

Overview of Issues raised in Annual Monitoring Summaries 2020-21

The College Summaries have been reviewed by the Senate Office to identify any common themes, including what worked well and issues that require further consideration. These are presented below.

Areas that worked well have also been identified in the College Summaries. These have been broken down into themes and will be sent to Student Learning Development for wider dissemination.

1. What worked well

There were a number of common themes reported in the What Worked Well section of the College Summaries. These themes, however, also feature in the themes for attention as the positives often relate to the achievement and endeavour of staff and students in the context of extremely challenging circumstances. These areas included the following:

Flexibility and adaptability of staff

Online engagement and assessment

IT improvements – interactive technologies

Student performance

Student satisfaction

What worked well

Flexibility and adaptability of staff

“All schools reported that staff performance in challenging circumstances was exceptional, with very engaged and committed staff (Psych, GES, ENG, P&A, M&S, Chem, CS), with particular mention of excellent admin and technical support.” (Psych)

“Schools provided some local community building, and support for students with mental health problems (Psych, Chem), with evident goodwill between staff and students.” (M&S)

“The January start for PGT students caused significant academic, administrative and technical problems, with extremely high workloads for lecturing staff teaching large classes over the summer, and consequence staff burn-out (CS, GES). These problems are on-going, with project supervision of large cohorts overlapping with S1 delivery. All staff involved should be commended for their commitment to seeing through this difficult year while continuing to prioritise the delivery of high-quality education.” (CoSE)

“Flexibility for 20-day feedback turnaround was welcomed (Psych), as was the flexibility in the evidence required for Good Cause claims (Psych), and the use of MyC for Good Cause processes.” (Psych)

“Tutorials and additional tutorial(Q&A) support sessions were well received by students (Chem); assessment and feedback calendars continue to work well in Psych.”

“Staff contribution both PSS and academic has been tremendous throughout the last academic year under very challenging circumstances.” (MVLS)

Online engagement and assessment

“Overall, the move online worked well and allowed for greater autonomy and flexibility for students around timing and pace of learning. Online anytime lectures encouraged active learning, whilst online live classes led to a greater sense of community.” (College of Arts)

“Improved rates of attendance at online classes were noted.” (College of Arts).

“Blended learning. Online lectures, the mixture of ‘live’ and ‘anytime’ has been received well by the students. Live small group tutorials continue to work well, attendance and interaction has been excellent. Most senior students keep their cameras on fewer in the earlier years.” (MVLS)

“The delivery of online proctored end-of-year examinations using Proctorio was highly successful (BVMS1, BVMS3) and provided an opportunity to streamline post exam administrative processes (BVMS3) while maintaining equivalent assessment content. Support from IT services and the Moodle team were important in implementing the online proctoring system which was required by BVMS accreditors.” (SVM)

“Students adapted very well to online examinations (coursework has been submitted electronically already). Online exams: there is increasing appreciation across staff and students that open-book and less time-restricted assessments are more appropriate for most of the assessments. They are not a panacea, but they work, discriminate, assess more authentically, and drive deep reflection on the design of questions/tasks enhancing the assessment process. Student trust in assessments was undermined by the possibility of their classmates cheating, colluding or otherwise gaining advantage.” (SLS)

“Turnitin: The School’s use (as Pilot and then as spearhead) of Turnitin at point of submission for online exams (via Moodle Assignment) helped assure quality and instill confidence in the minds of students (and staff and External Examiners). Should be used more widely across the University.” (SLS)

IT improvements – interactive technologies

“Move to online delivery led to enhancements in organisation and appearance of Moodle pages and optimising use of ReadingLists.” (College of Arts)

“Opportunities for innovation e.g., Virtual Surgery (VS) adapted for online delivery, the new Virtual Primary Care (VPC) platform created by the Medical Schools Council (MSC) ‘real life video’ consultations, an online alternative to seeing patients face-to-face.” (MVLS)

