

Board of Management

Meeting	Learning, Teaching and Research Committee
Date and time	Tuesday 22 nd September 2020 at 4.30 p.m.
Location	Boardroom, 1 Inverness Campus

Board Secretary
15 September 2020

AGENDA**Welcome and Apologies****Declarations of Interest****ITEMS FOR DECISION**

- 1. MINUTES**
Meeting of the Learning, Teaching and Research Committee held on 9 June 2020
- 2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**
Action List
- 3. INTERNAL AUDIT TERMS OF REFERENCE – Report by Depute Principal Planning and Student Experience**

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- 4. UPDATE REPORT ON IMPACT OF AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19 - Report by Depute Principal Academic Development**
- 5. HISA REPORT AND STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT UPDATE - Report by Director of Student Experience and HISA President**
- 6. STUDENT OUTCOMES AND SATISFACTION RATES 2019/20 - Report by Depute Principal Planning and Student Experience.**
- 7. STUDENT ACTIVITY 2019/20 & STUDENT RECRUITMENT 2020/21 - Report by Depute Principal Planning and Student Experience**
- 8. CORPORATE PARENTING ACTION PLAN AND PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO SFC EQUALITIES REPORTING – Director of Student Experience**
- 9. RESEARCH REPORT**
Report by Director of Research & Innovation

- 10. FEEDBACK ON LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE
SELF EVALUATION AND COMMITTEE CHAIR EVALUATION EXERCISES**
Report by Board Secretary
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- 11. COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20** Report by Quality Manager

- 12. AOCB**

- 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 17 November 2020 at 4.30 p.m.**

If any member wishes to add an item of business to the Agenda, please inform the Chair and the Board Secretary as soon as possible. Additional items of business will only be considered for inclusion in the agenda in advance of the start of the meeting.

Board of Management

DRAFT MINUTES of the MEETING of the LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE held via Microsoft Teams, on Tuesday 9 June 2020

PRESENT:	Sally Blyth, Tom Speirs, Kelly Mackenzie, Chris O'Neil, Tina Stones, Fiona Neilson, Robyn Kennedy, Sarah Burton, Samantha Cribb, Vivienne Mackie and George Gunn
CHAIR:	Tom Speirs
APOLOGIES:	None
ATTENDING:	Depute Principal, Academic Development Depute Principal, Planning and Student Experience Director of Curriculum Director of Research and Innovation Director of Student Experience Board Secretary

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that our newly elected HISA President for 20-21 was Ruth McFadyen.

No Declarations of Interest were noted.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Learning, Teaching and Research Committee held on 17 March 2020 were **AGREED**, and **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

International Students is currently the only outstanding action. The Committee was advised that a partnership wide response to the report is still being developed. The Committee discussed the impact which Covid-19 may have on applications from

international students and thereafter the Committee **AGREED** that this action could be removed from the list.

3. POLICIES

- **Safeguarding Policy** – The Director of Student Experience took the Committee through the proposed changes to the policy. The Committee was advised that the policy had been amended to include a clear scope with regards student accommodation. The Committee **AGREED** recommendations for expanding on all staff being responsible for safeguarding students and the Director of Student Experience will **UPDATE** the policy to reflect these recommendations. Pending the policy being updated with these recommendations the Committee **APPROVED** the policy.
- **PVG Scheme Policy** – The Committee was advised that this was a new common UHI Policy which mirrors our own previous policy. This policy relates to students only. The Committee **APPROVED** the policy.
- **FE Guidance Policy** – The Committee was advised that this was again a new common UHI Policy which aims to highlight all entitlements which are available to students. The Committee discussed how this was being achieved within the College and thereafter the Committee **APPROVED** the policy.

4. IMPACT OF AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Committee was advised that a report has been prepared to highlight the impact of Covid-19 on the current Academic Year and to look at the predicted impact of Covid-19 for the next Academic Year.

Learning and Teaching

The Committee was advised that we are continuing to develop our virtual models of teaching and that a small number of laptops had been made available to both staff and students. The move to virtual teaching has provided both opportunities and challenges with some courses finding that students are more engaged and as a result some courses may remain online or blended in the future. The use of Brightspace and E-Portfolio has increased.

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It was noted that there has been a gap analysis carried out between FE and HE with some areas facing more constraints than others. This will continue to be analysed as we move into the next Academic Year.

Committee members gave their thanks to all Lecturers for all the support they have given to students to enable them to move their learning online.

The Committee enquired as to whether we have any idea of how many students may be suspending their studies due to Covid-19 and the prospect of online learning. The Committee noted that students are continuing to be fully informed of all measures being taken with regards Covid-19 and inductions for the new Academic Year are to go ahead as planned.

The Committee members gave their thanks to HISA for all the support they have given to students and staff during this period. It was noted that it is hoped that ex-students can be surveyed to see what they found worked well and given the opportunity to discuss any challenges they found with regards to moving to online learning.

The Committee was advised that all students who have accepted offers to study will be surveyed to ensure that they have sufficient means to study (such as access to computer/laptop, access to broadband, bandwidth of broadband and their own skillset and competencies with using technology). Support will be offered where needed and we will be prioritising the delivery of laptops to students who require them. The Committee noted that we hope to purchase 80 laptops in time for the next Academic Year.

Student Support

The Committee acknowledged the way in which staff were continuing to support students remotely and staff have been able to direct students to wider support and funding available to them. Amendments have been made to support plans in order to suit the new learning environment and PDA continue to support our most vulnerable students. Students have also been able to access the Big White Wall and there is now a counselling officer in post who can provide online counselling to students.

Assessment and Progression

The Committee discussed how we are continuing to meet criteria with regards assessments. The Committee noted that going forward all teams will look at each course separately to see how criteria can be met. The Committee was advised that the vast majority of students have completed their course and are ready to continue onto the next year. Where students have been unable to complete their studies then systems are being looked at so they are not penalised. With regards Foundation Apprenticeships it has been agreed by all universities that a letter of completion will be given which will recognise the apprentice's achievement.

Impact on Student Credits

The Committee was advised that the Funding Council have guaranteed that we will not be penalised for not meeting our credit targets this year and we are hopeful that this will be the same for the next Academic Year. Currently we are 1000 credits below target due to Covid-19. Until Covid-19 we were ahead of where we were expected to be and we have evidence of this which can be presented to the Funding Council if required.

The Committee was advised that HE is down 84 FTE on its target however we remain broadly the same as other partnership agencies. The MicroRAM is looking more positive with £371k which reduces the outflow ratio to 54% which is a very positive shift securing an additional £107k income in relative terms, and £22.5k in real terms due to the reduced recruitment.

Contingency 20/21

The Depute Principal (Academic Development) advised that he is chairing a small group, who meet weekly, to look at how to manage and co-ordinate the move out of lockdown. The Committee was advised that it is likely that we will move into phase 2 of lockdown on 18 June 2020 with staff who work within lab research allowed to re-enter labs.

Currently the group are looking at how we can maintain physical distance so that we are ready when buildings are able to reopen. A reduction of the physical

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distance to 1m would provide us with a more efficient means of delivery than if the 2m distancing remains.

The Committee was advised that staff will be given access to the building to allow them to collect work/papers which they may require. This has only just been launched and already 15 requests have been received from staff. Any heavy items are being delivered directly to staff to ensure that this is done in a controlled and safe manner.

The Committee noted that courses will likely begin online in Semester 1 to minimise the amount of students and staff within the building. It was advised that we have entered into a variation of contract with Pristine to allow a greater number of deep cleans to the building. The group will continue to monitor all advice from the Scottish Government with regards to face coverings and physical distance.

The Committee was advised that we are looking at 3 different scenarios for the new Academic Year:

1. We have limited access to the building during Semester 1 but reopen in Semester 2.
2. We have no access to the building during Semester 1 and limited access within Semester 2.
3. We have no access at all to the building during either Semester 1 or 2.

All Heads of Schools are planning for each scenario and the biggest constraint will be the number of students allowed within classrooms or workshops. Heads of Schools will be looking at staff resources available and reprioritising their programmes.

5. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Depute Principal (Academic Development) took the Committee through the report which is looking at the general environment and provides a PESTEL analysis of the macro environmental factors impacting Colleges. The Committee was advised that it was felt useful to look at the broader picture in this current changing environment. The Committee noted that there are vectors for growth which have been identified and we are in a position to progress, adapt and

capitalise on demand however we remain cognisant of the challenges facing us and others within the sector.

6. STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT UPDATE

The Director of Student Experience gave the Committee a brief overview of the partnership agreement. The Committee was advised that the Student Representative Committee has, due to Covid-19, moved to virtual meetings which have been very successful and well attended given the current circumstances. Work is continuing to foster the needs of students with HISA being available online and the bi-monthly newsletters continuing.

The Committee praised the phenomenal amount of nominations which were received as part of the HISA awards with nominations being received throughout all teams and noted the high regards that our students have for staff.

The HISA President advised the Committee on how student life has changed due to the current circumstances and students are aware that there will be no graduation ceremony this year. Support is continuing to be offered to all students in relation to mental health.

The Committee expressed their delight that Vivienne Mackie would be staying as HISA Vice President for Education and look forward to meeting the new HISA President Ruth McFayden and the HISA Vice President for Activities and Welfare Julie Riviere.

7. HISA END OF YEAR UPDATE

The HISA President advised the committee that some of this update overlaps with the previous agenda item. The Committee was advised that HISA had experienced a good year with a high level of support for all events. Due to Covid-19 adaptations have been made and it was reiterated that the Student Representative Committee had moved online. Events such as quizzes were continuing but again these are being held online.

