Online.

When? Between the 16th and the 29th of November 2020.

**Receive
a €12,50
gift card!**
In exchange
for your time and
participation.



for more info!

For questions please contact:

p.w.jacobs@st.hanze.nl (student researcher)

j.van.der.velde@pl.hanze.nl (senior researcher)

Click here to sign up:

here



De Innovatiewerkplaats
Begeleid Leren is een
gezamenlijk initiatief van het
Lectoraat Rehabilitatie van
de Hanzehogeschool
Groningen en de Stichting
Rehabilitatie '92 te Bilthoven

Appendix 3: Informative PDF (from QR-code flyer)

Who are we?

My name is Pom, I am a final year student at the Hanze studying applied psychology. On behalf of the research centre for Rehabilitation from the Hanze UAS, I will be conducting this focus group. The research centre for Rehabilitation consists of a group of researchers that focus on improving the possibilities for the functioning of people with disabilities in their preferred environment. One of the innovations of the research centre for Rehabilitation is 'Supported Education'. The goal of the innovation Supported Education is to develop products and services, as well as provide information to students and others about studying with cognitive and/or mental health problems.

Why are we conducting this focus group?

Due to the COVID-19 measures that have been implicated by the government, most students are now obligated to study (partially) online. The aim of the research centre for Rehabilitation 'Supported Education' is to ensure that students with cognitive and/or mental problems are able to complete their studies to the best of their ability. By conducting this focus group we want to find out how it can be ensured that online education does not form an extra obstacle for students with cognitive and/or mental health problems to graduate and complete their studies with satisfaction.

What is a focus group discussion?

In this focus group we would like to discuss online education with 6-8 other participants. The discussion will take around 1,5 hours. We are interested in learning about your experiences regarding online education and will be discussing these experiences as a group.

Anonymity

Before starting the focus group discussion, each participant will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement whereby each participant agrees not to share any names or information discussed during the focus group discussion. Furthermore, the focus group discussion will be audio recorded so that I am able to transcribe and analyse the discussion afterwards. During this process the information will be anonymised. What this means is that all names and any other personal information that could be traced back to a participant will be changed so that this is no longer possible. For example, say one's name is said during the discussion, it will be transcribed as 'participant 1' instead of the name. This way no individual can be linked back to a specific statement. As soon as the audio recording has been transcribed, it will be deleted and destroyed.

**Receive
a €12,50
gift card!**

*In exchange
for your time and
participation.*

For questions please contact:

p.w.jacobs@st.hanze.nl (student researcher)
j.van.der.velde@pl.hanze.nl (senior researcher)

Click here to sign up:

here



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de Hanzehogeschool
Groningen en de Stichting
Rehabilitatie '92 te Bithoven

Wanted!

Participants for an interview.

Are you an International Student experiencing cognitive and / or mental health problems?

We are looking for you!

Why? The Research Centre for Rehabilitation from the Hanze UAS is conducting research on how to support international students with cognitive and / or mental health problems with studying online due to the Corona-crisis.

Who? International students currently studying at the Hanze who have been experiencing cognitive and/or mental health problems for at least 6 months.

Where? Marie Kamphuisborg (Hanze faculty of Social Studies) or Online.

When? Click to sign up and let us know when you are available.
We will plan the interview on a date you prefer!

**Receive
a €12,50
gift card!**
In exchange
for your time and
participation.



For questions please contact:

p.w.jacobs@st.hanze.nl (student researcher)
j.van.der.velde@pt.hanze.nl (senior researcher)

Click here to sign up:

[here](#)



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Groningen en de Stichting
Rehabilitatie '92 te Bilthoven

Appendix 5: Interview topic list

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to take part in this interview. You have been asked to participate in this interview as your point of view is important. I realise you are busy and I appreciate your time. My name is Pom and I would like to find out about your experiences regarding online education during COVID-19. Your experience will give us insight into how students such as yourself are coping with this new form of education. Using these insights, I will construct an advisory report for the Research Centre Rehabilitation 'Supported Education' from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences. The research centre for Supported Education develops and tests interventions to support students with cognitive or mental health problems with their studies. They also want to support international students with cognitive or mental health problems. This report will contain advice on what is necessary to ensure that international students with mental health and/or cognitive issues are able to follow online education to the best of their ability.