“Use of OneDrive to collate ILOs. Previously, all ILOs were on different documents across Moodle. This year, a OneDrive document was created where all ILOs could be easily found, this was very useful for staff and students and will continue.” (MVLS)

“Recorded lectures with the opportunity to re-engage and the flexibility resulting from ‘anytime’ sessions evaluate particularly positively. The delivery of ‘live’ teaching sessions and exam revision sessions worked well. Use of Moodle books to organise course contents, help to create an engaging online learning experience”. (BN1)

“Greater opportunities for external speakers.” (College of Arts)

Student performance

“Student achievement compared to previous years vary: similar (Psych, P&A, ENG), on average was better (Chem), noticeably better (CS).”

“A number of subject areas in SMLC, Humanities and CCA reported similar grade-profiles as pre-pandemic and in some courses even a little better. This was confirmed by externals in all four Schools, where practices in marking and feedback were praised. English Lit reported that over 50% of students were awarded a first class degree.” (College of Arts)

“Assessment performance was increased, possibly due to the online nature of the exams, or the pandemic as students had more time to focus on learning. The MCQ component was increased and this had a positive effect on marking load, whilst maintaining assessment reliability and validity.” (MVLS)

“Student performance in assessments was generally very strong; learning happened and to a high standard for the majority who completed the year. Detailed statistical analysis of grading patterns and assessments evidenced a high level of discrimination. However,

although difficult to draw comparisons, the average grade achieved was higher than seen in previous years.” (SLS)

Systems for identifying students requiring remedial assistance noted in more than one report.

Student Satisfaction

“High levels of student satisfaction are reported in all Schools and many examples of community building activities are given in the AMRs. In particular, students praised teaching staff for their frequent and clear communication as they navigated online learning.” (College of Arts)

“Students responded positively to the online teaching innovations, despite being fatigued by the number of online hours. Teaching in 2021-22 session will be a mix of online and on campus.” (MVLS)

“Student feedback was largely positive across the BVMS and BSc/MSc Vet Bioscience programmes and acknowledged the efforts of academic staff for their enthusiasm, their engagement, passion and for supporting students and keeping them informed. Also, administrative staff for their support and help negotiating and managing the complex class rotations.” (SVM)

“Course Evaluations, NSS results, EE reports, SSLCs etc. all indicate that students appreciated the support and the quality of the education they received from staff. The commitment and willingness of staff to support their students and each other, their adaptability, flexibility, and willingness to work above and beyond the call of duty should be acknowledged as key to making things work. However, years like last year cannot be sustained.” (SLS)

“Considering the challenges, the impression is that students and staff think that many of the issues that develop have been successfully navigated.” (SVM)

“Students’ attainment remained equivalent or improved in comparison to previous years and feedback was generally positive. Very good feedback was received from external examiners regarding the work of administration and teaching staff regarding marking and feedback. Student voice through SSLC meetings operated effectively. NSS overall student satisfaction of 85.5% was one of the highest in the Business School. The subject of Economics has climbed from the 4th place to the 2nd place in the Russell Group and in external benchmarking, overall satisfaction reached place 17.” (SocSci)

“Student satisfaction with the quality of teaching remained high and was reflected in both Staff Student Liaison Committees and in feedback on individual courses. Courses were praised for being intellectually stimulating and well run, and access to online materials was effective. Students appreciated staff availability over the teaching period, including Q&A sessions, office hours, or ad-hoc responses to enquiries.” (SocSci)

2. Themes for University attention

There were a number of common issues reported through the Summaries, a number of which have been recurring themes over previous reports. The issues identified related to the following themes (with recurring themes marked *):

Admissions – increased student numbers, and English language requirements

*Staff workloads and welfare

*Staff and student mental health

*IT/Remote delivery and equipment

*Suitability and quality of teaching spaces/timetabling

Online assessment and exams

*University policy

*University communication

*University systems

Student Conduct

Issues raised in previous summaries

2.1 Admissions – increased student numbers, and English language requirements

All four Colleges referred to issues regarding admissions policy and over recruitment with the subsequent impact on staff and students which was significant and will continue for at least four years as cohort passes through the levels of study.

