

EPFL Library training offer during and after COVID-19: a survey

Context

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, the EPFL Library Training Team adapted its training offer to make it available online. At this time, we want to benefit from this online teaching experience to determine:

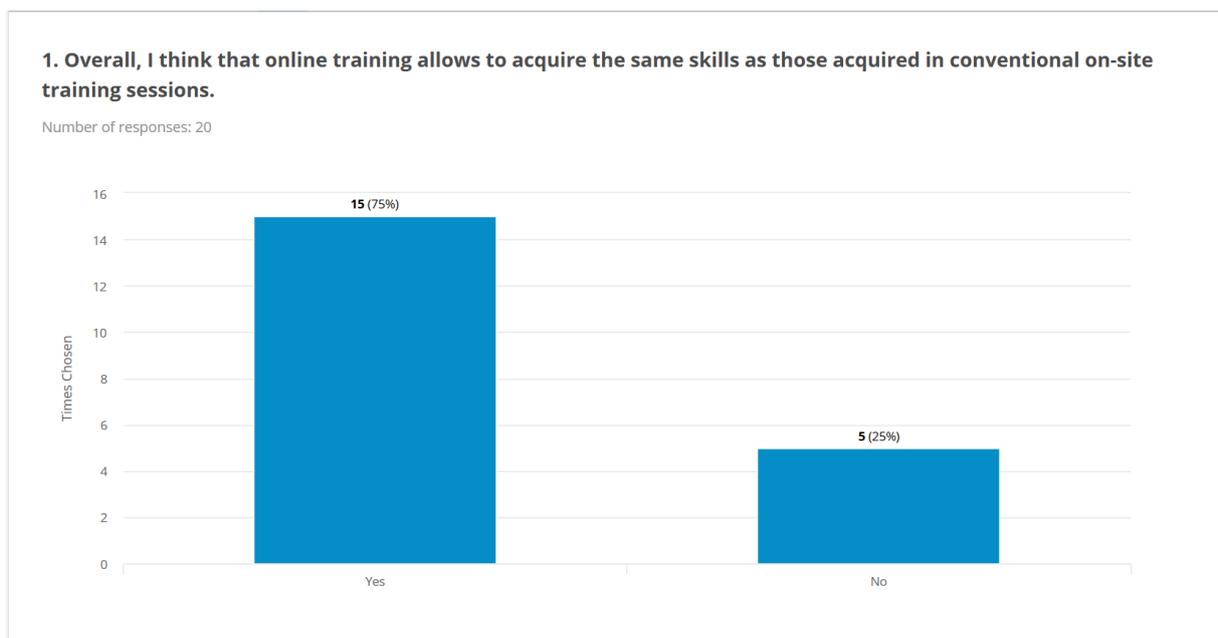
1. if an online training offer after COVID-19 would meet the needs of participants
2. which aspect(s) of the online sessions we should focus on, develop or incorporate in our possible future online training sessions
3. which aspect(s) of online training sessions we should keep for our on-site training sessions

We have asked everyone who attended at least one of our online training sessions between March 13 and June 30, 2020 to fill out a survey in order to get solid answers based on their experience. In total, 92 unique attendees were contacted. Most of them were PhD students. The survey was available between July 13 and August 13, a reminder was sent on July 31st. We have then gathered their 20 answers, described them and analyzed the results. Finally, we made some recommendations.

Results

In this section, we will provide data visualization and result description for all survey questions.

Question 1: Overall, I think that online training allows to acquire the same skills as those acquired in conventional on-site training sessions.