The best way to find out about these experiences is to talk to international students with mental health and/or cognitive issues who are currently following online education at the Hanze. In this interview today I want to talk about your experiences with online education, the difficulties you may face, what sorts of strategies you use to cope with those difficulties, and what sorts of skills and resources you feel you need to be able to successfully follow online education with satisfaction.

Let me see... What else do I have to mention... oh yeah! I would like to point out that although the Research Centre Rehabilitation 'Supported Education' is part of the Hanze, I am collecting information for the Research Centre and not for the Hanze. So I hope you feel comfortable to share with me what your genuine experiences are regarding online education during COVID-19. In a minute I will go into more detail about anonymity.

This interview will take around 45 mins.

Is it OK with you if I record the interview to facilitate the transcription process for myself?

Anonymity

Despite being taped, I would like to assure you that this interview will be anonymous. The recording will be kept safe until it has been transcribed word for word, after this it will be deleted. The transcribed notes of this interview will contain no information that would allow you to be linked to specific statements. So in the transcription your name will **not** be noted. Instead you will be referred to as the interviewee. So anything you have to say about a certain course or a teacher will never be linked back to you.

Please try to answer and comment as accurately and truthfully as possible. **If there are however any questions that you do not wish to answer, you do not have to do so.**

Furthermore, I would like to state that **you are allowed to end this interview whenever you like.**

Do you have any questions regarding anonymity?

Opening questions

- Where are you from?
- What study programme are you enrolled in?
- Which year are you currently in?
- How long have you lived in the Netherlands?

Introductory questions

It's been a couple of months since the decision was made to close universities and convert to online education in most countries... for the Hanze it was March 13th to be exact. A lot of things have changed since then and now most students at the Hanze are making use of a combination of online and on-campus classes.

- **How are you experiencing this?**

Key topics & Specific questions

- Outcome 1: *What difficulties does the target group face now when it comes to online education in comparison to before the corona crisis?*
 - **What are some of the advantages of online education in your opinion?**
 - **What has become more difficult for you since most of your lessons are now taught online?**
 - **What kind of impact has this had on your ability to study?**
 - How has your **motivation** been affected?
 - Probe: Self-discipline?
 - How has your **concentration** been affected?
 - Probe: Study environment?; Lack of good learning attitude?
 - How has 'effectiveness' been affected?
 - Probe: 'study routine' e.g. more or less time needed to get the same result (as pre-corona)?
 - **How has this affected you psychologically?**
 - How has this affected you **positively**?
 - Probe: less pressure; less stressors.
 - How has this affected you **negatively**?
 - Probe: isolation/loneliness (loss of social contacts); stress; anxiety; social adjustment; loss of structure in daily life; stigmatisation; uncertainty; fear.
- Outcome 2: *What sorts of strategies does the target group apply in order to follow online education to the best of their ability/as effectively as possible?*
 - **What sorts of things do you do to help yourself study online?**
 - **What advice would you give other students in your position to help them with online education?**
 - Online education has been implemented for a few months now... if you were to go back in time, what advice would you give yourself on studying online?
- Outcome 3: *What kind of skills and resources does the target group need to be able to successfully follow online education with satisfaction?*
 - **If you had to name three resources that would significantly help you in regards to following online education in the corona crisis, what would they be?**
 - **Who do you normally go to for help?**
 - **What do you 'normally' do, which is no longer possible now?**
 - **How can the Hanze be of help to you in successfully following online education?**
 - Extra support?

- What kind of support? (student psychologist, etc.)
 - Clarity?
 - Involvement?
- In what ways do you think your peers could be of help?
- **Earlier on we discussed a few of the difficulties you face studying online. What do you think you would need to make these difficulties go away or at least make them a little easier for yourself?**

Closing question

- Considering all the things that we've discussed today, what would you say are most important issues you would like to express about online education during COVID?
- What tips would you want to give students like yourselves regarding online studying during COVID?
- If the Dean of the Hanze were here right now, what would you advise him to do in order to make online education manageable for International Students experiencing cognitive and/or mental health problems?