“All admission applicant groups are becoming more complex in their admissions advice and conversion from offers to places taken. Non-standard applications (outside the ‘normal’ high school or graduate profile) are increasing, as are candidate changes late in the cycle (fee status, response to offer, deferral). These factors make targets difficult to secure. Widening Participation (WP) has significantly grown, with GAP, MD20/40, REACH, SWAP (Scottish Wider Access Programme), Care Leaver and Remote and Rural all now needing to be identified and given different consideration under the WP umbrella.” (MVLS)

“Another area requiring urgent attention is our admissions processes at PGT level. These are extremely difficult for PGT programme conveners to effectively manage and has led to programmes being oversubscribed –with, for example, the MSc in Music Industries having to field a 100% increase in their standard student numbers in the 20/21 academic session. This renders our programmes difficult to deliver and, particularly, to assess with the current staff availability, and much of this could be avoided with more streamlined and communicative admissions processes. We would like to highlight that many individual members of staff within the admissions team are doing an excellent job, but that the team is understaffed, and the mechanisms by which are admissions system functions, particularly regarding anticipated and final student numbers, seem to be inadequate.” (College of Arts)

“The need to improve transparency around admission policies for postgraduate international students, particularly around language requirements. FTV convenors operated under the assumption that all students meet the published IELTS entry requirements and were only informed recently that this was not in fact the case. As a ‘traditional’ academic postgraduate programme, the MLitt in Film and Television Studies requires students to be able to write and communicate at a high level and some international students have really struggled to do so this year, in a much more widespread and noticeable way than in previous years.” (College of Arts)

“Moving the start date of PGT programmes from September to January required enormous staff effort, particularly in delivering S2 in the Summer, and in battling with an university infrastructure that does not recognise the specific nature of this model of delivery.” (SoSE)

“Our first-year intake increased by around 70% in 2020/21 and has increased again in 2021/22. These numbers are becoming unmanageable with the current staffing levels and academic recruitment in our subject area is problematic. Furthermore, the large numbers impact on the student experience. We have a reputation as a small (in relative terms), friendly programme – which is one of our main selling features and what drives NSS results. Students do not want to enter a faceless factory – which is what we are becoming. In terms of student welfare, we have traditionally provided Advisers of Study from within the subject, which greatly enhances the student experience, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to find suitable members of staff for the role. We pride ourselves on high levels of graduate employment, but this will become more difficult with around double the numbers of students, again impacting on our reputation.” (Acc & Fiin)

“We are all very concerned about the large and increasing number of UG students in the ASBS. This can have adverse effects on students experience and have severe implications for the NSS results, especially in assessment and feedback which has become difficult to manage.” (Economics)

“Revising the recruitment policy, to limit the enrolments further, allowing for a better quality of teaching and learning. Also, to have a better balance of GIC and Non-GIC enrolment.” (Management)

“Over-recruitment at the undergraduate and postgraduate level and a lack of forward planning in consultation with the School and Subject is having a negative impact on the student experience. This level of growth is unsustainable and will require a major expansion of our Honours provision to accommodate this number of students. Due to the impact this will have on staff workloads and therefore our ability to respond effectively the issues raised by our NSS results, it is likely that the student experience will be negatively affected for the next few years. We would also ask that due consideration is given to preventing any further growth in either our undergraduate or postgraduate programmes for the next four-year years, while the surge in undergraduate numbers over the past two years of (2020/21 and 2021/22) works its way through the four-year degree.” (Politics)

2.2 Staff workloads and welfare

All College summaries referenced the significant additional workload that the pandemic situation had created for staff. As was evident from the comments in the “What worked well” section, there was an amazing effort by staff, particularly in relation to student support, however, there were concerns that the ongoing pressures were at the cost of staff wellbeing. Staffing and workload issues are matters for College resourcing, however, the following comments were extracted from the ‘For University attention’ section.