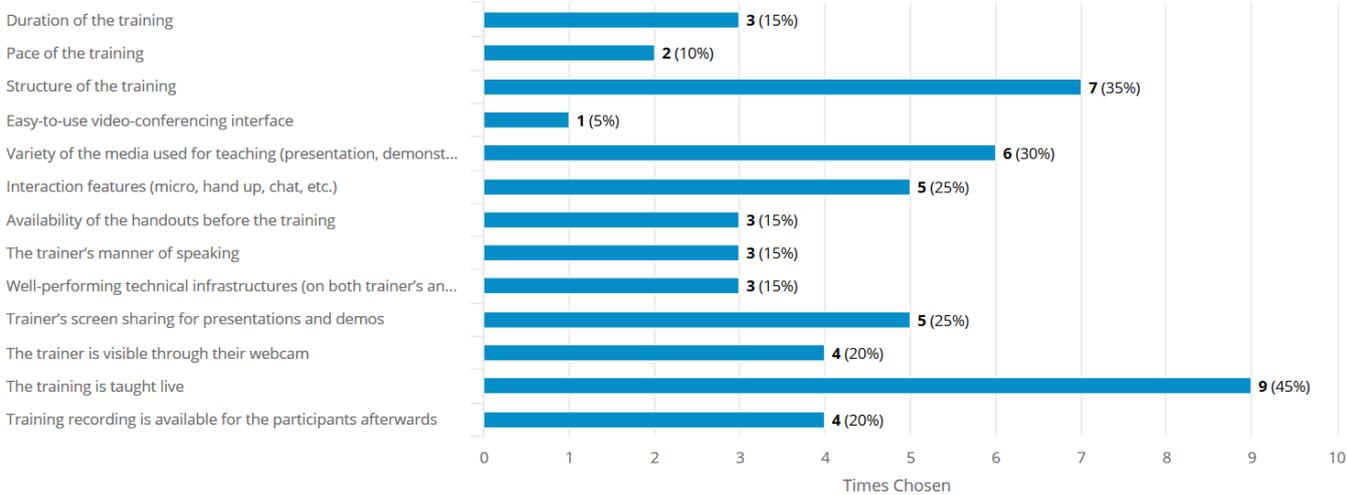


Three quarters of respondents are convinced that online training provides the same skills as conventional on-site training sessions.

Question 2: What are the most important aspects for an online training session to be pleasant to attend?

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Number of responses: 20

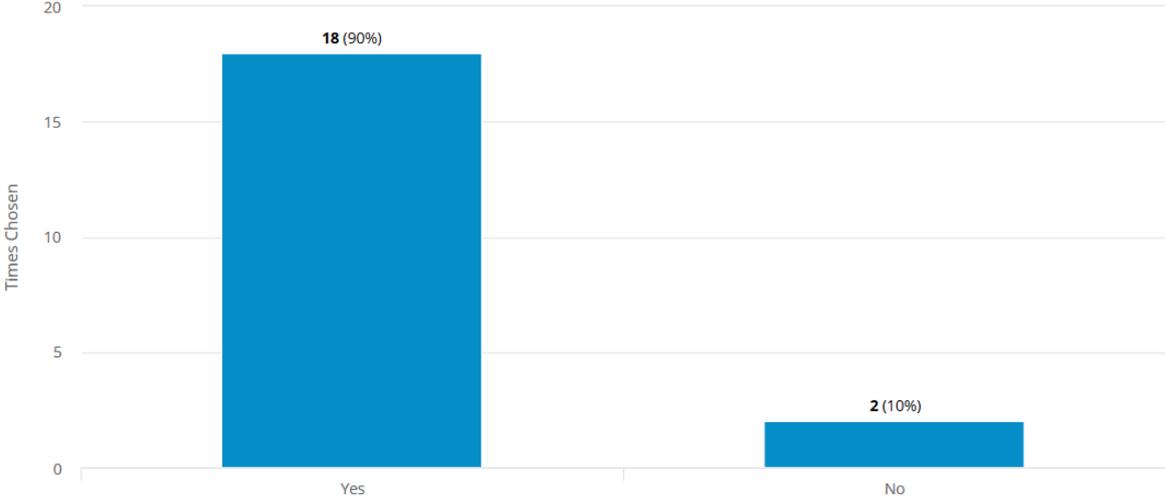


The most popular aspects for online training session are that the training is taught live, then the structure of the training and, third, the variety of media used for teaching.

Question 3: After COVID-19 period, I would be interested in attending on-site training by the EPFL Library.