HISA have two new members of staff and there were 232 class representatives for the year. Engagement is up this year with meetings being well attended. Voting

within the HISA elections increased by 30%. The Committee gave thanks to the outgoing HISA President George Gunn and HISA Vice President (Activities and Welfare) Deborah Halliday for all their excellent work over the past year.

The Committee discussed and highlighted the following campaigns and events which had been held over the year:

- Fresher's week – particularly the here to help signs.
- Stop Brexit Campaign
- Climate Emergency
- Mental Health – it was reiterated the work that is continuing to be done to support students especially during this pandemic.
- Covid-19 – events such as Badaguish had to be cancelled but students were enthusiastic about the event and it had been fully booked.
- HISA Conference
- Clubs – these have increased from 16 to 23 and applications are continuing to be received. The first in a set of regular club and society council meetings have been held and these will be used to ensure good governance for all clubs.
- Volunteer Officers – there were 18 candidates for 6 positions.
- Halls of Residence – The Halls Officer has been continuing to engage students and events have been well received by students.
- Work is continuing with regards Peer Support and links are continuing to be built with Victim Support Scotland.

The HISA president highlighted the difficulties the HISA representatives faced when papers for Committees were received late. Communications between HISA and the Chair of the Board of Management are continuing with regards HISA representation on other Committees.

8. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT AND PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO SFC EQUALITIES REPORTING

The Director of Student Experience took the Committee through her paper advising that this was an annual update on the Corporate Parenting for the Academic Year 2018-19. The Committee was advised that our Corporate

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Parenting Plan was first published in 2016 and we were reviewing this retrospectively for the year 2018-19. There have been a lot of changes in the policy area with regards Corporate Parenting and we have now been asked to report on this as part of the Regional Outcome Agreements. This will involve reviewing what recommendations we need to act on and planning ahead for 2020-23. This remains a national issue and there is a drive to close the attainment gap. This has resulted in a lot of common policy throughout the partnership.

The Committee was advised that the regional approach to both the Access and Inclusion Strategy and the Gender Action Plan had been put on hold due to pressures surrounding Covid-19.

The Committee was advised that our outcomes for F/T FE were progressing and we are sitting at 58% which is the same as the sector average however there remains much work to be done. We are continuing to see success with PDA FE.

The Committee enquired as to how we are helping our most vulnerable students especially with regards to the impact of Covid-19 and it was noted the most problematic area was student's ability to access IT equipment. Staff are continuing to work with the most vulnerable students to ensure they remain supported and we are maintaining our links with partnership schools and the Highland Council.

9. STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEYS

The Committee noted the good response rate to the second semester survey and were advised that the outcome of the survey would be available for discussion in due course.

10. RESEARCH REPORT

The Director of Research and Innovation highlighted to the Committee the impact Covid-19 is having on research and advised that her report should be read in conjunction with the UHI paper which was also circulated to the Committee.

The Committee discussed a number of issues including:

- Delays to final submission dates and the concerns around this.
- The absence of Core funding throughout the sector.

- Support being provided to research post-graduates.
- Research students not being furloughed and the hope for field work and labs to be opened soon within Phase 2 of Lockdown. Staff were able to be furloughed.
- That a Rivers and Lochs Institute Director was not recruited. The Director of Research and Innovation advised that she will continue to oversee this role for the future and the Committee discussed the impact this would have on her capacity and highlighted their concerns over this.

11. RISK REGISTER ANNUAL REVIEW

The Depute Principal (Planning and Student Experience) advised that he had detailed the risks held within the risk register that fell within the remit of this Committee. These include:

- Covid-19
- Our Financial Position
- The Financial Position of UHI
- Changes across the Sector

The Committee noted that the SMT were reviewing all risks and mitigating any additional risk and that the entire risk register would be updated and taken to the Board of Management for final approval.

12. MODERN APPRENTICESHIP IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Committee was advised that SDS had issued UHI with a requirement to look at, review and address ongoing non-compliances with the SDS contract. This is an opportunity for us to ensure our compliance and each Head of School has been provided with a framework and action plan and monthly monitoring will be carried out by the Academic and Equality Committee.

13. STUDENT ENROLMENT 2019/20 AND RECRUITMENT 2020/21

The Committee noted the contents of the Student Enrolment 2019/20 and Recruitment 2020/21 report and highlighted that trends are continuing to be analysed and recognised.

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14. LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE SELF EVALUATION AND COMMITTEE CHAIR EVALUATION EXERCISES

Due to time constraints the Committee **AGREED** that the Committee and Chair Evaluations would be completed out with this meeting. Anonymised results from these evaluations will be brought back to the September meeting.

15. AOCB

None noted and the Chair wished everyone well in the challenging times ahead.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 4.30 P.M.

Signed by the Chair: _____

Date: _____

Outstanding Actions from Learning and Teaching Committee

9 June 2020				
Committee and Chair Evaluation	To be completed by all Board Members.	Board Secretary		Anonymised results to be discussed at September Meeting.

Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Covid-19 Quality and Assessment ToR for Internal Audit
Author: [Name and Job title]	Roddy Henry, Depute Principal – Planning and Student Experience
Meeting:	<i>Learning, Teaching and Research Committee</i>
Meeting Date:	22 September 2020
Date Paper prepared:	14 September 2020
Brief Summary of the paper:	<p>The Audit Committee, at its June 2020 meeting, requested the LT&R Committee to consider the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the proposed internal audit on quality and assessment arrangements necessitated by the Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>This paper provides the committee with thoughts on the ToR and recommendations on amendments to the original ToR, compiled from discussions between the two Depute Principals, the Directors of Curriculum and Student Experience and the Quality Manager.</p>
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Recommendation
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change 	This paper links to the strategic plan, particularly in relation to the student experience and the curriculum.
Resource implications:	Yes: management time to engage with the audit.
Risk implications:	No
Equality and Diversity implications:	No
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	n/a

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Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-confidential		
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]	Yes		
*If a paper should not be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.			
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

Executive summary

The Audit Committee, at its June 2020 meeting, requested the LT&R Committee to consider the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the proposed internal audit on quality and assessment arrangements necessitated by the Covid-19 restrictions.

This paper considers the background to the amendments to the assessment arrangements and the context within which the college operates. It proposes some changes to the ToR in light of these factors while maintaining a focus on the college's compliance with awarding body requirements.

Main body of information

Background

The background for and main purpose of the audit are valid. Although the exact circumstances are not likely to be replicated, and the college's actions are already subject to awarding body scrutiny, the audit can be helpful in reviewing the process and providing assurance that the college implemented the requirements of awarding bodies appropriately.

The 'lockdown' in response to Covid-19 necessitated significant and rapid amendments to planned assessment arrangements, across all qualifications and levels of study. The purpose of the audit is to provide assurance regarding the arrangements and controls in place throughout the period affected by Covid-19 restrictions. While this may be seen as an exceptional circumstance, we should accept that amendments may need to be deployed again in 2020-21 (at least) as the restrictions are still in place now and may well be in place throughout the academic year.

The college has the authority to deliver and assess qualifications on behalf of awarding bodies, mainly the SQA and the UHI: it does not however award qualifications in its own right. The college is of course an integral part of the UHI, however, decisions on amendments to the assessment of qualifications awarded by UHI come through the Faculty Boards and the office of the Academic Registrar. The college is an 'SQA Centre' with devolved authority for the delivery of SQA qualifications at FE level. The college is also a centre for other awarding bodies, such as EAL and IMI (engineering and motor vehicle awards) and delivers vocational qualifications linked, via SQA, to industry body occupational standards. The UHI is the SQA Centre for SQA qualifications at HE level (such as HNC and HND).

While UHI was able to act quickly to make amendments to its own degree qualifications, discussions with SQA took place at a national level and the resulting amendments were implemented nationally by every SQA centre. The instruction and guidance from SQA evolved over the period of lockdown, and elements of it changed during the period. The situation with the national SQA exam diet was the most high-profile example, with the Scottish Government eventually stepping in to amend the process subsequent to the release of grades.

Discussion on the ToR

Bearing the above in mind, the main focus of the audit should be on the actions taken by the college in relation to the requirements of awarding bodies: the engagement with the discussions and guidance, and how the amended arrangements were implemented and complied with. Much within the ToR addresses this focus, however it also contains elements over which the college has little or no control.

The original audit ToR intends to evaluate whether the procedures and arrangements gave particular advantage or disadvantage to students and whether they were fair to all students. It also sets out to establish if the college ensured that the value of the qualifications it awards was not diminished. While these aims are understandable, they are problematic in the context of internal audit for several reasons.

Firstly, and as outlined above, the college does not award qualifications but was bound to implement the arrangements as instructed by the awarding bodies: it had limited opportunity to make choices within the prescribed arrangements. The main concern, and responsibility, was to comply with awarding body requirements, particularly that of the SQA, to ensure that candidates would be certificated and/or progress wherever possible.

Secondly, the 'fairness' of the arrangements prescribed by the awarding bodies is debatable and open to subjective judgement. The college followed closely and rigorously the instruction from SQA regarding how to submit grades for National 5 and Higher results, for example. However, the Scottish Government later deemed the process unfair to candidates and changed it, and there is still significant unhappiness from some groups and individuals as to the fairness of the outcomes. The equity of the arrangements was largely out-with the college's control.