“Workload models must recognise the time required for staff to undergo training with new technology associated with blended learning and digital assessment.” (SVM)

“Staff have gone to extraordinary measures to support the students, and this seems to go on without acknowledgement by the University.” (SVM)

“Increased workload due to the pandemic and being too busy to take any annual leave, including the additional days was noted by two different Schools in Arts.” (Humanities and CCA).

“We are all very concerned about students and staff wellbeing which were never more important than now, given the heavier workload as well as the private constraints, e.g. care responsibilities, fear about health and job security etc. We are very concerned about meeting students’ expectations in terms of on-campus experience since most courses in Economics are well above 50. In addition, some academic staff would still feel insecure with on campus teaching amid COVID, calling for a comprehensive guidance on what should be done under such circumstances.” (Economics)

“There is a view that the pandemic has highlighted that a significant amount of development work/innovation will be required in moving forward and this needs to be reflected in workload models.” (Interdisciplinary Studies)

“Workload concerns and expectations: These need to be addressed, particularly for those with caring responsibilities.” (School of Law)

“Since academic staff are required to be much more active in response to online student communications, extension requests etc., and have additional burdens in facilitating online delivery, it must be acknowledged that there is less time for scholarship/research (Psych, Chem) –noting that the additional academic burdens for online delivery have tended to fall on the shoulders of the dedicated few.” (Chem)

“Staff mental health should become more of a priority to the University and there should be more contact points for staff to rely on when they feel overwhelmed or very low/not coping. The conditions we had to work through this year were really tough and the amount of stress sometimes was unmanageable.” (SLS)

“The University has not been proactive in helping to manage the mental health of staff.” (SVM)

“There are some staff vacancies which need to be replaced as soon as possible. Additionally, some provision for cover of staff on long term sick leave is required. Having several permanent staff vacancies is unsustainable and is compromising the student experience.” (Dental School)

2.3 Staff and Student Mental Health

Student mental health was commented on by all four colleges with concerns for the support available to students and the need for staff training to support the students.

“All four Schools raised noted increases in student anxiety and mental health concerns. They note that available resources need to be better signposted to students and that CAPS needs additional resources as all areas reported waiting times that are much longer than is practically helpful. This was a significant feature in all AMRs in Arts.”

“Also, for student mental health. Many students did not make it through last year but would have in a normal year. They are our responsibility.” (SLS)

“The UoG CAPs (Counselling and Psychological Services) is a well-used and much needed resource for students. Further investment to expand the service and reduce waiting times. This was referred to by students in the NSS qualitative comments.” (NHCS)

“The lack of a counsellor at the SVM has caused problems as staff members, with little or no training, spend an enormous amount of time and energy supporting students – often to the detriment of their own mental health.” (SVM)

“Academic staff need guidance on how to deal with student mental health issues, since they are usually the first people that students contact when they have problems.” (CoSE)

“Addressing and supporting the ongoing digital inequalities facing students. Increased reporting of racism as experienced by Chinese students specifically in the pandemic context. Increased reporting of poor to at-risk mental health and the demands (of time but also significant emotional work) placed on all staff to support students the absence of appropriate mental health resources. For example, the kinds of events to support staff on dealing with the secondary stress of supporting students with serious MH issues should be repeated through the academic year and widely advertised among i.e. level convenors and admin staff.” (Sociology)

“The significant levels of support provided to students and staff from Financial Aid, Disabilities and the CRISIS Team should be noted.” (SocSci)

2.4 IT/Remote Delivery and Equipment

There were a substantial number of comments received pertaining to various aspects of IT provision for staff and students and development and use for online teaching methods:

“Many of the challenges posed by the continuation of a blended learning approach are not limited to the SVM, these challenges include (but may not be limited to):