Conclusion

- Thank you for participating. This has been a very successful interview
- Your opinions will be a valuable asset to the study
- I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this report will be anonymous
- If you are interested in receiving a copy of my thesis please let me know!
- As a token of my appreciation for your participation on this focus group, I would like to give you a gift card → (how can I send this to you?)
- Have a nice day!

Appendix 6: Code book

Code	Description	Citation from interview
Advantages of online education	All said about the experienced advantages of online education and the positive psychological effects this has.	<i>"I think there could be very major advantages in the recording of lectures and having them available to watch afterwards, when you can watch them at your own pace, you can pause them and frequent them. It means if there's something you didn't catch you can just watch it again. Also, if you miss a day because you're ill, or I know a lot of people have other jobs and I know some of my friends used to miss class quite often, but if it's recorded you can do it whenever you want. That could be a very, very big advantage I think."</i>
Needs	All codes referring to the skills and resources students need to successfully follow online education.	<i>"For me personally would be interaction with classmates, actually asking for help, you know, because in class somebody is going to be beside you and the teacher is around and you can ask for help and everything."</i>
Negative influence on ability to study online	All codes referring to items that have a negative influence on the students' ability to study online.	<i>"Motivation is hard. Procrastination... I've always been a bit of a procrastinator, but I feel like now... Yeah you're always home, everyday feels like the next day. You know like also now that it's getting dark early, I'm like ok cool it's time for bed but it's actually five p.m. or it yeah it sounds a little bit weird but the concept of time feels strange. It doesn't feel as real as it used to feel."</i>
Negative influence on psychological wellbeing	All codes referring to factors that negatively influence the psychological wellbeing of students.	<i>"So I think like at some point I was kind of like, I was thinking that I was maybe getting depression... because I was not having energy, I just wanted to stay in, stay on the couch, watch</i>


		<i>movies... and then after, well I started thinking I miss my family, like I wish I was with them. It was super difficult."</i>
Strategies for online studying	All said about strategies that aid students in studying online.	<i>"And I feel like online education doesn't really provide that in the same way, like you can, what I have done with my fellow students is done like a pub quiz and then also like a quiz to like study like everyone had to submit a few questions for the exam and then we all did like a quiz on it. And like that helps, but it doesn't like... it's not the same thing as just like regular human interaction."</i>
Difficulties international students	All codes referring to the difficulties that students face as non-national students.	<i>"But a lot of information on health care, it's usually in Dutch. And translations... it's not always great. So yeah, exactly, so where do I go? Is it different than how it would be in another countries? Yeah just things like that would have been very nice."</i>

Appendix 7: Document 'Zorgvuldig omgaan met proefpersonen'
formulier

**Zorgvuldigheidsmaatregelen onderzoek door studenten Toegepaste
Psychologie**

Project / vak / studieonderdeel:	Afstudeeronderzoek
Docent / coach:	Lynette Germes
Onderwerp:	Online onderwijs inclusief voor internationale studenten met een psychisch en/of cognitief probleem.
Begin- en eindtijd van het onderzoek:	Dit staat nog niet vast.
Beschrijving van het onderzoek (kort maar volledig):	Door middel van focusgroeponderzoek zullen de ervaringen van internationale studenten met een psychisch en/of cognitief probleem in rondom het online onderwijs in kaart worden gebracht. Het doel van het onderzoek is om het online onderwijs inclusief te maken voor deze doelgroep.

Ondergetekende(n) verklaart (verklaren) zonder voorbehoud en naar waarheid bijgaand formulier te hebben ingevuld in verband met in het kader van de opleiding Toegepaste Psychologie uit te voeren onderzoek.