Finally, a judgment on whether the value of the qualifications delivered by the college (not awarded by the college) is diminished is similarly subjective. It is not clear how this could be verified through an audit process, other than canvassing opinion from a cross-section of stakeholders, which would not be an appropriate audit activity. It is also not clear what the college could do to address any concerns, other than ensure compliance with the awarding body requirements.

Essentially, the ToR contains elements that confuse the college's role with that of an awarding body and seeks to assess some risks that are largely within the control of the awarding bodies and not the college.

Recommendations

The attached ToR contains tracked changes that reflect the discussion above and make the main focus of the audit the college's compliance with the amended assessment arrangements.

The Committee is asked to consider the changes in light of the above discussion and background.

Roddy Henry
Depute Principal – Planning and Student Experience



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INTERNAL AUDIT TERMS OF REFERENCE

COVID-19 - QUALITY & ASSESSMENT

2020-21

INVERNESS COLLEGE, COVID-19 - QUALITY & ASSESSMENT

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BACKGROUND

As part of the 2020-21 Internal Audit Plan, it was agreed that Internal Audit would perform a review of the arrangements in place for assessing and grading students as a result of Covid-19.

PURPOSE OF REVIEW

The purpose of this review is to provide management and the Audit Committee with assurance over the arrangements and controls in place to assess and grade students throughout the period affected by Covid-19. We will consider whether the process ~~is fair for students and students are not unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged, and~~ is compliant with the requirements of awarding bodies.

KEY RISKS

Based upon the risk assessment undertaken during the development of the internal audit operational plan, through discussions with management, and our collective audit knowledge and understanding the key risks associated with the area under review are:

- Assessment practices have not been evolved to address the challenges posed by the Covid-19 restrictions;
- No emergency procedures have been introduced to ensure ~~students are not given any particular advantage or disadvantage due to the circumstances relating to their academic performance, or the process adopted may not be fair for students~~assessment and grading can be carried out under the restricted circumstances;
- The arrangements adopted are not compliant with the requirements of awarding bodies;
- The College is not considering best practice and could be ~~open to challenge on~~found wanting in terms of the approach it is taking to academic performance assessment and grading;
- Students are not being kept informed or do not have access to information relating to their academic performance under the changed circumstances; ~~and~~
~~The value of qualifications awarded by the College during the restrictions period is diminished.~~

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The scope of the review is to assess whether:

- ~~Appropriate assessment arrangements have been introduced in response to Covid-19 restrictions and awarding body requirements;~~
- The College has considered assessment options and has adopted the most suitable approach for students across the College;
- ~~Procedures and processes have been introduced that ensure students are not given any advantage or disadvantage due to the circumstances relating to their academic performance, and the process adopted is fair for students;~~
- The arrangements adopted are compliant with all awarding body requirements;

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INVERNESS COLLEGE, COVID-19 - QUALITY & ASSESSMENT

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- The College has accessed, considered and adopted best practice in its approach to academic performance assessment and grading;
- There is clear justification ~~available to demonstrate why the College has adopted its preferred approach, for the approaches taken by the College,~~ and this is made available to all students ~~as appropriate, and has been approved by the Board of Management;~~
- All students are provided with regular and clear updates as to the amended ways of working and the procedures that the College will be adopting, and can access information relating to their academic performance, ~~and~~
- ~~The arrangements are reported to and monitored by the Board of Management.~~
- ~~Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure the qualifications awarded by the College during the restrictions period are not diminished.~~

Internal Audit will bring to the attention of management any points relating to other areas that come to their attention during the course of the audit. We assume for the purposes of estimating the number of days of audit work that there is one control environment, and that we will be providing assurance over controls in this environment. If this is not the case, our estimate of audit days may not be accurate.

APPROACH

Our approach will be to conduct interviews to establish the controls in operation for each of our areas of audit work. We will then seek documentary evidence that these controls are designed as described. We will evaluate these controls to identify whether they adequately address the risks.

We will seek to gain evidence of the satisfactory operation of the controls to verify the effectiveness of the control through use of a range of tools and techniques.

During the course of the review we will keep management informed of any issues which arise as a result of our testing.

A de-brief meeting will be undertaken before completing the review on-site to discuss findings and initial recommendations.

MANAGEMENT COMMENTS

No management comments have been raised regarding the areas under review.

LOCATIONS

Fieldwork will be performed at Inverness College, Main Campus.

EXCLUSIONS

The scope of the review is limited to the areas documented under the scope and approach. All other areas are considered outside of the scope of this review.

INVERNESS COLLEGE, COVID-19 - QUALITY & ASSESSMENT

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REQUIREMENTS

Outlined below is an initial information request relating to this audit. Timely receipt of this information is critical to ensure that the objectives of the audit are met and that the work is completed on time. We have provided an overview of what we require from you and when we require each piece of information. We have tried to be specific wherever possible however, please do contact us as soon as possible if you're unsure about any of the information required.

Please note that this is an initial request and is not exhaustive - further information requiring your attention (including meetings) will be required at the time of our fieldwork.

REQUIREMENT	DETAILS	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	REQUIRED BY
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Guidance and correspondence issued to students explaining the changed arrangements- Minutes of meetings held to discuss alternative options- College policy on the approach being adopted.	Chris O'Neil	08/02/2021 (2 weeks prior to fieldwork)

Access to information/staff

Any unreasonable delay in gaining access to required information or key members of staff will place audit timings at risk and may result in additional fees to you. Any such charges would be notified to you and agreed at the time the issue is identified.

Timing changes and cancellation:

In accepting this Terms of Reference document you are agreeing to the timing of this audit (specified on p.5). We will make every effort to accommodate timing changes or cancellation of the audit however any changes within 3 weeks of the start of the fieldwork may result in fees being charged in respect of the audit. Changes with more than 3 weeks' notice will be accommodated at no charge.

KEY CONTACTS

BDO LLP

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Chloe Ridley	Internal Audit Assistant Manager	T: 0131 347 0358 E: chloe.ridley@bdo.co.uk

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Chris O'Neil	Principal	E: Chris.ONeil.ic@uhi.ac.uk
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PROPOSED TIMELINE

AUDIT STAGE	DATE
Commence fieldwork	22/02/2021
Number of audit days planned	5
Proposed date for closing meeting	26/02/2021
Planned date for issue of the draft report	12/03/2021
Planned date for receipt of management responses	26/03/2021
Planned date for issue of proposed final report	29/03/2021
Planned Audit Committee date for presentation of report	TBC

SIGN OFF

ON BEHALF OF BDO LLP:		ON BEHALF OF INVERNESS COLLEGE:	
Signature:	Claire Robertson	Signature:	
Title:	Director	Title:	
Date:		Date:	





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Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Impact of and Response to Covid-19
Author: [Name and Job title]	Ken Russell, Depute Principal – Academic Development
Meeting:	<i>Learning, Teaching and Research Committee</i>
Meeting Date:	15 th September 2020
Date Paper prepared:	22 nd September 2020
Brief Summary of the paper:	This paper provides a summary of the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on learning teaching and research activities, and the responses made. Early experiences of delivery in academic year 2020-21 are considered.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student activity targets • student experience • student outcomes
Resource implications:	Yes If yes, please specify: The restrictions place an additional strain on resources and impact on the college's ability to maintain income from student activity. These aspects are considered in the paper.
Risk implications:	Yes If yes, please specify: Operational: significant change and disruption to normal business processes. Organisational: resilience is tested significantly. Financial: additional strain on resources and funding; additional uncertainty in funding environment going forward.
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes If yes, please specify: Vulnerable and the most disadvantaged students are potentially at greatest risk from the disruption.
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	Consultation with students, key partners and stakeholders has been and will be a feature of actions and contingency planning.

ITEM 04

Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non confidential		
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]	Yes		
*If a paper should not be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.			
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

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<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

Impact of and Response to Covid-19**Executive summary**

This paper has been produced to provide an update to the June LT&R paper. The paper is divided into two main sections: Planning for Academic Year 20-21, and Initial Experiences and a conclusion. The planning process has been largely successful in practice and this has been driven by the robust issue identification, risk assessment and mitigation together with related protocols and guidance. Communications have been key to the enactment of the plans. The team continue to be vigilant and responsive to changes in our external environment and to learning from our lived experience. Given the dynamics of this environment, there will be a verbal update to this report at the Committee meeting.

1. Planning for Academic Year 2020-21**1.1 Key principles**

We have followed Scottish Government guidance and their 4-phase route map throughout our transition out of lockdown. We are currently in Phase 3 of the route map. We have also observed our statutory and mandatory requirements throughout.

The Covid-19 Transition Management Group (chaired by the DPAD with the Director of Research and Innovation as the Deputy Chair) has had oversight of the process to support safe re-entry into the buildings and has worked collaboratively with the curriculum areas and support functions to support students and indeed staff working in the building or remotely.

One of the key considerations in our contingency planning was to focus on the delivery of practical skills and assessment to students who had last been in the building on or before 20th March when we entered lockdown. We were assisted in this process through various teams (led by the Director of Curriculum and the DP Planning and Student Experience), at Inverness College and across the partnership, being involved in planning for delivery at both FE and HE. An important facet of the period from March onwards in academic year 2019-20 was the use of synchronous and asynchronous online delivery for students who would normally have studied on campus. Through being able to continue this form of delivery for the majority of HE students (only exception is for Forestry where practical skills are embedded in the programme) in semester 1 we were able to relieve pressure on the building capacity. Uppermost in the planning process was to develop a safe environment for staff and students utilising social/physical distance of 2 metres as a mainstay in the mitigation against the transfer of the virus. Our contingency planning had identified the capacity of our teaching rooms and specialist workshops at both 2m and 1m physical separation. This effectively put a cap on the numbers of students that could be in the building at any one point in time. Cleaning regimes have been adapted to maintain high standards of hygiene and especially for high-contact surfaces and also to clean rooms between classes. We took an early decision that staff, and students should wear face coverings while transiting through the building (we have since strongly recommended that face coverings are worn in class). We have also provided hand sanitiser at key locations throughout the buildings.