- Work is required as to how students are supported with digital learning to ensure engagement (SVM)
- Work needs to be done to determine the optimal balance of online and in-person teaching. (SVM)

- Further training and support for staff is needed to enhance the student online learning experience. (SVM)
- Staff struggle to find the time to undergo training with new technology.
- The digital infrastructure across the University must be fit for purpose.
- Appropriate IT support must be made available to staff and students.” (SVM)

“Better on-campus provision needed for staff to record lectures and/or deliver online classes.” (M&S, P&A)

“A university service should be provided for the task of checking the transcriptions for recorded teaching materials.” (CoSE)

“Support for Gathertown would be welcomed, to support remote community building.” (Chem)

“Technical support for mixed sessions (teaching but also committee meetings that are simultaneously online and face-to-face). Current provision is woeful.” (SLS)

“More lecture recording facilities for on-campus sessions.” (SLS)

Transcription of videos

“It is noted that the position on correction of video transcripts has changed since the end of the 2020-21 academic year. Whereas in 2020-21 staff were told that there was ‘no legal requirement to correct’ automatic machine transcriptions recent announcements on requirements for digital accessibility for the new 2021-22 academic year say that staff ‘must provide a corrected transcript and/or captioning’. The workload implications of this are of course huge. It is noted that the UofG information (University of Glasgow -MyGlasgow - Digital Accessibility -Video states that ‘How we will meet the regulations: The University has agreed that we will provide automatic transcripts, i.e. machine-generated transcripts, for all video recorded via services that Information Services provides, primarily Zoom, Echo 360 and Microsoft Stream. The quality of these transcripts is claimed to be between 75 -90% accurate, although strong anecdotal evidence suggests it is less than that. To try to manage student expectations, information on the accuracy of auto transcripts has been provided to students. Improvement of transcripts needs to be addressed locally.’ Therefore, clarity on what ‘improvement of transcripts needs to be addressed locally’ means will be needed. An important point here is that not all teaching uses English as the language of instruction and so not all staff can expect to start with a transcript ‘claimed to be between 75%-90% accurate’. One subject area (Archaeology) has suggested that funding could be provided for functioning voice recognition and transcription software. The current system is not fit for purpose and providing even approximately accurate lecture transcripts results in an entirely unacceptable quantity of additional work for staff. There will be future issues with students with disabilities unless this issue is resolved.” (Humanities)

“Additional spaces to deliver courses over Zoom from campus are needed. The University should consider longer term investing in platforms more specifically designed for teaching delivery that have enhanced features for learning (for example, Adobe Connect).” (Short courses)

“Access to on campus wifi remains a problem. The wifi provision across different parts of the campus varies significantly, and this made it unreliable for staff teaching online from their offices.” (TRS)

“Some staff commented that if we want to have effective on-line teaching (especially for group discussions or tutorials) in the future, we may need to insist that students to turn on their cameras and make sure they are listening.” (SocSci)

“Any continued use of online/blended learning should prioritise the student learning experience over any need to reduce resourcing requirements.” (CoSE)

“There is need to adapt new technology and policies about physical on-campus facilities to deliver a high quality blended and online learning experience for our students.” (MVLS)

2.5 Student – IT

“LEADS should be encouraged to provide student courses in basic digital skills, undergraduate research and dissertation skills, and general ethics, at a university level.” (College of Arts)

“Scot Lit would like to highlight the issue of access to technology as crucial to creating an inclusive learning environment. Staff voiced real concerns about ‘Tech poverty’ and that the support in place for students, such as the laptop loan scheme, are not yet enough.” (College of Arts)

“Students need clarity as to the technical settings (e.g. cookie settings) needed for students seeking to access lecture recordings embedded in Moodle.” (College of Arts)

“Staff in TRS would like guidance on disability accommodation for online learning in relation to accessible readings for people with dyslexia and dyspraxia and the difficulties around note taking when courses are online.” (College of Arts)

“Study space for students on campus that allow them to take part fully in online learning sessions.” (SLS)

