



Board of Management Learning & Teaching Committee

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Action	Discussion

My Student Experience Survey Outcomes

Brief Background

This report summarises the AY20-21 My Student Experience Survey – undertaken 19th October to 13th November 2020.

Key Findings

- In total, 9,799 Full Time college students were surveyed and asked 25 rated questions and 4 open questions. In response, 5,147 students completed the survey, a response rate of 53%.
- Overall the College satisfaction rate was high at 87%, 7pp above the College target of 80%.
- In comparison to the last academic session, satisfaction rates at College level remain broadly the same, despite the many challenges of lockdown.
- Faculty satisfaction rates are similar across the board:
 - Education and Humanities satisfaction rate was 88%, an increase of 2pp compared to last year.
 - Hospitality and Leisure satisfaction rates were 89%, up 1pp compared to last session.
 - Creative Industries recorded a satisfaction rate of 85%, a 1pp drop.
 - Nautical and STEM satisfaction rates were 83%, down 3pp.
- Overall, whilst mindful of the reduced sample size, results are positive seeming to endorse the mitigation actions undertaken during lockdown.

Cross College Findings & Recommendations

Compared with last session, the highest increase in satisfaction was in relation to the availability of funding information prior to application. This question had a satisfaction rate of 84%, an increase of 8pp from the last academic session.

Given the physical upheaval during lockdown, it is perhaps not surprising that the biggest drop in satisfaction related to online and on-campus library resources, in particular, "*The library resources (books online services and learning spaces) support for my learning*" "*The course is well organised and running smoothly*". However, satisfaction rates were still relatively high at 81% and 82% respectively.

Respect to all learners and all backgrounds is a core value of the college, and it is encouraging to see this reflected in the views of learners. For example, the highest satisfaction scores reported, were "*I understand I have a responsibility to treat others fairly and with respect*" and "*I am aware I have the right to be treated fairly and with respect*" with satisfaction rates of 97% respectively.

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Students were appreciative of staff efforts during the move to emergency off-campus learning. When asked the most effective aspect of online learning, five key areas were commended by students: the accessibility to online learning resources; innovative and interactive lessons; open communication with lecturers; independent learning and; opportunities for online peer-group socialisation.

Considering the challenge of moving to off-campus learning, it is not surprising that the least effective aspects of online learning were: the lack of practical/ on-campus learning days; inaccessible college equipment; organisational issues and; lack of guidance time.

Key areas highlighted for improvement were: communication over changes to assessment; and the importance of maintaining the overall student experience, mindful of the on-line learning recommendations made above and the issues set out below.

Blended Learning – The Student View

Across all faculties there was a sense of fatigue and dissatisfaction with blended learning. Most learners stated they did not blame the College for this and overwhelmingly missed the benefits of face-to-face learning. Some of the feedback included:

- *Learners feel a lack of motivation learning online – common words seen to express this were “boredom”, “exhaustion”, “connection”, “engaged”, “isolated”, “learning alone”, “distraction”.*
- *Learners overwhelmingly feel disengaged when other learners are not on camera and would prefer learners to be seen to create a human connection between them.*
- *Learners feel communication and social cues are missed between lecturers, staff and learners online*
- *It takes longer for learners and staff to communicate and get to know each other.*
- *Learners miss the supportive college atmosphere and community*
- *Learners miss their friends*
- *Learners feel disconnected*
- *Learners feel lonely*
- *Learners have suggested they would like to visit the campus to study there safely since the atmosphere for studying at home is not beneficial to them and is distracting.*
- *Learners love coming into the College for social connection, a sense of community, for activities and to meet new people. They feel a sense of loss of that environment this year.*
- *Learners miss peer support and feel lonely when fully remote.*

Based upon the findings detailed above, cross-college recommendations are that:

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1. Lecturers should continue to seek to maximise opportunities for student engagement, manage the duration of on-line sessions and encourage creativity and interaction. Equally, that they establish a deliberate system of engagement, allowing regular communication with students during and after courses, if only to minimise the volume of email contact.
2. Student funding information prior to application should continue to be updated and made readily available for prospective and current students.
3. Timetabling and funding issues need to be anticipated and contingency planned with decisions communicated early and consistently. Equally, faculties should commit to staying in touch with learners systematically, to avoid messages falling through the cracks and to provide reassurance to learners, even if we are only able to communicate what is still unknown.
4. We give thought to improving accessibility to library resources or identify alternative options to support students as learning and teaching continues online.
5. Students should be regularly reminded of the support available to them – both academic and personal. Reminders should be planned and systematic. Guidance hours should be maximised, recognised as another key mechanism for maintaining student engagement.

On reflection, undertaking the survey during lockdown has proved a worthwhile exercise. Indeed, it has demonstrated a commitment to continue to listen to learners and, given the unprecedented levels of disruption to learning and teaching, provided a useful outlet for the student experience to date to be captured.

Largely, the student experience has been positive, mindful of both the college effort and challenge faced post lockdown. It will be important that this early progress is maintained. Moreover, that, alongside the continuing improvements being made to the off-campus experience, the outputs from the contingency planning currently underway by faculties to manage delivery and assessment, are appropriately and systematically communicated to learners.

Safeguarding the student voice in the processes and approaches that emerge post lockdown is now a key focus. As we undertake faculty reviews and move on from Stop-Check-Support toward an annual performance review cycle, we will want to ensure the student voice is fully embedded in this new approach, working together with faculties to continuously improve.

Key Faculty Recommendations – The Student’s Voice

Learning and Teaching:

- Many students appreciated that some lecturers pre-recorded lessons and uploaded these to MyCity/Moodle to make them accessible at any time. Academic staff should (if possible) implement this which may assist with successful completion, and subsequently, student progression/articulation to Higher Education or employment.
- Creative Industry students detailed innovative lessons whereby lecturers gave live demonstrations of practical lessons on furniture within the home. Academic staff should (if possible) try and provide live demonstrations or incorporate credible online videos whereby practical demonstrations are given to encourage student engagement as well as enhance practical knowledge.

Software/Equipment Access:

- Some students within Nautical & STEM commended the use of digital drawing pads. Others detailed issues with accessing relevant software for coursework. The College should continue to ensure learners can access high specification laptops to complete coursework.

Guidance:

- The importance of guidance time was highlighted across all Faculties. It’s important that effective use is made of this resource and that students are aware of this entitlement to one-to-one support.

Feedback and Communication:

- Many students detailed that they enjoyed Zoom lessons as they were able to ask direct questions without the pressure of a classroom-based environment. Others highlighted that Zoom lessons needed to be shorter than classroom-based lessons and that feedback was occasionally delayed. Academic staff need to review how they manage Zoom lessons accordingly, ensuring breaks and using Zoom breakout rooms to allow class discussions and learner engagement. Timescales for feedback should also be communicated clearly.

- Some students within Nautical & STEM commented on being asked to do too much too fast with insufficient preparation; that they were being assessed too much, and that there was a lack of clear communication on changes to assessments. It's important that academic staff convey changes to assessments clearly and with as much notice as possible. Additionally, students should be reminded of the support available to them by Faculties and from across the college in managing workload and taking up the guidance that's available for them.