1.2 Key Curriculum areas scheduled for on campus delivery

The following areas were identified as the first groups of students to be permitted to come back to campus:

- a) Hair and Beauty including Barbering on a Wednesday evening
- b) Construction and the Built Environment (Bricklaying, Plumbing, Painting and Decorating, and Carpentry and Joinery)
- c) Engineering Technology (Motor Vehicle, Fabrication & Welding, Manufacturing, Electrical and Mechanical engineering)
- d) Supported Education (community based students only)
- e) Professional Cookery
- f) Forestry – at Scottish School of Forestry (Balloch) and including a contingent of carpentry and joinery students in the tractor shed.

1.3 Supporting students and staff to work safely on campus

The Covid-19 Transition Management Team continues to meet every Friday morning as it has done throughout the period from the beginning of lockdown. This broadly based team (remit and composition previously reported) provides the coordination and infrastructure support to enable safe working. The team includes Health and Safety Representatives from the three recognised Trade Unions as well as three members from HISA. We have forged an excellent collaborative working relationship. The IC Data Information Development Manager has provided GDPR advice throughout the process and was instrumental in testing and approving the use of the QR code system for tracking attendance in the building.

In addition, a subset of the team meets once a week to review requests for access to the building for the period ahead. Prior to commencing controlled reopening of the buildings for staff to work in the buildings we were able to put in place mechanisms to support track and trace including the use of the QR code system. These approaches continue to be refined in the light of experience.

We have been supported by HR in protecting staff who have declared health conditions or who live in a household with someone who has. This cadre of staff have been asked to complete the SG individual covid-19 risk assessment (either for themselves or the other person(s) in their household who need to be protected. The SG guidance is that anyone who returns a rating of “very high” should not return to work in the buildings. We have taken the additional precaution of requiring those who have a “high” rating to undertake an OH assessment so that we can better understand how to support them.

The team also continues to facilitate bookable access for staff who are not normally working in the building. This facility is currently available on Thursdays. In addition, there are further booking systems in place for students: a) to clear lockers etc, and b) to access space in the Learning Resource Centre in the case of demonstrable digital poverty. Furthermore, we have a process where staff can make ad hoc requests to work in the building for short periods. An instance of this recently has been to support the online FES audit.

The DP Planning and Student Experience and the Director of Student Experience have also been working with our ICT Services Manager and colleagues in EO to again provide loan laptops to students requiring this.

We continue to support staff working remotely e.g. with delivery of office furniture and equipment especially if they need to continue “shielding”.

2. Reflections on early experiences of delivery in AY2021

2.1 Initial impressions

The first day of any new arrangements is always a test of the design. The main thing that happened was we had some queuing to access the main building. This was partly caused by students anticipating that they would have to sign in using the QR code. This was quickly resolved, and we have not had any real issues with people queuing outside. Students only have to use the QR code at Beechwood when using the Corrie for food and beverages and/or if they have been authorised to access the LRC. We do require students to use the QR code at Forestry because of the different configuration of that site. We have a secure backup system in place should the system fail or the person entering is not a member of IC college staff or an IC student.

We have a duty rota system in place where members of the College Management Team volunteer to provide on the ground cover. We also have a back-up system of SMT members on call to advise.

Members of the public are not allowed access. Any contractors visiting the site must book in advance. We have only had one incidence of a contractor arriving to perform maintenance without prior warning however this was handled appropriately by relevant staff. Staff have been vigilant and have dealt with any anomalies appropriately. We have prepared a script for staff to use should they encounter, say, a student (who is not exempt) to wear a face covering through a non-challenging dialogue that is encouraging them to do the right thing. In all cases where this has occurred, so far, the student has recognised the rationale and complied. Alternative arrangements have been put in place for Scot Graduate Entry Medical students who would have historically used our buildings as a study space prior to lockdown and these have now been accommodated in the Centre for Health Sciences.

We only have permitted one evening class to operate so far i.e. Barbering on a Wednesday evening. So far, the Health and Safety Manager and the Principal have provided the evening Duty Manager support.

2.2 Current short to medium term priorities for the Covid-19 Transition Management Team

Whilst wishing to keep the numbers in the building to a risk assessed level, we recognise that the October break is a key milestone in the evolution of our

operations in Phase 3 of the SG Route Map. There is ongoing dialogue with Highland Council about servicing needs of school pupils to access the college and this is being considered in the light of current SG guidance and restrictions. Some colleges have an estate that permits them to teach school pupils in a separate building and we do not have this luxury. The Board will be kept informed of developments.

Student activity and recruitment is reported elsewhere in this set of LT&R papers. Now that things have “settled down” somewhat (at the time of writing there is still another week for HE students to enrol) we have more of an opportunity to take stock and examine actual student numbers. We wish to refine our capacity utilisation, and this will be a major topic for discussion at the Heads and Deputes meeting on Friday 18th September. A verbal update will be provided at the LT&R Committee.

Another aspect that we are exploring is being able to bring students, currently taught remotely, in for, say, half or full day sessions on campus in order to further strengthen the relationship with classes and ultimately improve the student experience and minimise withdrawals.

2.3 Ongoing vigilance

The original contingency planning identified risks, mitigations and led to the production of the return to work in the building protocol as well as a series of guides for managers, staff, and students. We continue to keep these up to date in line with SG guidance and SMT requirements (which may sometimes go beyond what is expected of us).

With the rise in the number of cases and increase in the R-number, our Communications team (integral members of the Covid-19 Transition Management Team) have assisted in producing a communications campaign to be executed in the event of an outbreak. We are already in dialogue with the Health Protection Team at NHS Highland.

We have set up a specific email address for staff and students to notify us of and Covid-19 tests and the outcome. This is monitored by the Health and Safety Manager and the DPAD.

The control of numbers in the building is closely monitored and linked to our fire safety evacuation plans. At the current level of building occupancy, we have drawn up interim guidance and this will be kept under review especially if numbers increase. We are also arranging for further fire warden, first aid and “evacuchair” training for staff.

Conclusions

We used our best endeavours to ensure that staff and students are safe and that we give students the best learning experience we can whilst do so. At the most recent Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee we were informed that our arrangements were at the forefront of those in the UHI partnership. This is a credit to all involved though we are not

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complacent and will continue to refine our approach in the light of changes in our external environment and leaning from our experiences.

Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Student Experience and Student Partnership Update
Author: [Name and Job title]	Lindsay Snodgrass, Director of Student Experience Ruth McFadyen, Student President IC UHI
Meeting:	Learning & Teaching Committee
Meeting Date:	22 nd Sept '20
Date Paper prepared:	10 th Sept '20
Brief Summary of the paper:	To provide an update of developments around student experience and aspects of partnership working
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change 	<i>Strategic Plan - Opportunity and growth in student life</i> <i>To further embed the student voice to ensure its contribution to all aspects of college life; to create a lively community of staff and students; and develop further student participation in clubs, societies and other activities, and engagement with the wider community</i>
Resource implications:	No If yes, please specify:
Risk implications:	No If yes, please specify: Operational: Organisational:
Equality and Diversity implications:	No If yes, please specify:
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	

ITEM 05

Status – [Non confidential]			
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes]			
*If a paper should not be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.			
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Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
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Student Partnership

Executive summary

To update the committee on the early progress made around the Partnership Agreement for session 2020-21 and a variety of other aspects of student engagement including how we have collectively supported students in the pre-start period of this academic year.

Background information

The lead up to and start of this academic year has been one like no other. We have grappled with the challenges of enrolling and inducting all students remotely alongside addressing issues of digital poverty and continuing to provide high quality support across a variety of services to meet the needs of our students. A huge amount of work has gone into providing students with a series of timely and critical communications in the pre-start period and to making the start of the new academic year as smooth as possible during this period of uncertainty.

At the same time, we have been reviewing our Partnership Agreement, particularly considering the Covid situation and all of the challenges which that brings. We have considered what aspects of the student experience are the most appropriate and worthy of our focus in a year which will prove to be like no other, we hope. In discussion with HISA and the Quality team, and following thorough analysis of student feedback from various sources, we have collectively chosen the following enhancement themes for AY 2020-21:

- Student Voice in Partnership
- Student Life
- Tools for Learning



As with last academic year, we will compose an action plan for each theme which will provide specific workstreams which the three HISA Officers and the Student Engagement Officer will collectively oversee. Across the three themes, some early and immediate priorities have been identified and worked on in preparation for the start of this unusual academic year.

Student Life*Students on campus*

We have devised a [return to campus guide](#) for those students who are returning to campus to first and foremost complete AY 19-20. This is a live document to keep abreast of government guidelines. Our Vice President Education has replicated the successful '*Here to Help*', which was run last AY. This has not only provided a physical welcome at the front door but has also been critical in ensuring our students comply with the requirements around face coverings. Whilst not encouraging students to come on to campus, we are cognisant of a volume who need to come in for a variety of reasons over and above scheduled classes. We have therefore established an online booking system to control footfall and for track and trace purposes.