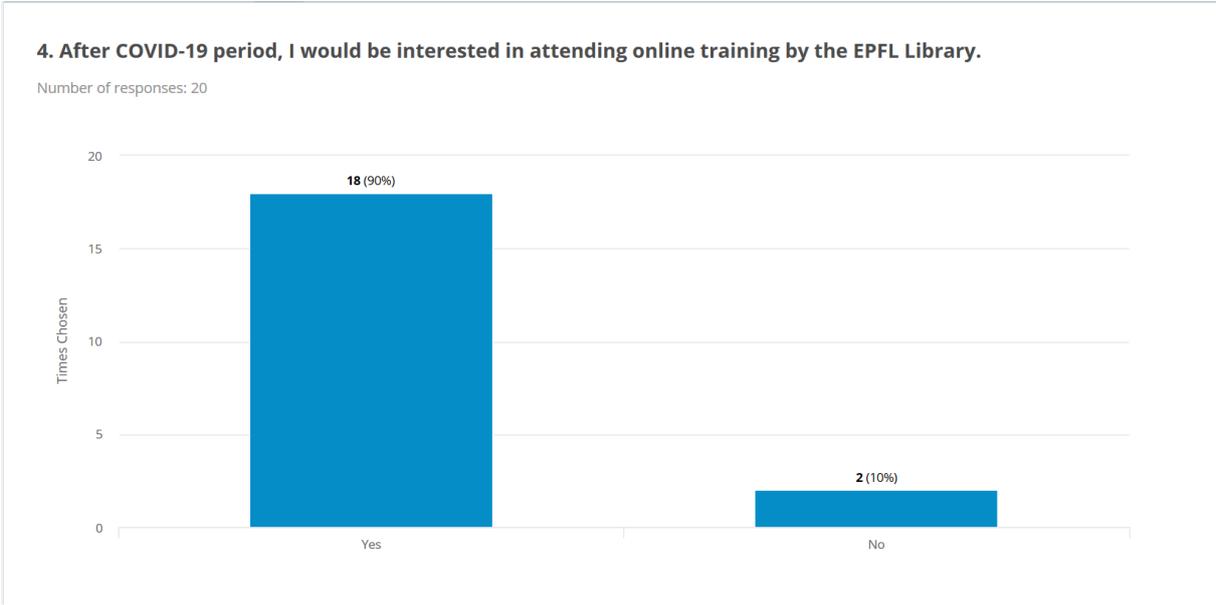
3. After COVID-19 period, I would be interested in attending on-site training by the EPFL Library.

Number of responses: 20



18 out of 20 respondents say they want to attend on-site library training after the COVID period. Nevertheless the two people who answered no are interested in following our online training.

Question 4: After COVID-19 period, I would be interested in attending online training by the EPFL Library.

