

Unplugged Teaching: DESI 2025 vs 2026 (A/B Empirical Evaluation)

1. Executive Summary & Context

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Project Executive Summary

1 Introduction

Advances in artificial intelligence have fundamentally reshaped teaching. Within DESI, this shift reached a turning point when students raised concerns to the teaching staff about outdated teaching methods. In response, the department decided to introduce unplugged lecture sessions. This project aims to make the most of this significant educational shift which creates real-world A/B testing conditions by measuring (a) overall student satisfaction, (b) student performance (and reliance on AI for assignments, perception by professors), and (c) student engagement in class. The end goal of this project is to document the change, and produce a research paper. This executive summary is intended to inform DESI members of our collective effort and to invite participation from anyone interested in contributing.

2 Context

A group of PhD students previously led an effort to foster cross-team publications within DESI. This research is a direct continuation and expansion of that initiative. It seeks to leverage the real-life A/B testing conditions created within our department by the decision to proceed with unplugged lectures.

3 Timeline

This project is set to conclude when the 2026 cohort of students graduates. Key milestones we aim to meet:

- **October 2026:** Submit ethics application
- **November 2026:** Collect data from the 2025 cohort: course surveys, average grades per course, and a survey to professors on student engagement
- **December 2026/January 2027 and June/July 2027:** Send a survey to recent graduates of the 2025 cohort
- **August 2027:** Collect data from the 2026 cohort: course surveys, average grades per course, and a survey to professors on student engagement
- **December 2027/January 2028 and June/July 2028:** Send a survey to recent graduates of the 2026 cohort

4 How to Take Part

This project is currently led by **Stergios** and **James**; feel free to reach out to Stergios if you're interested in participating as a researcher. A coffee or lunch will be organized to establish expectations and outline a project plan. Teaching staff will be contacted independently through confidential surveys to gather their feedback on the cohorts.