“Graduation ceremonies, and celebrations ceased during the pandemic. This is an important rite of passage for the student community. During the crisis, staff were happy to support producing video, relying on the good will of friends/colleagues as a temporary measure. Moving forward, the University should invest in professional IT/digital services to support schools to design and deliver alternative celebrations/events. Written guidance and advice on creating videos was helpful, but this needs to be properly resourced and should not continue to fall to lecturing staff.” (NHCS)

2.6 Teaching Spaces and timetabling

“Three subjects expressed concerns around the ongoing uncertainty around teaching arrangements for 2021-22. The issues related to timeliness of availability of information, timetabling, safety of staff delivering in-person classes, and one subject underscored that access to campus is an irreplaceable part of the student experience.” (College of Arts)

“The requirement to relocate History of Arts classes from Robertson building with an intensively taught practical course during the teaching semester was disruptive for staff and students and added workload and stress to what was an already challenging year managing working during a pandemic. Earlier planning and consideration of the impact of this needs to be considered in future developments. This has had a lasting negative impact on staff workload and moral.” (MPhil Textile Conservation, College of Arts)

“Accessibility to our physical infrastructure remains a significant barrier – none of the buildings on University Gardens, including practice spaces and the in-train new media lab at no. 8, are accessible for students with physical disabilities and the same is true of the recording studios in the Gilbert Scott Buildings. This means, currently, that teaching on courses that require the use of these facilities is often moved to accessible spaces, but these spaces do not have the hardware or software required to teach what is needed. In the absence of a new building, more urgent action on accessibility is required.” (Music, College of Arts)

“Space is needed for students to work independently; request Molema 227, 229 and 306 be removed from central bookings.” (CoSE)

“Timetabling Challenges – the blended approach to come courses where students will be on campus for some classes and online for others is a timetable challenge.” (MEduc)

“Although it is difficult with COVID-19 uncertainty, it will be helpful to have clarity on room bookings/allocations as early as possible to enable effective planning.” (MVLS)

“Improvements have been made with CMIS electronic timetabling simplification this year. There is, however, continued frustration that the ‘fourth term’ (July-September) remains unfacilitated causing confusion for both students and staff.” (Dental School)

“The number of suitable facilities in which to safely carry out AGP treatments remains insufficient as does the required number of supervisory clinical staff. If AGP experience provision is less than required to meet the GDC requirements the School will remain unable to graduate the final year cohort even after an additional year.” (Dental School)

2.7 Online Assessment and exams

There were a substantial number of comments received pertaining to online assessment and examinations.

“There is a need to have a clearer definition of what constitutes a ‘High Stakes Assessment’. On some courses, the move away from such assessments has resulted in an increased number of summative assessments, and correspondingly higher stress levels for students (as reported through the School Staff-Student Liaison Committee) and increased marking workload for teaching staff.” (Interdisciplinary Studies)

“Academic standards / plagiarism –colleagues in Critical Studies, Humanities & SMLC would like greater guidance on marking ‘open book’ exams and would like to see Turnitin or other plagiarism software used as standard in online exams.” (College of Arts)

“One subject (Scottish Literature) is grateful to Senate for their advice and support through exam boards this year. Understanding that these are unusual circumstances, colleagues nevertheless reported feeling disengaged from the exam board process this session and felt that their contribution was diminished. It is hoped that future refinements to exam boards, while promoting fairness, transparency and equality, do not disenfranchise teaching staff and that we instead find ways to engage staff who actually teach on and convene the courses for which results are reported.” (College of Arts)

“Differing views regarding open-book and online (unproctored) exams/assessments: open-book exams are welcomed (Psych); suitable in some areas (GES); online exams appear to be appreciated by students (CS). However, there is an increase the potential for cheating (P&A, M&S, ENG, Chem); it is very difficult to set appropriate exams for open-book online circumstances (CS, ENG); Supervised exam conditions would be an improvement on the current processes (even for quizzes) (M&S). Future decision on online/open-book exams should consider subject-specific requirements.” (CoSE)