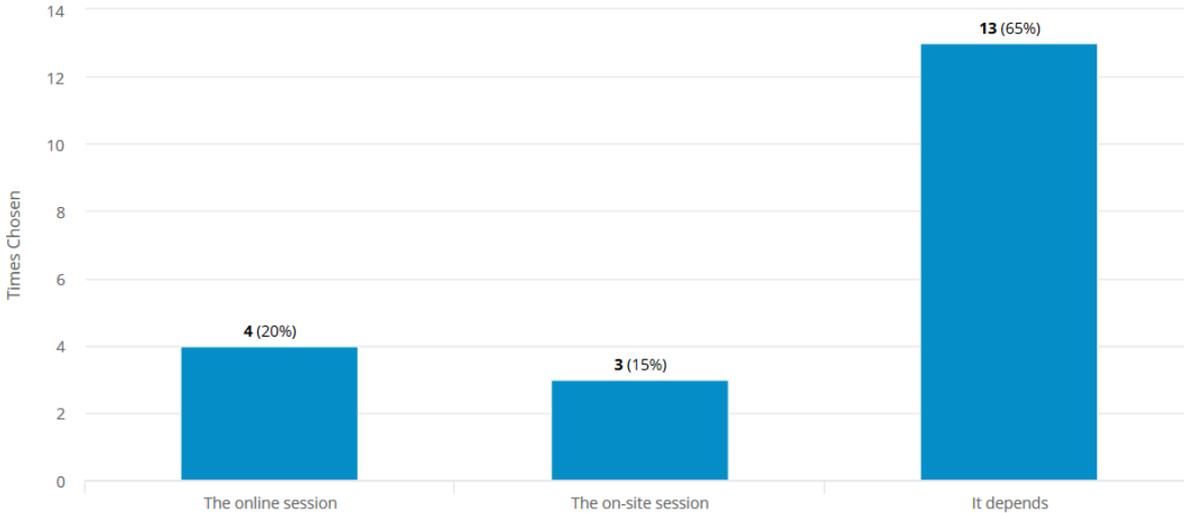


Regarding participation in online training, the same number of respondents says that they are interested, also after COVID, in following online training. Among those who are interested in the online format, 16 are also interested in attending on-site training.

Question 5: For a given training, I would attend

5. For a given training, I would attend:

Number of responses: 20

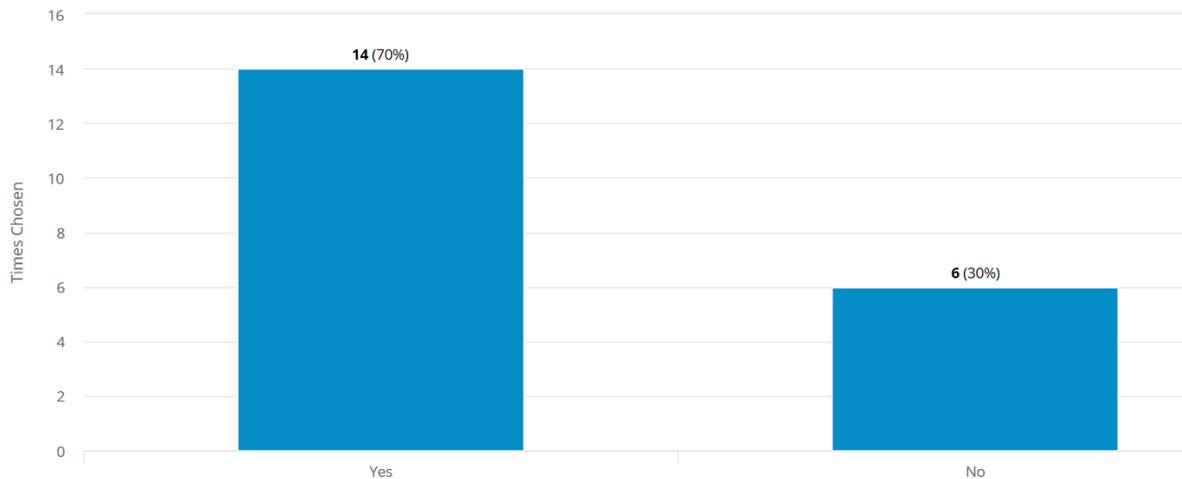


The answers given to this question indicate that the choice to follow an online or on-site training course is very dependent on their own situation.

Question 6: I knew EPFL Library's training offer before the COVID-19 lockdown.

