

Krause and Coates (2008) explain student engagement as *“the extent to which students are engaging in activities that higher education research has shown to be linked with high-quality learning outcomes”*. This encompasses the academic and non-academic elements of the student experience, understanding that each has an implicit value in supporting those learning outcomes. In addition, Fredricks et al., (2004) highlight three dimensions to student engagement: behavioural, emotional and cognitive. Each of these dimensions can relate to the various aspects of the student’s journey through our university, and the various activities that have been put in place to support this.

When the infamous coronavirus made headlines and countries went into lockdown, the first order of business for educational institutes was to think about how to adapt teaching in terms of moving learning materials online and continuing the provision of education. Therefore, the need of the hour was to consider how in terms of student engagement we move beyond the initial March response when the lockdown had just begun and develop a new response to student engagement in this new ‘normal’. Any initiative in response to this new normal needed to incorporate old values aligned with what Coates (2007) has described as that of taking the steps needed to engage learners in their study; recognising each and every learner as an individual and providing mechanisms for personal support both academic and non-academic; and building in structures to engage our students with each other and the rest of the academic and non-academic communities.

The biggest challenge was to keep students involved when there were no formal classes. In order to keep students engaged during the lockdown period, the Accounting and Finance team at Middlesex University Dubai organised 11 events in 10 weeks under the ‘Accounting Mondays’ initiative.

These events witnessed participation of more than 700 attendees and featured a number of industry guest speakers, exploring topics including ‘the future of finance’, professional qualifications, employability factors, and competitions. Industry leaders from companies and organisations including KPMG, CIMA, ICAEW and IMA, spoke to the students on digital innovations, CV writing and future careers within the financial sector.

In order to bring together the ‘bigger picture’, Accounting Mondays brought together various departments from the university, including the Centre for Academic Success, Quality Office, and other faculty from the Business School. Not only have these sessions helped students to stay engaged, they’ve helped to build their knowledge and gain confidence. The aim of this initiative was to build a resilient education system for continued and sustainable student engagement in times of crisis.