Halls of Residence

We have been proactive in working with UHI and City Heart to ensure we have confidence in the arrangements for our students moving in to halls and for compliance with government guidelines. HISA have been proactive in working with City Heart to help welcome students moving into halls during the 'move in' weekend. This has been very successful with our new students, and their parents, being able to meet with our Student President. We have also successfully lobbied City Heart to provide a warden on site this academic year to help manage any anti-social behaviour. With the support of Executive Office our messaging and procedures around Covid are co-ordinated.

Freshers Fair

This time of year would normally see our campus packed for Freshers Fair. Although not possible this year, HISA have worked hard to develop a virtual Freshers Fair including an online escape room, a Netflix watch party, a tour of Inverness, meet the team sessions, coffee with the Principal, and online information and offers from local businesses. We hope to be able to run a more traditional style Freshers event in February.

Tools for Learning*The remote learning environment*

We are acutely aware of the different experience students will have this year as remote learners. We have devised a student *Netiquette* to ensure that everyone understands the responsibilities and expectations of being an online learner. We have also supplemented this with information to staff about the need to be especially mindful of safeguarding and data protection considerations. Our student induction experience has been enhanced by a new information site on Brightspace which we anticipate all students will be signposted to by their course teams.

Digital Poverty and Access to IT

We are acutely aware of some students not having the required IT equipment to fully engage in their learning. The UHI partnership have received additional funding from the Scottish

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Government to support this. IC UHI have been proactive in purchasing a new stock of laptops which will be loaned out to those from low income households who meet the eligibility criteria. We unfortunately however anticipate that we will not have enough to meet demand and for that reason we have opened our Learning Resource Centre and have a booking system in place for use of the PCs.

Student Voice in Partnership

Engaging with our students in the remote learning context provides us with a real challenge, one which we experienced earlier in the year. HISA are considering how we raise awareness of the student's association and are working on a short video which Personal Development Advisers / Academic Tutors can show to classes by means of introducing the team and the role of HISA. HISA will also be booked in to classes to provide a virtual hello and information about electing class representatives.

Further consideration is being given to the format of the monthly student representative committee (SRC) and how best we recruit class representatives to their roles. We are mindful that the number of class representatives is not in itself a good measure of student engagement, but we would like to see every class with a representative before the October break. We will also continue to produce the successful student newsletter, *The Link*, which was established last academic year. This will provide a further opportunity to reiterate any critical information and key messages alongside providing feedback on what collective improvements we are continually making.

HISA are also considering a bi-monthly surgery on campus for students to make an appointment to meet with the Student President either in person or virtually to provide a further outlet for students to provide feedback.

Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Student Outcomes and Satisfaction Rates for 2019-20
Author: [Name and Job title]	Roddy Henry, Depute Principal – Planning and Student Experience
Meeting:	<i>Learning, Teaching and Research Committee</i>
Meeting Date:	22 September 2020
Date Paper prepared:	14 September 2020
Brief Summary of the paper:	This report provides the committee with the status and context around student outcomes and a summary of student satisfaction rates for the academic year 2019-20. At the time of writing, most of the student outcomes have still to be finalised and a verbal update will be provided at the meeting on 22 September.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with: a) compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change	This paper links to the strategic plan, particularly in relation to the student experience and the curriculum.
Resource implications:	Yes
Risk implications:	<i>Yes – quality of the student experience</i>
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes – equity of the student experience
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	n/a

ITEM 06

Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-confidential		
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]	Yes		
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Student Outcomes and Satisfaction Rates for 2019-20**Executive summary**

The report provides a summary of student satisfaction rates for 2018-19 and the status of student outcomes, the processing of which have been affected by the Covid-19 restrictions.

Student outcomes are still in the process of being finalised due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Early indications are that FE outcomes will have a higher percentage of 'partial success' this year due to the processes put in place to deal with the 'lockdown'. SFC intend to publish the college outcomes as usual this year, however there will be a clear statement about the context and the problems of comparing them to previous years. Education Scotland have already declared that colleges will not have to publish Evaluative Reports for 2019-20. HE outcomes, particularly for HN awards, will also have been impacted, but to a lesser extent.

Overall pass rates for Higher and National 5 awards rose by 23.3 and 19.2 points respectively, reflecting that grades were eventually based on lecturer estimates only.

Student satisfaction rates remain high, with the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) at 93% and the National Student Survey (NSS) at 83% satisfaction overall.

Main body of information**Provisional Student Outcomes**

An update on student outcomes will be provided at the meeting on 22 September.

Higher and National 5 Results

The circumstances around this year's national SQA exam diet are well known. Following intervention by the Scottish Government, teacher and lecturer estimates were used to award grades and therefore comparison with previous years' results is not valid.

The overall pass rate for students taking Higher exams at the college in 2019-20 was 88%, an increase of 23.2 points from the previous year. The National pass rates for Higher awards was 89.2%, an increase of 10.3 points. The college sector data has not yet been published.

Higher passes	Overall pass rates				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
ICUHI	58%	69%	74%	64.5%	88%
College sector	63%	67%	61%	56.3%	-

The overall pass rate for students taking National 5 exams at the college in 2019-20 was 88.2%, an increase of 19.2 points. The National pass rates for National 5 was 88.9%.

National 5 passes	Overall pass rate				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
ICUHI	74%	76%	76%	69.0%	88.2%
College sector	68%	70%	71%	67.6%	-

Student Satisfaction Rates

Four survey reports are appended to this paper:

- a) Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) Headline Report
- b) National Student Survey (NSS) Full Report
- c) Your Learning Experience Survey (YLES) Headline Report
- d) Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2020 Report

The SSES and YLES reports are compiled by the college's Quality Manager, the NSS and PTES reports are compiled by Executive Office.

The two main student satisfaction surveys are the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) and the National Student Survey (NSS). The SSES is a SFC requirement for the college sector. Although the college returns only its FE responses to the SFC, all students (FE and HE) other than those included in the NSS are included in the survey for internal monitoring purposes. The NSS is the national HE survey and includes only students who are completing the final year of their HE study.

Student satisfaction rates remain high overall across these two surveys. In terms of the SSES results, satisfaction rates remain high at 93% overall: comprising 95% for FE and 90% for HE. Overall satisfaction expressed in the NSS remained the same as last year at 83%, while the UHI satisfaction rate overall fell to 82%, 3 points below the Scottish level.

Survey/level	Overall student satisfaction rate				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
SSES: FE	89%	87%	95%	93%	95%
SSES: HE	87%	88%	90%	85%	90%
NSS	82%	75%	80%	83%	83%

The *Your Learning Experience Survey* (YLES) was introduced towards the end of 2019-20 to evaluate the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions. The survey ran for two weeks through April 2020. The response rate was just over 17% of the student body. The results show that overall satisfaction is lower than the SSES return at 75%, however, students reflected in their responses the impact that their own individual circumstances had on their learning and recognised that the college did what it could in the exceptional circumstances. Students with a declared disability expressed less satisfaction overall with arrangements than those who have not declared a disability. The findings also highlighted the challenges in areas where learning is largely practical. The findings have informed further work with teaching staff to enhance remote delivery skills.

The results of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2020 were released in August. An overall report for the university is attached. PTES took place entirely within the lockdown period this year. The UHI's overall satisfaction rate dropped from 89% to 85%,

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from an overall response rate of 14%. This is still ahead of the Scottish average (78%), and UHI remain 13th overall out of 57 participating institutions across the UK. The Inverness College satisfaction rate was 80%.

Roddy Henry

Depute Principal – Planning and Student Experience

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey – Headline Report

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Executive Summary

This year the coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on the promotion and response rate for the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES). The response rate to the SSES dropped from 47% in 2019 to 34% in 2020. There is a lower response rate from HE learners compared to FE learners, and a significantly lower response rate from part time students. Despite the drop in response rate, the satisfaction rate has increased in this academic year to 93%, 3 percentage points higher than last year.

Satisfaction across curriculum areas is good overall, with each area sitting above 89%. Satisfaction with the quality of service across support areas also remains high.

The analysis of the data provides the basis for recommendations which can be found at the end of the report. These are predominantly from a cross-organisation perspective; however where satisfaction levels across curriculum areas fall below that of the overall college rate, further evaluation will be required at team level to identify the reasons and potential areas for improvement. It will be important to reflect the outcomes from the 'Your Learning Experience' survey administered at the end of semester 2 (post lockdown) in the evaluation at School and team level.

Key Findings

- There has been a decrease in overall response rate from 47% to 34%
- Overall satisfaction has increased from 90% to 93%
- Satisfaction and response rates are higher for FE students than HE students
- Part time students are more satisfied than full time students
- Younger students are more satisfied than older students
- ICUHI sit above the benchmark for nine of the SFC mandatory questions (last published sector data 2018/19).

Introduction

The SSES is a crucial tool in gathering a college wide view of the student experience. With ten mandatory questions included as per Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) requirements, the publication of sector wide data enables the organisation to benchmark itself against the rest of the sector on publication of these results. This was the second year of the regional approach, giving a benchmarking opportunity across the academic partners in a shorter timeframe. In 2020, the survey was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the methodology used to gain staff and student engagement with the survey, and a cross-organisation summary of the outcomes from the responses provided. The responses to the survey are made

available to curriculum and support teams to feed into self-evaluation activities, such as the Course Committee Meetings, monthly team meetings.