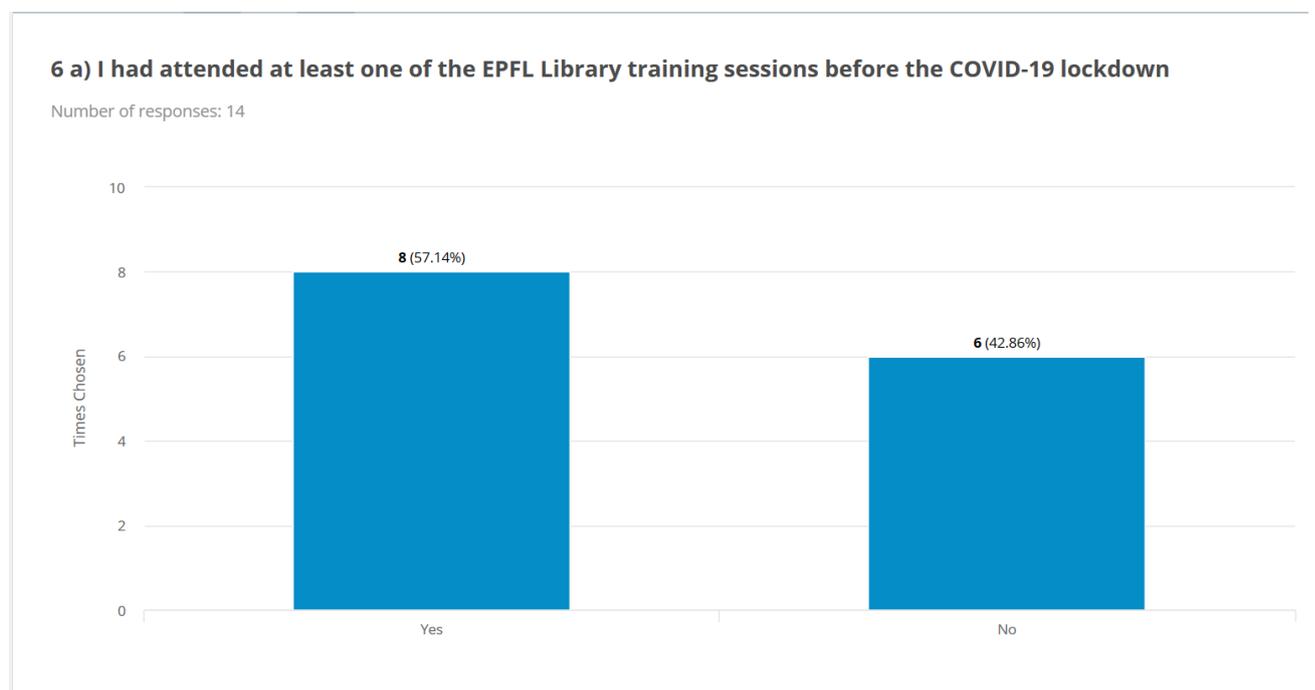
6. I knew the EPFL Library's training offer before the COVID-19 lockdown.

Number of responses: 20



More than two-thirds of the people who answered this survey were aware of our training offer before the Campus closed. For the remaining percentage, these are new users who discovered our training offer during this period.

Question 6a.: I had attended at least one of the EPFL Library training sessions before the COVID-19 lockdown



Among the respondents who were aware of our training offer, 6 respondents had not yet attended one of our sessions before COVID. In total, for this question and the previous one,

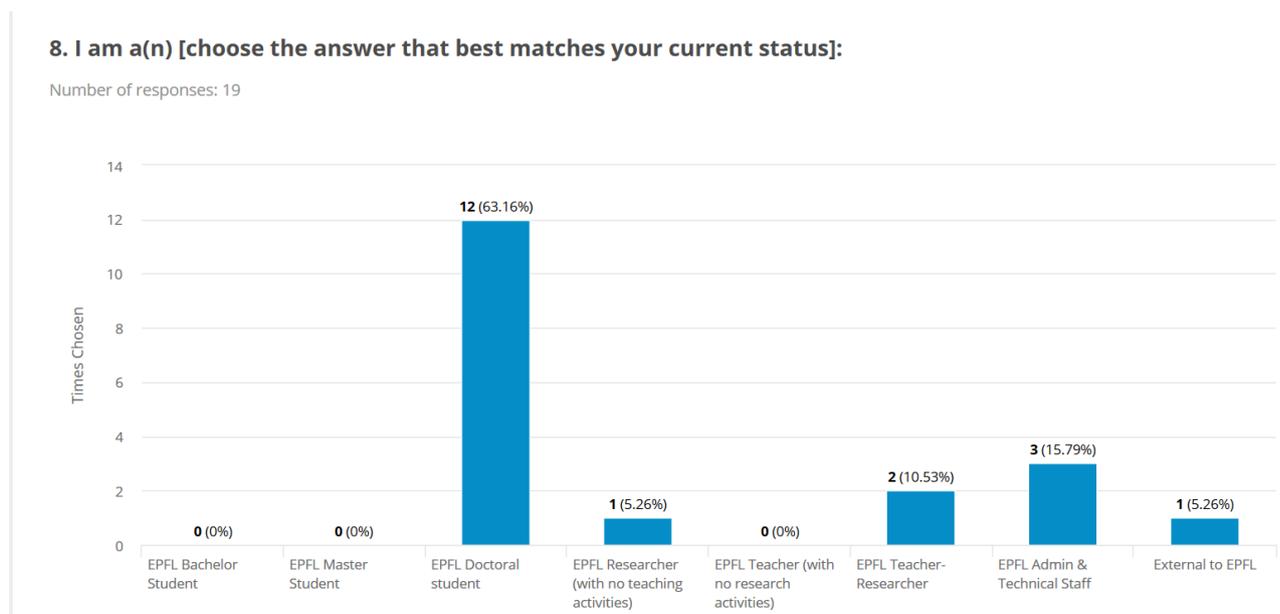
there are 12 out of 20 people who attended an initial library training during the Campus closure.

