To the Editor:  As U.K. medical students whose clinical placements were suspended in March 2020, the views expressed by Schuiteman and colleagues on the importance of bridging communication barriers particularly resonated with us.

COVID-19 lockdown measures brought a halt to in-person teaching and clinical placements for medical students across the United Kingdom. Summative examinations for the academic year at our medical school were also postponed and later moved to online proctoring systems. Having been suspended from placement and isolated—not only from medical school but from our peers, too—there was much concern surrounding online examinations. Bridging the communication gap between medical students and medical school administrators was key in easing increasing worry among students and to provide a more manageable workload for the university in a time of great uncertainty.

To this end, our medical school made use of an online forum to facilitate the dissemination of information to students; this included updates on changes to lockdown measures, examination updates, and directions to well-being services. This forum helped ensure we were kept up-to-date on current guidance, and it alleviated much unrest among students. Effective communication, however, also involved sharing the student opinion in a manageable way. To address this, the Student–Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) was employed to gather and communicate the medical student opinion. SSLC representatives were able to share the views and concerns of students with the medical school, providing an effective and manageable means of communication.

The importance of a student representatives council has been previously discussed. Here, we demonstrate its importance in facilitating the communication of the medical student opinion in unprecedented times and its role in addressing student concerns. Like the authors, we agree that the value of an effective working relationship between the student government and medical school administration has been demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we recommend the use of online forums and SSLC representatives in all future crises’ events involving medical schools.

Funding/Support: None reported.

Other disclosures: None reported.

Ethical approval: Reported as not applicable.

Elena Whiteman, MSc
Third-year medical student, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom; elena.whiteman@warwick.ac.uk; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2451-1967.

Sallu Dawo
Third-year medical student, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1208-4104.

First published online June 8, 2021

References