Background

All colleges across Scotland are required to participate in the SFC Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey. This forms part of the Regional Outcome Agreement and as such is a Performance Indicator of the College, used by the SFC to measure success. In 2020, SFC set a benchmark figure of 50% response rate for colleges, across each mode and level. This was due to poor response rates from a number of colleges across the sector in 2019. UHI Academic Partners are only required to submit FE figures, whereas other colleges across Scotland submit both FE and HE (HN) figures. The outcomes are published as part of a sector-wide report, which ultimately provide ICUHI with benchmark data which is used, in part, to inform continuous improvement within the organisation. SFC have confirmed the sector results from SSES in 2020 will not be published due to the lack of data validity because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The mandatory SFC questions were embedded within a wider college survey. The Regional SSES survey was broken down into the following categories:

- SFC student satisfaction and engagement survey questions
- Student Community
- Learning & teaching
- Assessment and Feedback
- Academic Support
- Organisation
- Learning Resources
- Digital Skills

The regional core questions were mapped to the National Student Survey (NSS) questions to facilitate longitudinal analysis. Sufficient flexibility was built into the survey design to ensure partners could ask particular sets of questions relevant to their work activity. For ICUHI, this included:

- Quality of service provided by areas across the college, which provides valuable information to inform our work with the CSE standard
- A question about the effectiveness of the PDA role
- A question set about the HISA elections

Students were asked to provide information about their protected characteristics due to changes to data protection legislation. The number of students who chose not to disclose their protected characteristics has reduced in this year's survey.

An overall target of a regional response rate of 60% was agreed across the partnership as a stretch target.

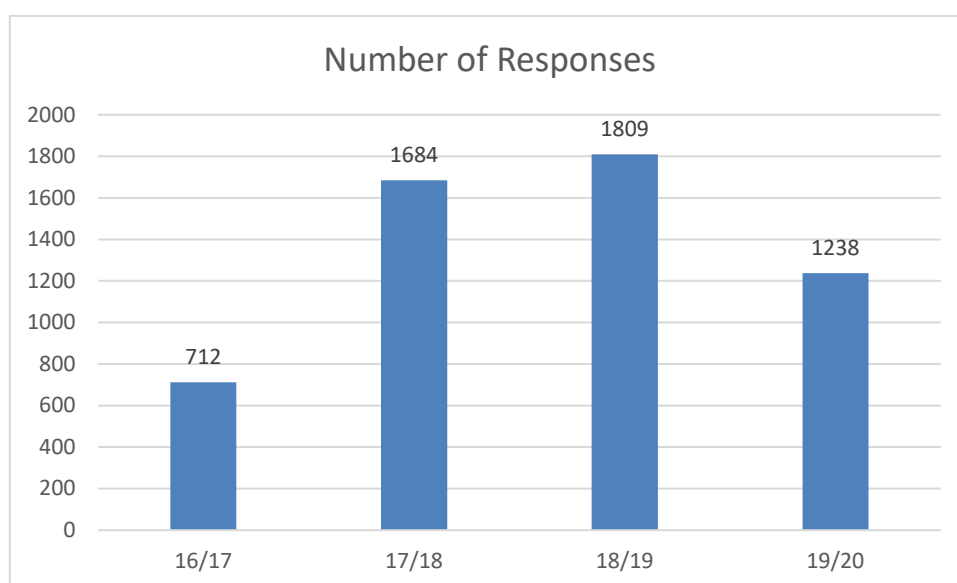
Methodology

A comprehensive strategy was developed to inform the administration of the survey. Building on successful approaches used during the previous ESES and SSES, and the inclusion of two new initiatives. For example:

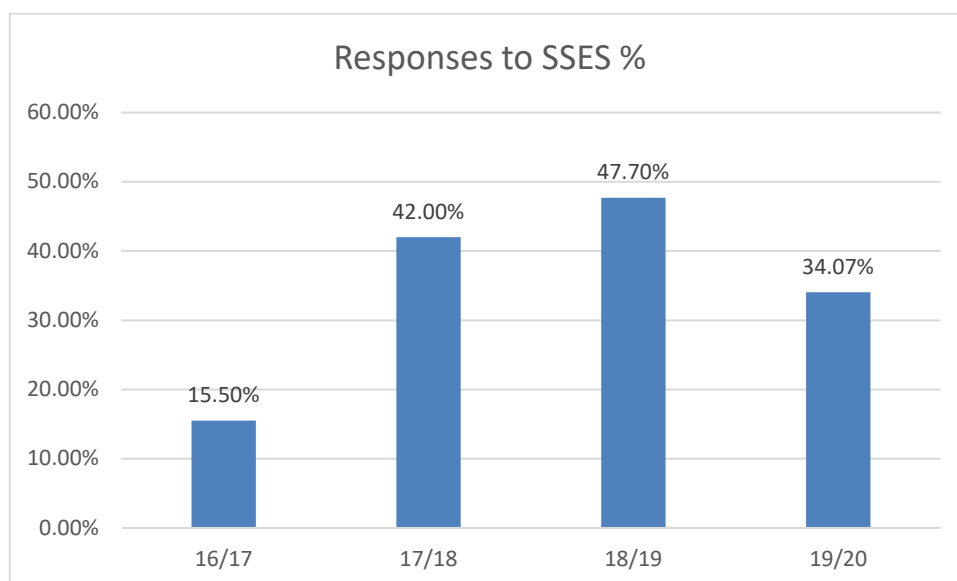
- Awareness raising prior to the survey launch through the use of social media and screens around the campus
- Awareness raising communications for PDAs and PATs
- A weekly prize draw to generate ongoing interest through social media campaign
- Close liaison with local HISA office
- Engaging Supported Education students to promote and raise awareness of the survey with students across the campus

The survey was scheduled to be open for three weeks from 9th March to end of March. As this coincided with the national lockdown the survey was left open for the full six weeks permissible by the SFC, although it was not pro-actively promoted from 23rd March.

Response Rate



A total of 3634 students were targeted through the survey via an individual link sent to student email addresses. This excluded those students identified as taking part in the NSS, and those on a course of less than four credits. Surveys were completed by 1238 students in total, equating to a 34.07% response rate. A decrease of 13.63% from last year.



Response Rate by Level and Mode

Level & Mode	% of Level & Mode Response Rate
FEFT	48.9%
FEPT	27.6%
HEFT	33.6%
HEPT	19.7%

The table above shows the percentage response rate for each of the levels and modes. It can be seen that the response rates for HE students are lower than FE students. This may be due to the timing of other surveys e.g. NSS, module surveys.

Responses by School

School	No. of Responses	School Response Rate %
Business, Computing & Hospitality	268	48.2%
Care, Health & Wellbeing	242	26.1%
Construction & the Built Environment	179	34.7%
Creative Arts	273	36.1%
Education & Applied Sciences	85	27.7%
Engineering Technology	133	32.6%
Forestry	59	36.0%

The response rate by School is varied, ranging from 26.1 – 48.2%, with most of the remainder around the overall college response rate within a 2 ppt difference.

Interpretation of the results

In analysing the data, percentages throughout the survey are calculated on the basis of the respondents to the questions.

Within the free text responses, it should be recognised that there are highly individualised responses. High level categorisation has been undertaken to determine discernible themes or patterns emerging. It should be noted the free text analysis adds colour to the quantitative data available. It provides assistance to teams by contextualising the quantitative data to identify what is working well or what requires enhancement for their particular service or curriculum area.

Trend data has been included where this is available. In comparing trend data, the following categories of percentage satisfaction have been used for the current survey responses:

	Overall satisfaction > 90%
	Overall satisfaction 80-89%
	Overall satisfaction < 80%

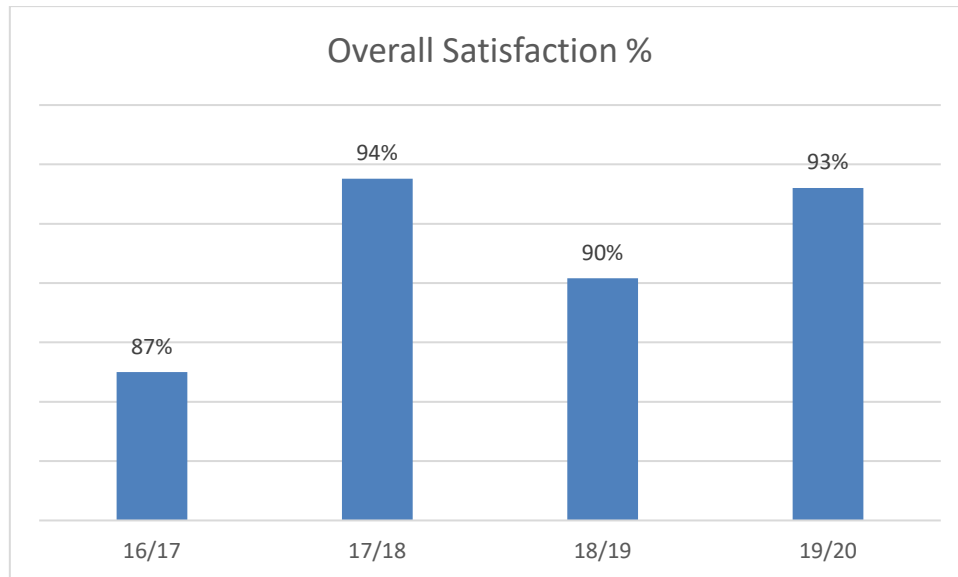
This represents a shift from the previous years survey:

	Overall satisfaction > 80%
	Overall satisfaction 70-79%
	Overall satisfaction < 70%

Where no trend data is available, or where it is more appropriate to do so, comparisons are drawn against the overall college score.