Question 7. What factors influence my choice to participate in an online rather than in an on-site training session (on inversely)?

Number of responses: 19

On-site training session		Online training session	
Human warmth	1	Flexibility/organization	13
Interaction in presence	6 One answer specifies that the importance of interaction in presence depends on the subject taught. In this answer, interaction in presence is important for Software Carpentry class. Another answer specifies that interaction in presence is important for practical classes, such as Latex class.	Interaction by (shared) screen	4 One answer specifies that the importance of interaction by screen depends on the subject taught. In this answer, interaction by screen is important for Zotero class. Another answer specifies that interaction by screen is important for theoretical classes.
Already on-site	5	Covid-19	3

Question 8: I am a(n)...

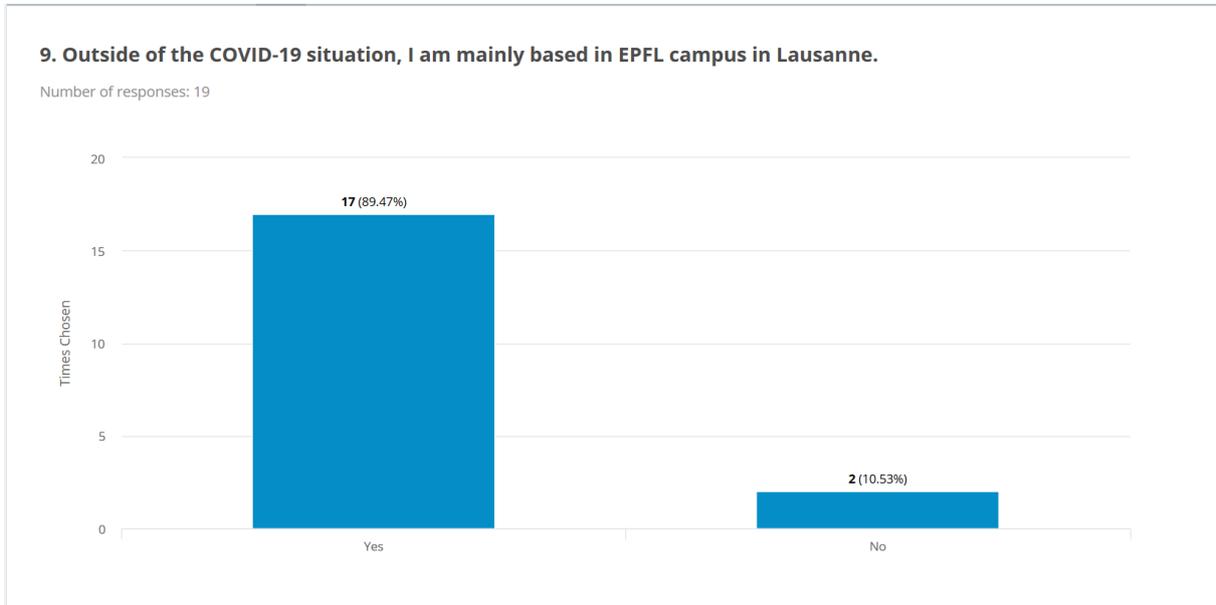


- 12 respondents are doctoral students
- 1 person is a researcher (without teaching load) EPFL