“There should be more flexibility around invigilation and timing of examinations across different subjects. In medicine, the exams in early years are partly in preparation for a national licencing exam and in final years, the exams ensure students can practice safely. This makes these exams different to the aims of many other courses and invigilation and time limits would be appropriate for future assessment diets. The External Examiner comments show that they are strongly supportive of this and that the Medical School in Glasgow is currently out of step with other institutions. To meet the needs of the GMC we may also need to explore further, solutions for holding online exams under strict exam conditions with students own devices.” (MVLS)

“Remote proctoring of online assessments is likely to remain a requirement by some accrediting bodies.” (SVM) “The move away from timed, invigilated exams is likely to cause AccFin to lose their accreditations from professional bodies. This will have a huge impact on student recruitment and student satisfaction.” (ASBS)

“Colleagues requested a return to in-person language exams. In the short term, colleagues requested that the University prioritise a 4-hour time window for online timed exams in 2021-22.” (College of Arts)

“The automatic double time for assessments (plus extra for ASN students) was deemed excessive by teaching staff and External Examiners and the RCVS (the SVM was a significant outlier compared to its peer group)”. (SVM)

“Online exams only versus in-hall exams:(staff and students) need a decision/guidance early (before Semester 1 starts) as to which or both will be allowed for the full 2021-22 session.” (SLS)

“Some students answered assessments with verbatim quotes from lectures. Is this acceptable under open-book circumstances? Should students be viewing recorded lectures during their exam? - More guidance needed.” (SLS)

“MCQ exams are not really suitable for open-book conditions, yet they are authentic assessments not only for professional programmes but also for early years (Year 1 and Year 2) of non-professional programmes. They do have a place. A suitable online MCQ assessment system is badly needed. Similarly for short-answer-based exams that, like MCQ exams, legitimately assess breadth of knowledge across a broad curriculum rather than depth per se.” (SLS)

“There was some questioning around the pedagogical purpose of examinations when conducted exclusively online in ‘open-book’ format. There were also some concerns among staff about the increased potential for student misconduct in online examinations.” (Interdisciplinary Studies)

2.8 University Policy

“Less centralised decision making, especially those seeking (and generally failing to find) solutions that suit everyone and every situation. Accept the inevitable truth that ‘guidance’ delivered early would EMPOWER Schools to act in their own initiative and to solve problems early. Schools were successful through the 2020-21 sessions (and despite the centre rather than because of it) and will do so again for 2021-22. The centre should aim to inhibit schools less: trust schools more. A university aiming to be world leading should embrace management practices that are of this millennium and not of the last.” (SLS)

“Code of assessment and support for assessment: upcoming changes are welcome to the code of assessment and the GCAT interim and partial solution. However, these are only the start, and the SLS encourages the University to invest more seriously and urgently in: a) Revising/simplifying the code of assessment b) Streamlining the processing of assessments (grading, aggregation, feedback, programme outcomes etc.) All issues from previous years.” (SLS)

“Students and staff need firmer deadlines and rules regarding extensions and good cause and delayed or deferred assessments. The system used in 2020-21 was not suitable for purpose and caused massive stress and workload problems. 5 days extensions are sufficient (to avoid clashing with following assessments and a domino effect).” (SLS)

“Continued use of a 20-day turnaround period for feedback (rather than the 15-day) would ease pressure on staff.” (Psych)

“Extended exam periods prevent discrimination in exam results and exams need to be time-limited to avoid this.” (Chem).