Findings

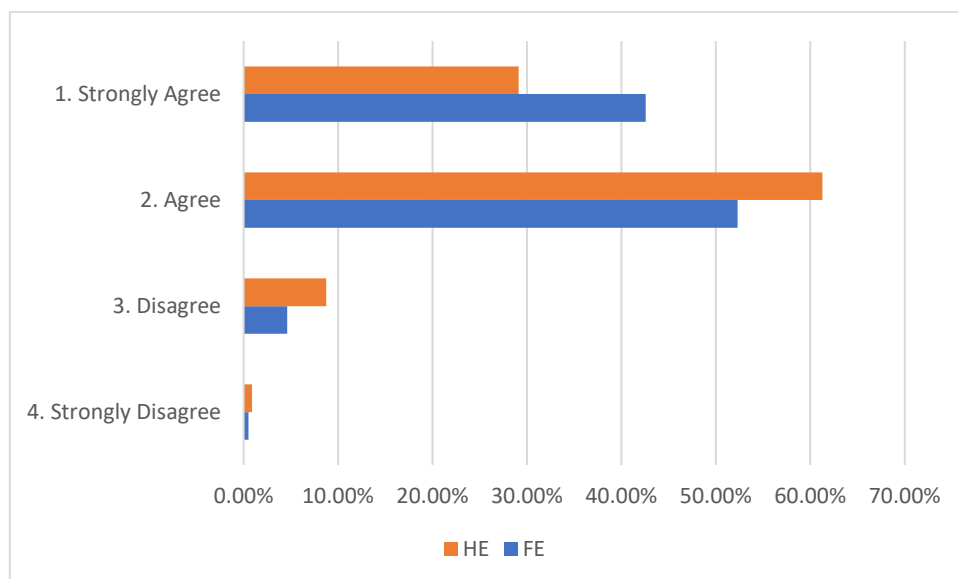
Overall Satisfaction with College Experience



Overall satisfaction of students has increased this year by 3%. Potential reasons for this include:

- Implementation of the PDA role for FTFE students
- Embedding of the Course Committee Meeting model
- Embedding of the student partnership agreement and resource

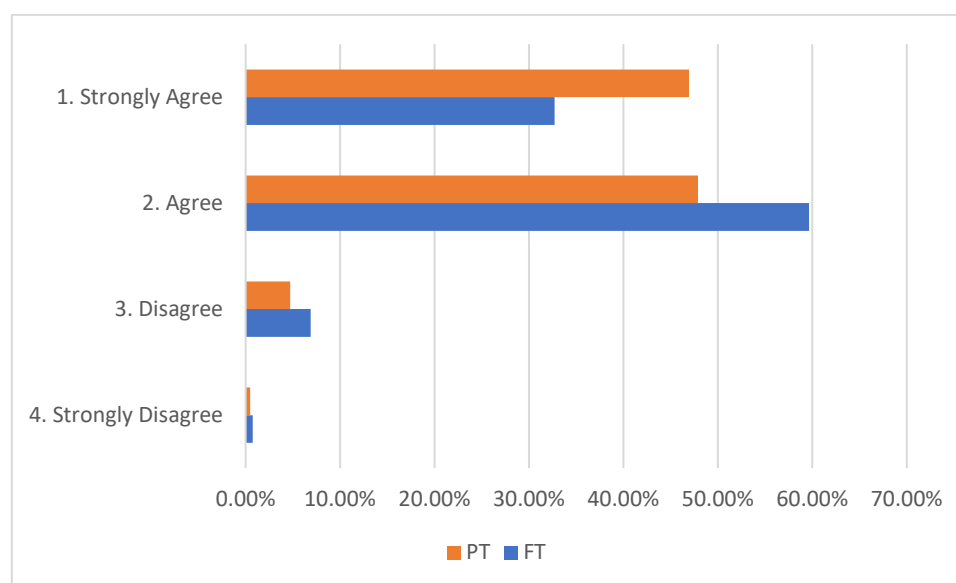
Satisfaction – Level of Study



Level of Study	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
FE	332	408	36	4	740	94.87%
HE	133	280	40	4	413	90.37%

The overall satisfaction rate is higher in FE students (94.87%) than HE students (90.37%). Compared to the previous survey this represents a 2ppt and 4ppt increase respectively.

Satisfaction – Mode of Attendance



MOA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
FT	266	485	56	6	813	92.37%
PT	199	203	20	2	424	94.81%

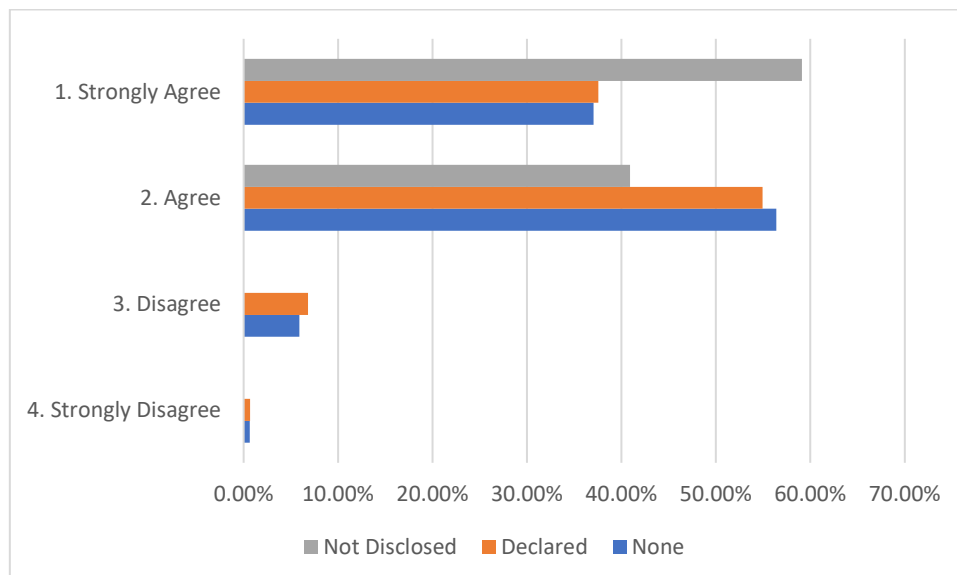
The overall satisfaction rate for full-time students is 89%, and 92% for part time students. This represents an increase of just over 3ppt for full time students and nearly 3ppt for part time students.

Satisfaction - Ethnicity

Ethnic Background	% Satisfaction	Responses
BME	97%	42
British	89%	89
Not given	80%	27
Polish	98%	84
UK and Irish	96%	919
Other White Background	95%	75

The following table highlights levels of satisfaction by ethnic background. Two categories fall under the cross college satisfaction rate of 93%.

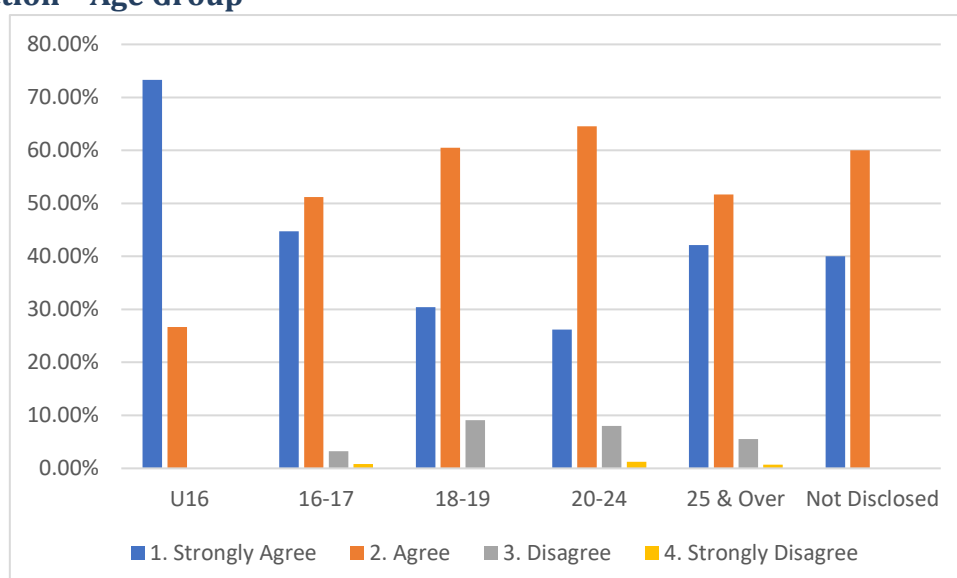
Satisfaction – Declared Disability



Declared Disability	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
None	339	516	54	6	915	93.44%
Declared	110	161	20	2	293	92.49%
Not Disclosed	13	9	0	0	22	100%

Learners with no declared disability have a satisfaction level 1ppt higher than those learners with a declared disability. The proportion of those students choosing not to disclose decreased from 50 in the previous SSES to 22 in this year's survey.