Naam van de student(en):	Handtekening:
Pommetje Jacobs	

Datum: 13-10-2020

	Aankruisen indien van toepassing		Beantwoord onderstaande vragen als in de vorige kolom het vakje met → is aangekruist.	Kan hier redelijkerwijs toch nog schade uit ontstaan? (kruis het juiste vakje aan)	
	A		B	C	
1				Nee	Ja
1 Privacy / anonimiteit					
1.1 Ken je de naam van proefpersonen? Heb je adresgegevens?	Nee ↙	Ja X →	Hoe is de anonimiteit gegarandeerd? (Denk aan het niet opnemen van persoonlijke gegevens in een verslag, het veranderen van namen en gegevens enzovoort.) Wanneer worden de gegevens vernietigd en wie is daar verantwoordelijk voor? Als naam van proefpersoon of een bedrijf of dergelijke toch wordt gepubliceerd, geven de betrokkenen daar dan expliciet toestemming voor? Deelnemers van het onderzoek zullen anoniem worden genoemd in de verslaglegging. De namen van de proefpersonen zullen niet worden gepubliceerd. Ikzelf zal verantwoordelijk zijn voor de vernietiging van de gegevens. Dit zal uiterlijk 1 februari gebeuren aangezien dit de deadline is voor mijn scriptie. Op deze manier kan ik de definitieve versie van mijn onderzoeksrapport sturen naar proefpersonen die daar eventueel belang naar hebben.	X	
1.2 Ken je het e-mailadres van de proefpersonen?	Nee ↙	Ja X →	Hoe zorg je ervoor dat het adres uit je adressenlijst verdwijnt (sent items, contactpersonen, inbox, andere mappen enzovoort), o.a. met het oog op spam / verspreiding van virussen? (Verder als bij 1.1) De email-adressen zullen uit mijn adressenlijst worden verwijderd na het onderzoek. Ik zal er voor zorgen dat ik hen ook als contactpersoon volledig zal verwijderen zodat zij niet meer traceerbaar zijn uit mijn adressenlijst.	X	
1.3 Beschik je over (andere) persoonlijke gegevens?	Nee ↙	Ja X →	Zijn deze gegevens nodig? Waarom? (Verder als bij 1.1) Ik zal over de volgende persoonlijke gegevens beschikken: 1. Opleiding 2. In welk jaar van de opleiding de proefpersoon op het moment van het onderzoek zit 3. Geslacht 4. Leeftijd 5. Type psychische stoornis van de proefpersoon Deze gegevens zijn nodig om in kaart te brengen of de bovengenoemde gegevens eventueel een invloed heeft op de resultaten van het onderzoek. Daarnaast is het bruikbaar om zo de	X	

			validiteit van het onderzoek te controleren.		
1.4 Komen proefpersonen op foto of op beeld- of geluidband te staan?	Nee ↙	Ja →	Zijn proefpersonen hiervan vooraf op de hoogte? Wie krijgen dit materiaal te zien / horen? Geven proefpersonen hier nadrukkelijk toestemming voor? (Verder als bij 1.1) De focusgroep gesprekken zullen worden opgenomen (alleen via een microfoon, geen videobeeld). De proefpersonen zullen hier voorafgaand het onderzoek van op de hoogte worden gesteld. Zij zullen door middel van een 'signed consent' formulier ook toestemming om worden gevraagd. Aan het begin van het focusgroeponderzoek zal hier nog een keer nadrukkelijk worden verteld dat het gesprek zal worden opgenomen.	X	
1.5 Wordt er gewerkt met bekenden van de onderzoekers?	Nee X ↙	Ja →	Bestaat de mogelijkheid van rolverwarring? Zijn er problemen denkbaar op het gebied van privacy of bijvoorbeeld strijdigheid van belangen en de verhouding die kan ontstaan door een lastige testuitslag? Wat wordt er gedaan om deze problemen te voorkomen? Welke alternatieve oplossingen zijn overwogen en waarom zijn die niet toegepast?		

2 Informatie en toestemming					
2.1 Wordt proefpersonen expliciet om toestemming gevraagd?	Ja X ↙	Nee →	Waarom niet?		
2.2 Worden proefpersonen vooraf op de hoogte gebracht van het doel van het onderzoek / de interventie?	Ja X ↙	Nee →	Waarom niet? Worden proefpersonen achteraf op de hoogte gebracht?		
2.3 Wordt proefpersonen naar waarheid duidelijk gemaakt wie de opdrachtgever is / welke belangen de opdrachtgever heeft?	Ja X ↙	Nee →	Waarom niet? Worden proefpersonen achteraf op de hoogte gebracht?		
2.4 Kunnen proefpersonen deelname weigeren?	Ja X ↙	Nee →	Waarom niet?		
2.5 Kunnen proefpersonen op elk moment stoppen / van verdere medewerking afzien?	Ja X ↙	Nee →	Waarom niet?		

