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*The online shift: teaching with empathy*

As mathematicians, we are enamoured with our subject, and enter the classroom believing that our students, once exposed to the beauty of mathematics, will be too. Of course, things do not usually turn out as planned. What matters, perhaps, is not what we write on the board, but how students feel while they're in our class.

A colleague in our university's Teaching Centre made the following observation during a meeting: there are two types of university teacher – those who care most about their subject, and those who care most about their students. During our pandemic-induced shift online, I would argue that of the two, the latter was more successful.

In a campus-wide student perception survey that asked students how their instructors best supported their learning this year, there was one recurring theme: empathy. Students got the most out of the courses where they felt their instructors understood the challenges they were facing, and were willing to provide flexibility and support. I'll discuss some lessons learned, and how they will impact my teaching going forward, whether in person or online.