

Issue 6/2023

June 2023

# PRESCRIPTION

Latest news and updates from the Faculty of Pharmacy



## THRIVING IN CHAOS: DO MORE WITH THESE 10 TOOLS IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

The COVID-19 pandemic has propelled many of us into establishing presences in the physical and digital worlds. Now returning to the normal routines in the post-pandemic era, technology is closely intertwined with our daily lives. Not only the online presence in social media but across the different sectors - banking, retail, health and education.

### Post-COVID: An observation

If you walk into a lecture hall these days, you will see very few students are using pen and paper. My last count was less than five out of 160 students. All students have mobile phones, and most prefer tablets to jot down notes during lectures or laboratory sessions. A complete opposite was observed less than five years ago when students took notes on printed lecture notes. And they had stacks of folders for these notes. The majority of lecturers were still using PowerPoint back then. This observation illustrates students' rapid adoption of digital devices, eschewing older, printed materials. The adoption was likely brought about by online distance learning during the pandemic. It may be due to the convenience and connectivity of the devices.

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Or perhaps it was due to peer pressure. Nonetheless, digital devices have become integral to students' learning experiences. With technological advances and better accessibility, this trend will likely continue to grow. Interestingly, the use of PowerPoint in lectures remains unchanged.

### Teaching with technology: The Why

At this juncture, I am reminded of a well-known quote by Rumi, a thirteen-century Persian poet. The quote encourages the practice of deep reflection for personal growth; it is as follows:

"Yesterday, I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself."

It further highlights the importance of self-improvement as a means to positively impact the world. Especially when the world around you is changing at a breakneck speed with the advent of technology such as artificial intelligence (AI), sustaining human connection and cultivating empathy are perhaps as important as remaining agile and responsive in the VUCA world.

Thus, rather than resisting or blocking the use of technology in teaching and learning sessions, it is imperative for educators and institutions to recognise and adapt to this shift and ensure that students have access to the necessary digital resources and the right skills to succeed in their academic and professional pursuits.

Besides that, leveraging digital apps and platforms in education promises a strategic advantage that will empower our students and equip them with digital skills for thriving in a chaotic and rapidly evolving world, e.g. the Internet and AI that exists alongside the physical world. The co-existence of these worlds means that academics have a vital role in paving new meaningful learning opportunities and pathways by harnessing the power of technology while honouring real-world experiences.

### Teaching with technology: Five Tools

There are hundreds of educational platforms or apps for teaching and learning. The following five tools are in my teaching toolkit:

1. Genially. Turn your static slides into interactive and animated content. It offers many templates, e.g. infographics, escape rooms and quizzes. Highly recommended.
2. Edpuzzle. If you have teaching videos created during the pandemic, you can embed questions in the videos using Edpuzzle and use them as resources in flipped classrooms.
3. Gamified quizzes. For example, Kahoot, Quizizz and Quizlet. Utilise these tools in formative and self-assessment for students.
4. AI-powered question generators. Quillionz and Quizgecko are two portals to convert your content (in text) into questions. These questions would be suitable for gamified quizzes or formative assessments.
5. Canva for Education. Canva is a user-friendly graphic design platform with thousands of well-designed templates and elements for various purposes that would fulfil your needs as an academic. More powerful than PowerPoint.

Whether you are a young or an experienced lecturer, these tools help you organise, deliver and design your lectures, learning activities and assessments. Conducting a session in a hybrid or blended learning mode will provide invaluable exposure to students. In addition to teaching, academics are expected to conduct, promote and publish their research findings.

## Research using digital technology

"Experience the future of productivity" may be the catchphrase for many AI tools. Briefly, some research tools are:

1. Quillbot and Grammarly: Two excellent apps proven in helping to improve manuscript quality. Grammarly focuses on spelling and grammar correction, while QuillBot is a full writing platform with cutting-edge paraphraser and summariser as well as a new grammar checker
2. ResearchGate: Join the active discussion forums, forge collaboration and enhance your article visibility.
3. Litmaps: Visualising a body of literature helps one situate one's research in a particular field and discover the gaps.
4. Scispace: The AI-powered chatbot swiftly extracts important points from an article and presents them concisely for quick reading and writing of manuscripts.

Some research tools shared above can be your "research assistants" to help organise messy and chaotic processes in research and writing. With these tools for teaching and research, you can publish and flourish as an academic in the twenty-first century.

An integral part of today's world, technology has enabled us to be more connected, efficient, and productive and has opened up new opportunities and possibilities. Academics can navigate these co-existed terrains through the thoughtful integration of technology in teaching, focusing on holistic learning, ensuring that students thrive in the 21st century, where the digital and physical realms are intertwined. Nevertheless, we should strive to strike a healthy balance between the two realms. It is crucial to ensure that we use the tools responsibly and ethically with purpose and that we maintain the importance of human connection and interaction. Moving forward, we must ensure that technology remains a force for the greater good, both for ourselves and future generations.

\* Disclaimer: I am not affiliated with any platform or app. These tools are included here since I use them and found them helpful in my teaching and research.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Aisyah Saad Abdul Rahim is Associate Professor in Pharmaceutical Chemistry at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Universiti Teknologi MARA. Her current research interests are digital technology and games in chemistry and pharmacy education e.g. gamified learning, educational escape rooms and technology in teaching. She has authored 60+ research articles, reviews, books and book chapters. An award-winning educator, she has delivered over 100 workshops, seminars and talks at faculty, national and international levels on academic presentations, MOOCs and online courses as well as the use of technology and games in higher education. She has also served as a judge for the prestigious Wharton-QS Reimagine Education awards since 2017 and, recently, International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Awards in 2022. Dr Aisyah maintains a blog at the intersections of pharmacy, technology and academic presentations at [www.draisyah.com](http://www.draisyah.com)



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