2.6 Wordt het proefpersonen duidelijk gemaakt in welke rol je met ze werkt? (Bijvoorbeeld om van te leren, als medewerker voor een opdrachtgever)	Ja X ⬇	Nee ➔	Waarom niet? Worden proefpersonen achteraf op de hoogte gebracht?		
2.7 Wordt proefpersonen de mogelijkheid geboden op de hoogte te worden gebracht van uitkomsten / resultaten?	Ja X ⬇	Nee ➔	Waarom niet?		
2.8 Wordt aan proefpersonen onjuiste informatie verstrekt over de opdrachtgever, het doel van het onderzoek of dergelijke.?	Nee X ⬇	Ja ➔	Waarom? Worden proefpersonen achteraf op de hoogte gebracht?		
2.9 Zijn (sommige) proefpersonen minderjarig?	Nee X ⬇	Ja ➔	Is toestemming geregeld met ouders/verzorgers? Zo nee, waarom niet?		
2.10 Zijn (sommige) proefpersonen wilsonbekwaam?	Nee X ⬇	Ja ➔	Is toestemming geregeld met eventuele andere verantwoordelijken? Zo nee, waarom niet?		
2.11 Is er een protocol gemaakt waarin staat hoe en in welke bewoordingen proefpersonen over de punten 2.1 tot en met 2.8 op de hoogte worden gebracht?	Ja X ➔		Voeg het protocol bij. De proefpersonen zullen door middel van het 'signed consent' formulier op de hoogte van punten 2.1 tot en met 2.8 worden gebracht (zie bijlage 1 voor een template van het signed consent formulier). Deze template zal worden vertaald naar Engels en zal op maat worden gemaakt voor dit onderzoek.		
		Nee ➔	Waarom niet?		

3 Mogelijke schadelijke effecten					
3.1 Is er tijdens het onderzoek sprake van misleiding van proefpersonen?	Nee X ⬇	Ja ➔	Waarom is dit nodig? Wat is de aard van de misleiding? Wanneer en hoe worden proefpersonen op de hoogte gebracht (debriefing)?		
3.2 Kan de proefpersoon door deelname geestelijk, sociaal, fysiek of andere	Nee X	Ja ➔	Welke nadelen zijn denkbaar? Wat wordt er gedaan om deze nadelen te voorkomen? Wat om de schade te beperken?		

nadeel ondervinden? Denk hierbij <i>onder andere</i> aan bewustwording van iets onaangenaams, in verlegenheid, frustratie of stress worden gebracht, het ongewenst bekend worden van uitkomsten enzovoort.	↙		Zijn proefpersonen hiervan vooraf op de hoogte?		
3.3 Kunnen er groeperingen (denk ook aan kwetsbare groepen / minderheden) door deelname aan of bijvoorbeeld uitkomsten van onderzoek of publiciteit erover ervan nadeel ondervinden?	Nee X ↙	Ja →	Welke nadelen zijn denkbaar? Wat wordt er gedaan om deze nadelen te voorkomen? Wat om de schade te beperken? Zijn proefpersonen hiervan vooraf op de hoogte?		
3.4 Kunnen organisaties en dergelijke (bijvoorbeeld school of woningbouwcorporatie die er 'slecht' van afkomt) nadelen ondervinden van de uitkomsten van of publiciteit rond het onderzoek?	Nee X ↙	Ja →	Welke nadelen zijn denkbaar? Wat wordt er gedaan om deze nadelen te voorkomen? Wat om de schade te beperken? Zijn proefpersonen hiervan vooraf op de hoogte? Zijn betreffende organisaties hiervan op de hoogte?		
3.5 Kunnen er op basis van het onderzoek beslissingen worden genomen (door bijvoorbeeld opdrachtgever) die nadelig kunnen zijn voor bepaalde (groepen) mensen?	Nee X ↙	Ja →	Welke beslissingen kunnen voor wie nadelig zijn? Wat wordt er gedaan om deze nadelen te voorkomen? Wat om de schade te beperken? Zijn proefpersonen hiervan vooraf op de hoogte? Zijn andere betrokkenen hiervan op de hoogte?		
3.6 Kunnen uitkomsten / testuitslagen schokkend / naar zijn voor de betrokkene?	Nee X ↙	Ja →	Worden er vooraf afspraken gemaakt over de bespreking van de uitkomsten / uitslagen? Is er de mogelijkheid van opvang, nazorg of doorverwijzing geregeld?		