“English Literature request greater University-wide clarity on content advice, which students still understand as a matter of ‘trigger warnings’. Staff also have this problem. The University needs a clearer central statement on the rationale for and limits of content advice. What does it protect against specifically? –students seem to understand such advice as psychological prophylaxis against the ‘triggering of trauma’. Is this really the case, and what are the implications if so, since some students therefore understand the presence of any upsetting course content as a form of exclusionary pedagogy (courses become inaccessible, like old buildings)? Or, if content advice is not (solely) a preventative against ‘re-activated’

trauma, what positive terms describe what it helps students to do in preparation? This needs to be clear and detailed –not just a phrase or two. To anticipate the diversity of all supposed ‘triggers’ would require the substitution of an entirely anodyne syllabus. What are the limits of content advice –what can be reasonably foreseen, and what can we say to students who do not feel their ‘triggers’ have been anticipated? These issues need to be cleared up urgently and very early in student experience – as a matter of induction.” (College of Arts)

“Relatedly, the ‘fitness to study’ process where students with MH issues can be asked to suspend their studies should be reviewed, our experience is that it tends not to be recommended by Disability Services and the Advising team because it ultimately makes things worse for students there must be something seriously wrong with this. Improving understandings of the disability services: what it does, how it supports students and staff in ensuring a student is supported appropriately.” (Sociology)

2.9 University Communication

“University communications to staff have been erratic, late, and sometimes only distributed after the communications to students.” (M&S, GES, Chem)

“University guidance with regard to the pandemic was at times slow to arrive at the School. While this is understandable, given the changing nature of the situation, it did make communicating with SVM students in a timely fashion challenging.” (SVM)

“Communication – If returning to campus in the second semester, ample notice and communication is needed. The speed and clarity around implications could be improved.” (MEduc)

2.10 University Systems

2.10.1 EvaSys

“Critical Studies & CCA noted low levels of student engagement in EvaSys this year.” (College of Arts)

“Colleagues in SMLC observed that the EvaSys questionnaires asks students to comment on the teaching abilities of individual members of staff, which results often in unconstructive feedback. In general, it was thought that the structure of the questionnaires invited students to critique teaching rather than reflect holistically on issues of learning and teaching. Would it be possible to adjust the base questions to elicit more constructive responses?” (College of Arts)

2.10.2 MyCampus

“English Language & Linguistics reports that MyCampus was unable to cope with semester 3 provision (i.e. for Masters students taking a programme with a January start in 2020-21). This caused confusion during the course selection period generally, and also resulted in some students from the ELL and SLS Masters programmes taking semester 3 courses while undertaking dissertation work.” (College of Arts)

“The MyCampus student record does not indicate the array of various WP categories on which the School is asked to report –the admissions team therefore needs to rely on additional spreadsheets/ databases/ separate communications provided by other teams, which introduces delay and potential confusion into the reporting process.” (MVLS)

“To enhance student experience, 'My Campus' needs further development to enable accurate handling of components of assessment and progression criteria across the BN(Hons) programme. The School is keen to work to secure these changes ensuring that 'My Campus' works effectively across the Programme.” (NHCS)

2.10.3 Library

“English and Scottish Literature raised the issue of purchase of set texts in formats that can only be used by one student at a time (meaning some could not read the book in time for the

seminar, and also that no-one had a copy of the text in front of them during class). Eng Lit also report that some students have struggled to access library materials during lockdown. Even with more electronic resources being made available, candidates have commented on difficulties securing key texts/archives.[NOTE –FTV have also raised the question of access to materials for teaching with College above]”.

2.11 Student Conduct

“Plagiarism procedures. Where students have been reported to Student Conduct in the Senate for plagiarism, the process has taken several months to get to interview. It is a focus of concern in the subject among affected students and staff how long the formal plagiarism process takes.”(ESH, SocSci)

“Serious thinking about how to deal with Plagiarism and collusion in online assessments.” (SLS)

“Senate Conduct processes make it hard to prove contract cheating.” (CS)

2.12 Issues raised in previous summaries

The following specific issues were raised in previous summaries:

“university insurance is not suitable for field trips” (CoSE)

“student field trip costs should be covered by the university, not the students” (CoSE) – to be followed up with College of Science and Engineering.

“refurbishment of Molema 227” (CoSE).