- 2 respondents are EPFL teacher-researcher
- 3 PAT members
- 1 external to EPFL

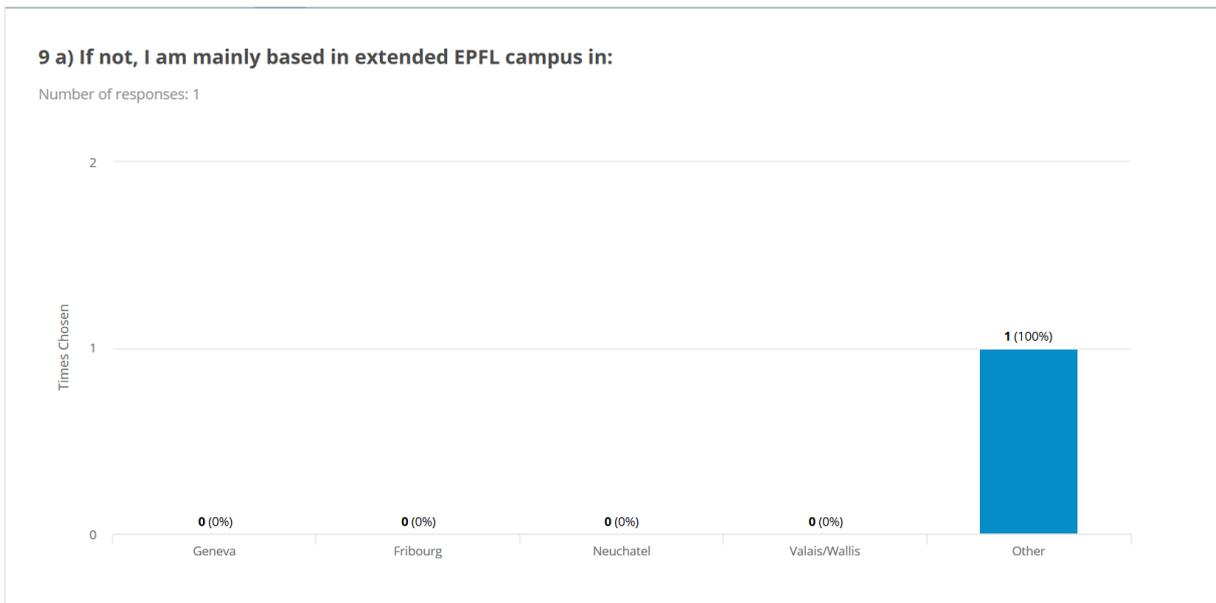
The profile of respondents is consistent with the profile of EPFL Library training attendees, which is mainly targeted at PhD's students.

Question 9: Outside of the COVID-19 situation, I am mainly based in EPFL campus in Lausanne.



17 of the respondents are mainly affiliated with the Lausanne campus

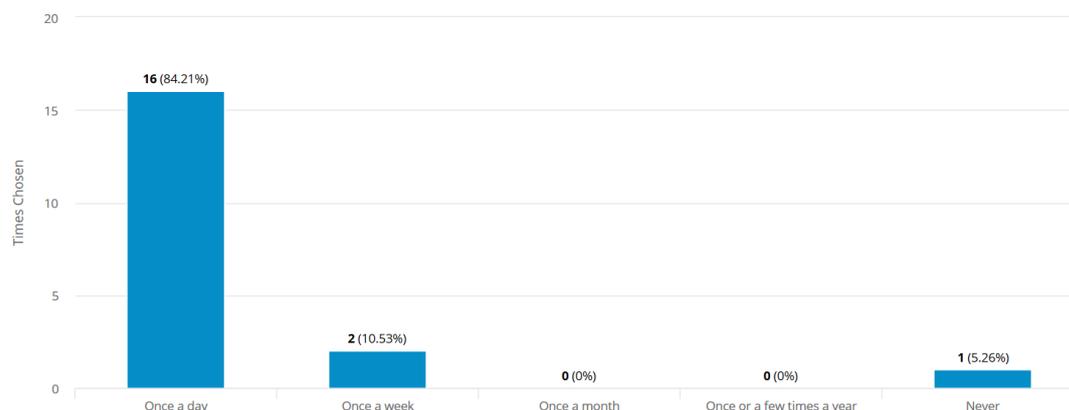
Question 9a: If not, I am mainly based in extended EPFL campus in:



Question 10: Outside of the COVID-19 situation, I go to the EPFL campus in Lausanne:

10. Outside of the COVID-19 situation, I go to the EPFL campus in Lausanne:

Number of responses: 19



Most respondents are on Campus every day, outside of the COVID period.