4. Afweging voor- en nadelen					
Als er in het voorgaande zaken zijn waarmee proefpersonen of anderen te kort kan worden gedaan, staan daar wellicht voordelen van het onderzoek tegenover (verbetering van de situatie van mensen, onderwijs-/leerdoeleinden, verdiensten e.d.). Zijn er zulke voordelen?	Ja	Nee →	Welke voordelen zijn dat? In hoeverre wegen de nadelen op tegen deze voordelen?		

Appendix 8: Informed Consent form



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This informed consent form consists of three parts:

- 1) The information letter (to share information with you)
- 2) The informed consent form (for your signature, if you agree to participate)
- 3) Confidentiality agreement

Part 1: Information

Name of Research Project	<p>Focus Group Discussion for International Students with cognitive and/or mental health problems about Online Education during Corona.</p> <p>This research study is led by Pom Jacobs (Student Researcher)</p> <p>Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen</p> <p>Research Centre for Rehabilitation, Supported Education, Jorien Van der Velde & Jacomijn Hofstra (Senior Researchers)</p>
Aim of the research study	<p>This research study is led by Pom Jacobs on behalf of the Research Centre for Rehabilitation, Supported Education, from the Hanze UAS. You are kindly invited to participate in this study. If there are terms in this information letter that you do not understand, we can clarify them for you. You can always contact us with any questions you may have about this study.</p> <p>The purpose of this research study is to find out how it can be ensured that online education does not form an extra obstacle for international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems to graduate and complete their studies with satisfaction. This research is part of a larger research project conducted by the Research Centre for Rehabilitation, Supported Education, which focusses on developing interventions for online studying during Corona for students with cognitive and/or mental health problems. This research study will be conducted through focus group discussion. This is a discussion with around 6-8 other participants.</p> <p>You have been invited to participate in this research study, because you are an international student from the Hanze who is experiencing cognitive and/or mental health problems. Because we are focusing our research on this target group it is</p>

	important to us to hear from you about your experiences regarding online education during Corona.
What are you expected to do?	<p>On the 20th of November, 2020 you will participate in a focus group discussion about your experiences regarding online education during Corona. An example of a typical question you will be asked is: "What are some of the advantages/disadvantages regarding online education?" You will then be expected to discuss this with the other group members.</p> <p>An audio recording will be made of the discussion, so that the discussion can later be worked out ad verbatim (word for word). This transcript will then be used in further research.</p> <p>Possible benefits of your participation in this research study are that your input will provide the Research Centre for Rehabilitation, Supported Education, with valuable information to develop interventions to support international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems with studying online. Furthermore, your participation will contribute to a good starting point for further research on the effects of COVID-19 on International Students (with cognitive and/or mental health problems).</p> <p>There are no physical, legal, or economic risks associated with your participation in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop your participation at any time.</p>
Compensation	In exchange for your time and participation you will receive a €12,50 gift card.
Confidentiality	<p>Your privacy will be safeguarded throughout the duration as well as after this research study. No confidential information or personal data about you will be disclosed in any way that would allow anyone to link any statements back to you.</p> <p>Before we release any data, all personal data will be made anonymous. For example, in the transcription no names will be noted. Instead you will be referred to as 'participant 1' or 'participant 2'. So anything you have said will never be linked back to you.</p> <p>The audio recordings, forms and any other documents made or collected in the course of this study will be stored in a secure location at the Research Centre for Rehabilitation and on the secure (encrypted) computers of the researchers. As soon as the audio recordings have been transcribed they will be destroyed.</p>

