Mathematics is different: student and tutor perspectives from Ireland and Australia on online support during COVID-19

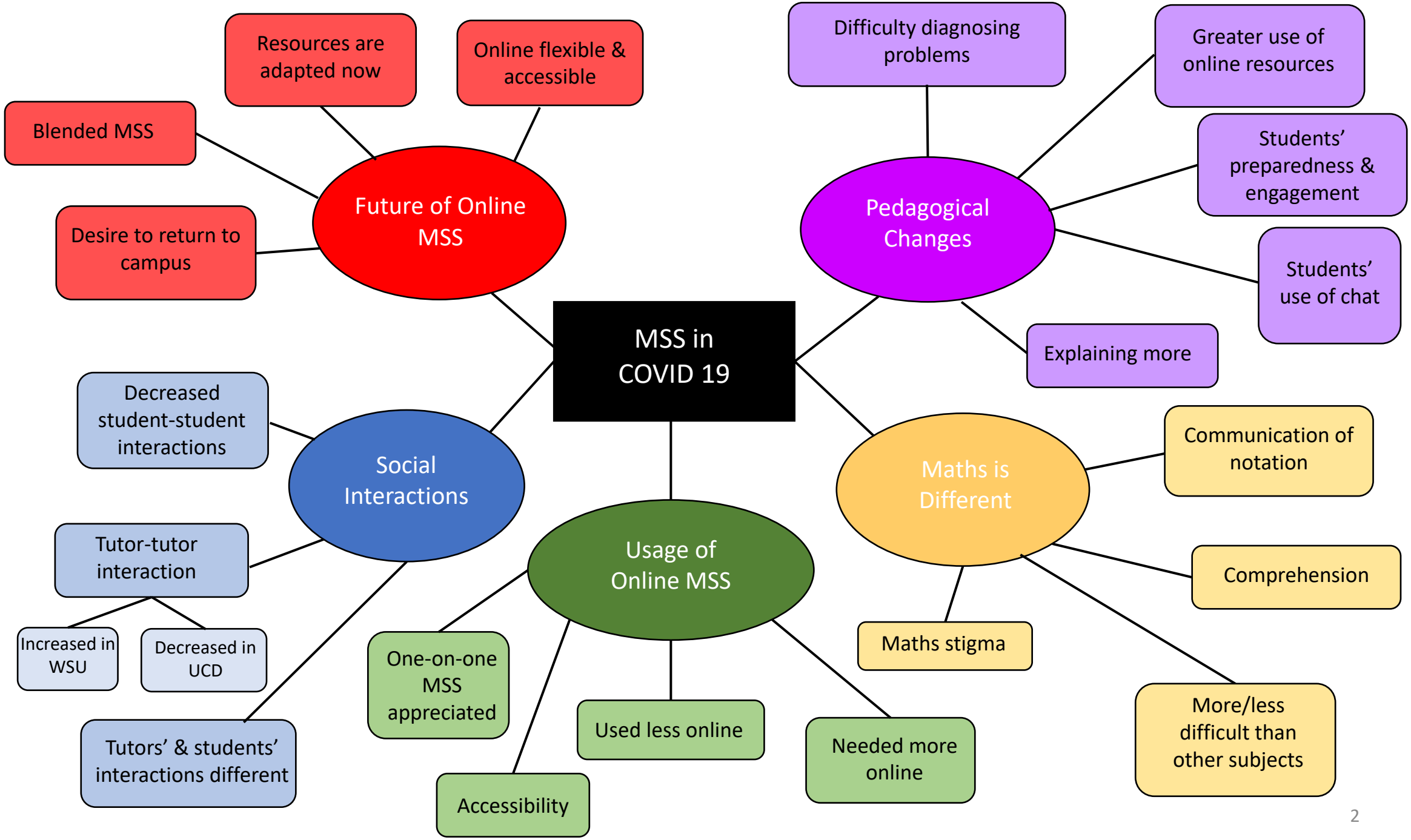
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What are the issues common to an Australian and an Irish university, from both the student and tutor perspective during the COVID-19 era, pertaining to the use and future of online MSS?

Western Sydney University (WSU)
Multi-campus with approx. 50,000 students
Maths Education Support Hub (MESH)
11 dedicated tutors
Pre-Lockdown: Drop-in at 6 libraries, workshops, online forum
During Lockdown: Drop-in zoom open 10am-2pm, 5 days a week.

University College Dublin (UCD)
1 campus with approx. 32,000 students
Maths Support Centre (MSC)
20-25 part-time postgraduate tutors
Pre-Lockdown: 1 drop-in centre open 40 hours per week
During Lockdown: Booked virtual 30-minute appointments

23 semi-structured interviews: 7 WSU students, 6 UCD students, 4 WSU tutors, 6 UCD tutors
Thematic, deductive, semantic analysis through 4 rounds of independent coding


MSS in COVID 19
Future of Online MSS
Resources are adapted now
Online flexible & accessible
Blended MSS
Desire to return to campus
Pedagogical Changes
Difficulty diagnosing problems
Greater use of online resources
Students' preparedness & engagement
Students' use of chat
Explaining more
Social Interactions
Decreased student-student interactions
Tutor-tutor interaction
Increased in WSU
Decreased in UCD
Tutors' & students' interactions different
Usage of Online MSS
One-on-one MSS appreciated
Used less online
Accessibility
Needed more online
Maths is Different
Communication of notation
Comprehension
Maths stigma
More/less difficult than other subjects