

Every cloud has a silver lining....

COVID-19

A dramatic sky with a large, dark, stormy cloud in the center. The cloud is labeled 'COVID-19' in white, bold, sans-serif font. A bright, golden light breaks through the bottom of the dark cloud, creating a 'silver lining' effect. The sky is filled with other smaller, lighter clouds, and the overall color palette is dominated by deep blues, greys, and bright yellows/whites.



**Peter Mathieson, Principal
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THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

What can be the positives from 2020?

1. The world is learning to cope with, and defeat, a new virus; universities have made major contributions
2. Universities adapted remarkably quickly/effectively
3. “Internationalisation without travel” can be achieved
4. Change has been accelerated and some of it will be irreversible (if we so wish)
5. Inequalities have been exacerbated, their profile has been raised: the transformative power of education is needed more than ever

What can be the positives from 2020?

1. The world is learning to cope with, and defeat, a new virus; universities have made major contributions
Academics as government advisors, WHO, media etc
Research on virology, immunology, social science, economics, politics, behavioural science etc
Laboratory and clinical research on new and old drugs, diagnostic tests, treatments, vaccines

Has the public standing of universities been enhanced?

What can be the positives from 2020?

2. Universities adapted remarkably quickly/effectively

Online/digital learning was already growing; the pandemic accelerated it, enhanced scale and scope. “Hybrid” model

Examinations: “open book”, reduced intensity, Year 1/2

Staff “working from home”. Our survey 90%/10% liked

Many researchers remained very productive

Markedly reduced travel: save money, cut climate impact

Efficiency has improved; more student & staff choice

What can be the positives from 2020?

3. “Internationalisation without travel” can be achieved
Importance of collaboration; role played by networks such as UNICA; language immersion/social experience
Get students “outside their comfort zone”
Generation Z is comfortable with online interactions
Positive climate impacts. Reduced cost. Time efficiencies

Has the world effectively got smaller?

What can be the positives from 2020?

4. Change has been accelerated and some of it will be irreversible (if we so wish)

Universities are conservative organisations where change is often slow, resisted, lengthy consultations etc

The pandemic response required speed, agility, top-down

Things that we should have done anyway were accelerated

The art will be to harness these changes, keep the improvements, no return to old ways. “Adaptation”.

What can be the positives from 2020?

5. Inequalities have been exacerbated, their profile has been raised: the transformative power of education is needed more than ever

Preferential impacts on disadvantaged people (medical, economic, social)

Education as a powerful driver of social mobility

Importance of “digital poverty” (devices, signal, time)

**Education (and research) can drive the adaptation:
wonderful opportunities for universities**

Take home messages/discussion points

1. Universities are highly resilient organisations, many in Europe are hundreds of years old & have survived wars, pandemics, civil unrest, famines etc. **Be confident!**
2. Universities that flourish will be those that adapt best
3. Collaboration more important than ever (UNICA etc)
4. If we are smart about harnessing the changes that have worked well, this period can have a net benefit
5. **The transformative power of education is needed now more than ever**