Question 11 (optional): Do you have any additional comments regarding the EPFL Library training offer?

This question allowed participants to give us feedback in form of a comment. The collected answers are below:

For the question “What is most important... choose 3” →none of the choices matched what is most important to me. I have NO interest in being “talked at” and when this happens online, I often start doing something else on my computer. I would much prefer a complete written guide (maybe a video but text is easier to skim). If it is going to be a synchronous training (online or on-site) then I want to have activities that make use of us all being together (ie discussion). I think that a “flipped” model would suit online library training really well – separate info delivery from application activities. Info delivery can be done asynchronously, then run a highly interaction live session that gives us feedback on what we have understood and lots of opportunities to ask our questions 😊

For some of the training, having dedicated sessions with specialized trainers from different disciplines would be more effective. Sometimes the standard practices in different fields of research (engineering and applied sciences/fundamental sciences/life sciences) differ.

Je pense que les formations en ligne ne peuvent de toutes les façons équivaloir la formation en personne surtout parce que l’on peut, en personne, appeler le formateur et lui montrer un cas précis sur notre ordinateur et avoir son aide directement. Ce geste de la personne qui s’approche de vous, avec le sourire, pour vous aider, ou vous dépanner donne confiance et permet d’apprendre encore plus vite, et cela ne peut être expérimenté, à distance. 😊 Toutefois, la situation nous oblige à cela, et je tiens à vous féliciter et vous remercier pour vos gros efforts, à nous servir même en ces moments difficiles. Bonne suite à toutes vos activités.

Much appreciated !

Analysis

Most respondents (75%) report that the acquisition of skills is as much possible at a distance as in a face-to-face setting. This probably explains why the choice of the same online or face-to-face training depends strongly on the situation (65%).

Regardless of whether the training is online or face-to-face, the vast majority of respondents (90% in both cases) say they would like to take a training session offered by the Library in the future.

The main advantage of online training is the flexibility it offers: the fact that respondents do not have to travel (on Campus or simply to the specific location on campus where the course takes place) makes it easier to include training sessions in their schedules. The topic of the course, as well as the contacts with the trainers and other participants are arguments that motivate some of the people to come *in situ*.

Regarding what matters for an online course to be easily followed, the criteria chosen by most (9 respondents) is the fact the training is taught live. This means recorded lectures would gather less interest.

An interesting aspect is that among the respondents, some of them (30%) discovered the Library's training offer during the period when the campus was closed. Others were aware of the offer but had not been able to attend training (42%). This means that 12 of the 20 (60%) respondents to our questionnaire are new participants in our training courses.

Communication from the Library during COVID-19 was useful and adapting our offer to the situation helped gain new users.

Recommendations

Because COVID will still affect Campus attendance next semester, the Library should provide most of its courses online, live. According to the survey, there is no need to push for onsite training sessions.

Whenever our target audience is mostly back on Campus, the Library should provide a mix of onsite and online sessions, for at least a semester. Then, another survey would be useful to assess the popularity of our online training offer.

We note that flexibility is the most important consideration of our participants, for organizational reasons. If we decide to keep an online training offer in the future, flexibility would be guaranteed. We could decide which courses suit online teaching best.

Interactions also seem very important for participants. We should keep in mind to make room, if not outright focus, on interaction during our training sessions whether they happen online or onsite. The concept of flipped classroom can help us to dedicate some live training time to interactive moments.

To compensate the lack of contacts during online training, a small-scale get together could be organized around a specific topic.

Finally, we recommend maintaining the current communication strategy to announce next courses, as it has been successful to reach new participants.