	<p>Furthermore, to ensure the privacy of other participants it is strictly prohibited to discuss the comments or personal information of other group members outside of this focus group discussion. You will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement in which you agree to this condition.</p> <p>For general information about your rights regarding processing of personal data, please consult the website of the 'Dutch Data Protection Authority: www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl/en. If you have any questions about your rights, please contact Pom Jacobs (student researcher) p.w.jacobs@st.hanze.nl or Jorien van der Velde (senior researcher) j.van.der.velde@pl.hanze.nl. If you have any questions or complaints about the processing of your personal data, we advise you to first contact the Research Centre Rehabilitation (Hanze UAS). You can also contact Elma Middel, the Data Protection Officer of Hanze UAS (e-mail: e.m.middel@pl.hanze.nl; telephone: 050-5957818) or the Dutch Data Protection Authority.</p>
Voluntarity	<p>Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. As a participant, you can stop your participation in this research study at any time. You may also refuse that your data be used for the study, without giving any reasons.</p> <p>This means that if you decide to opt out of this study prior to the focus group discussion, it will not affect you in any way. You can also withdraw the permission you have given to use your data up to 5 working days (reflection period) after the focus group discussion.</p> <p>In that case, your data would be removed from our files and destroyed. Discontinuing your participation will not have any adverse consequences for you or for any compensation already received.</p> <p>If you decide to discontinue participation in the study, or if you have any questions or complaints, or wish to raise concerns regarding the study, please contact the senior researcher:</p> <p>Jorien van der Velde, email: j.van.der.velde@pl.hanze.nl</p>
Results	<p>The results of this research study will be published in Pom Jacobs' bachelor thesis. The results will be in no way traceable back to you. The results will be shared with you to verify that the interpretations of the focus group discussion coincide with what you discussed.</p> <p>The results of this research study will also be shared with the Research Centre Rehabilitation, Supported Education so that they can continue doing research on the effects of online education on international students with cognitive and/or mental health problems.</p>
Complaints procedure	<p>If you have any complaints about the procedure of this study, please discuss them with the researcher Pom Jacobs p.w.jacobs@st.hanze.nl. If you are unable to</p>

	resolve the complaint with the researcher, please contact Jorien van der Velde (senior researcher) j.v.der.velde@pl.hanze.nl
	For any further questions please email: Pom Jacobs (student researcher) p.w.jacobs@st.hanze.nl Or Jorien van der Velde (senior researcher) j.van.der.velde@pl.hanze.nl

Part 2: Informed Consent form

Focus Group Discussion for International Students with cognitive and/or mental health problems about Online Education during Corona.	
Informed consent	<p>By signing this document you indicate that you are at least 18 years old and that you are well informed about the study, the way the data is collected, used and handled, and what the possible risks are of participating in this study.</p> <p>If you had any questions, please indicate when signing the form that you were able to ask these questions and that these questions have been answered clearly and unequivocally. You indicate that you have had sufficient time for reflection and that you voluntarily agree to your participation in this study.</p> <p>I agree to participate in a research project led by Pom Jacobs on behalf of the Research centre for Rehabilitation, Supported Education, from the Hanze UAS. The purpose of this document is to record the preconditions of my participation in the research study.</p> <p>1. I have received sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as a participant in this focus group discussion has been clearly explained to me and I know what this means to me.</p> <p>2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit compulsion for me to participate in this research.</p> <p>3. My participation in this focus group discussion implies that I will discuss questions asked by the researcher with other participants. The discussion will take approximately 1,5 hours. I hereby give the researchers permission to record the discussion and to make written notes of what is discussed. It is clear to me that I can stop my participation at any time, without giving a reason. The recording will be destroyed 14 days after the focus group discussion. The anonymised transcription will be saved for a maximum of 5 years before it is also destroyed.</p>

	<p>4. I have the right to not respond to questions. If I feel uncomfortable during the discussion, I have the right to stop my participation in the discussion and leave.</p> <p>5. I have received explicit assurance from the researcher that I cannot be identified in any data published by this research study. My privacy is guaranteed as a participant in this study.</p> <p>6. I have read and understood this form. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.</p>	
Date and Signature	Name Participant	Name Researcher
	Signature	Signature
	Date	Date

Confidentiality agreement ‘Focus group discussion for International Students with cognitive and/or mental health problems about Online Education during Corona’.

I, _____, agree to maintain the confidentiality of the participants and the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the focus group session.

Date:
Place:
Signature: