Geosci. Commun. Discuss., referee comment RC2
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# Comment on gc-2021-11

Anonymous Referee #2

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Referee comment on "Pandemic Minecrafting: an analysis of the perceptions of and lessons learned from a gamified virtual geology field camp" by Erika Rader et al., Geosci. Commun. Discuss., https://doi.org/10.5194/gc-2021-11-RC2, 2021

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This paper describes the development, implementation, and assessment of a virtual field course developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic that drove cancellation of the "normal" in person field camps attended by many geology students. The approach was to develop a number of worlds in Minecraft within the constraints of the NAGT learning outcomes for field camp.

The overall presentation was well-structured and generally easy to follow. The flexibility and effectiveness of the Minecraft platform as an alternative to an outdoor field course was convincing, and the authors were effective in finding ways to incorporate many disparate elements into this platform, providing opportunities for students to perform a variety of tasks replicating the field experience. The description of the learning activities was well done, with enough meat on the bone to encourage others to follow; e.g. the supplementary software packages and other resources were named, and the ways in which they were used to enrich the experience described. The section (4.2) outlining the advantages of virtual work is convincingly laid out. It is clear that assessment was included as an organic component of the project, and while the limitations of n=25 were acknowledged, it seems that this was done well. Overall, I think the paper is important and informative.

I think that this paper has a rather more broad appeal than only to those engaged in geoscience education as a research topic, and as such suffered in a couple of places where those topics were not presented in a way that would be completely accessible to a significant fraction of potential readers; the paragraphs discussing connectivism and the description of the assessment tools are the two places where I saw opportunities to reach out to a broader audience with more explicit description.

Reading through, I often found myself wondering how many students were involved, and how the course was scheduled- was it all day, six-weeks, or some other format? Was there an in person component, or was it completely online? While the demographics were

given later on in the paper, much of this information was never made clear, and this lack of context made some points more difficult to fully understand. I was curious as to how the course was set up; what kind of licensing, server setup, etc. was required/used to provide the interface.

I thought that both the description of learning activities and assessment showed an awareness of barriers often faced by students, particularly BIPOC and financial barriers, but was quite surprised that there was no mention anywhere of issues of students with physical accessibility limitations- it seems to me that this is one of the most important application of virtual courses!

The comments I have should be considered to address minor points- the work and the presentation of the work are both well done, and I would highly recommend accepting a slightly revised paper for publication.