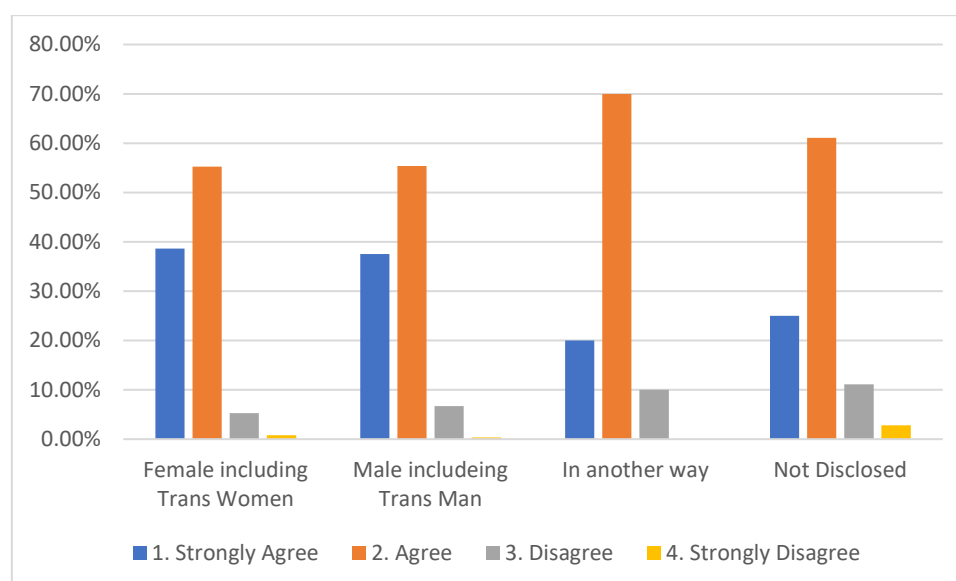
Satisfaction – Age Group



Age Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
U16	22	8	0	0	30	100%
16-17	110	126	8	2	246	95.93%
18-19	87	173	26	0	286	90.91%
20-24	62	153	19	3	237	90.72%
25 & Over	176	216	23	3	418	93.78%
Not Disclosed	8	12	0	0	20	100%

The age categories with the highest level of satisfaction are the U16 and those who have not disclosed their age at 100%. The lowest level of satisfaction of those students disclosing their age is seen in the 20 – 24yo category at 90.7%. This is reflective of the previous survey results.

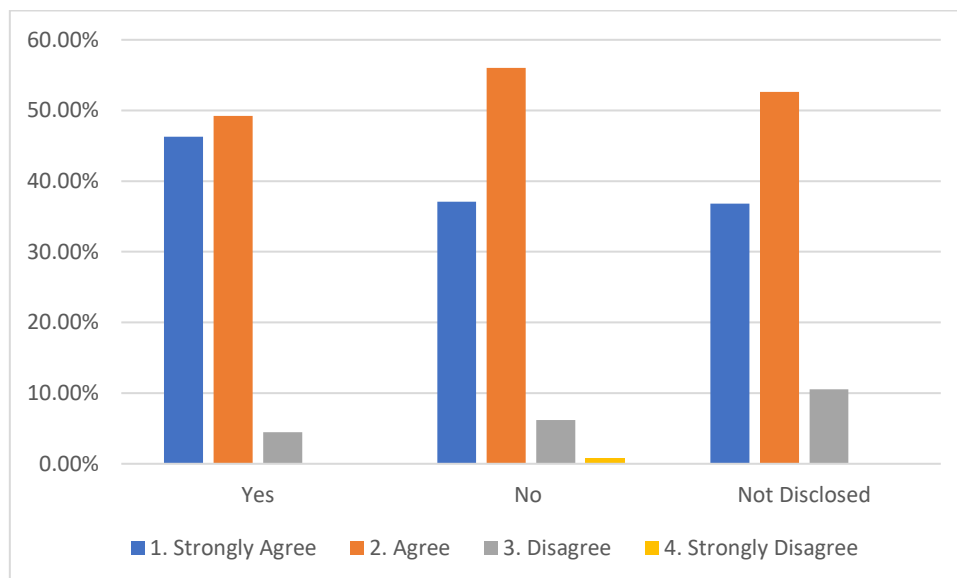
Satisfaction – Gender



Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
Female including Trans Women	242	346	33	5	626	93.93%
Male including Trans Man	212	313	38	2	565	92.92%
In another way	2	7	1	0	10	90%
Not Disclosed	9	22	4	1	36	86.11%

Satisfaction rates for female and male are within 1ppt, 93.9 and 92.9% respectively. Those who describe themselves in another way or have not disclosed their gender fall under the overall satisfaction rate of 93%.

Satisfaction - Care Leaver



Care Leaver	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
Yes	31	33	3	0	67	95.52%
No	427	645	71	8	1151	93.14%
Not Disclosed	7	10	2	0	19	89.47%

The proportion of students not disclosing in this category has fallen from 44 to 19. 95.5% of students who are care leavers are satisfied with their college experience so far, marginally more than those who are not care leavers.

Satisfaction Rate – School

School	Overall Satisfaction 2020 %	Total (Raw Count)
Business, Computing & Hospitality	90.26%	267
Care, Health & Wellbeing	95.04%	242
Construction & the Built Environment	96.65%	179
Creative Arts	93.77%	273
Education & Applied Sciences	89.41%	85
Engineering Technology	93.98%	133
Forestry	89.66%	58

Satisfaction rates are high across all curriculum areas ranging from 89.41% to 96.65%. The overall satisfaction rate for the college is 93%. Four areas sit above this level, three below.

SFC Mandatory Questions

Question	16/17		17/18		18/19		19/20		18/19
	%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)	Latest Published Sector Results (%)
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience	87.0%	620	93.5%	1573	90.2%	1621	93.2%	1153	91.2%
2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me	73.0%	515	83.4%	1397	81.1%	1458	85.8%	1059	83.0%
3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning	96.0%	684	96.8%	1623	96.6%	1735	97.6%	1200	94.7%
4. I am able to influence learning on my course	80.0%	567	86.8%	1449	83.1%	1489	84.7%	1036	86.4%
5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning	79.0%	559	88.5%	1480	87.6%	1572	88.6%	1086	86.8%
6. The way I'm taught helps me learn	77.0%	548	86.3%	1443	84.1%	1513	87.1%	1068	86.3%
7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace	83.0%	590	89.5%	1498	87.6%	1576	92.5%	1140	90.0%
8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously	71.0%	512	81.1%	1354	78.9%	1413	84.7%	1042	78.4%
9. I believe all students at the college are treated fairly and equally by staff	83.0%	590	88.1%	1469	87.3%	1566	88.5%	1083	85.2%
10. The college Student's Association influences change for the better	74.0%	525	82.9%	1352	82.9%	1448	91.3%	743	86.9%

Satisfaction levels have increased for each question between 1 – 8.4ppt. Q10 and Q8 have seen the biggest increase at 8.4ppt and 5.8ppt respectively. Q8, one of the lower scoring questions in last academic year remains one of the lower scoring questions. ICUHI scores well across all ten questions compared to the latest published sector data, with nine questions higher than the sector benchmark. Analysis by School for Q4 and Q8 (the lowest scoring questions) is shown below and shows the range of student satisfaction across the Schools. This information will be useful to facilitate the sharing of effective practice across the college.

		School – Satisfied %						
		Business, Computing & Hospitality	Care, Health & Wellbeing	Construction & the Built Environment	Creative Arts	Education & Applied Science	Engineering Technology	Forestry
Q4	I am able to influence learning on my course	78.87%	87.76%	89.77%	84.13%	83.53%	87.12%	82.46%
Q8	I believe student suggestions are taken seriously	83.83%	85.00%	89.39%	83.46%	83.13%	82.71%	84.48%

Student Community

		18/19		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q11	I know who my class rep is	84.47%	1322	79.8%	835
Q12	I know what the role of my class rep is	71.71%	1288	78.5%	826
Q13	I feel part of a community of staff and students	81.23%	1454	83.7%	1025

Given the focus on the role of the class rep during 2019/20 it is good to see an increase of 6.79% satisfaction. Whilst recognising this increase, the satisfaction rate and that of Q11 remain among the lowest satisfaction rates expressed through survey responses. There will be a continued focus on class reps, their role and activity through the academic year through one of the student partnership agreement work themes.

Q13 was asked for the first time last year. Scoring above 80% for 2018 – 19, the satisfaction rate has increased by 2.47%. This could be attributed to the initiatives emerging from the 'Student Life' strand in the Student Partnership. These included, for example, the implementation of a greater number of clubs and societies, stronger links with bars in Inverness.

Learning and Teaching

		18/19		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q14	I am happy with the way my course is taught	81.3%	1463	85.6%	1054
Q15	I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course	92.0%	1652	92.8%	1141

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Q16	I feel this has been the right course for me	92.1%	1653	92.7%	1137
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The second year this question set was asked, each has seen an increase in overall satisfaction level at cross college level. The response to Q14 remains the lowest in the question set at just under 86%. This may warrant further investigation through the CCM framework to understand what is behind the responses to the question. Analysis of the full question set by Schools is shown below:

		School – Satisfied %						
		Business, Computing & Hospitality	Care, Health & Wellbeing	Construction & the Built Environment	Creative Arts	Education & Applied Science	Engineering Technology	Forestry
Q14	I am happy with the way my course is taught	82.02%	87.03%	94.38%	83.88%	85.54%	84.21%	81.03%
Q15	I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course	92.11%	90.79%	98.87%	90.48%	90.48%	93.98%	96.55%
Q16	I feel this has been the right course for me	89.14%	95.78%	97.16%	91.21%	91.57%	94.70%	87.93%

Construction & the Built Environment have scored particularly highly for all categories. With respect Q14, over 7ppt above the next highest satisfaction level (Care Health & Wellbeing). Business, Computing & Hospitality and Forestry have the lowest satisfaction rates for Q14 and Q16. All Schools scored highly for Q15, with all satisfaction rates above 90%.

Assessment and Feedback

		17/18		18/19		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q17	Assessment requirements were made clear to me in advance	85.0%	1429	88.8%	1582	90.6%	1102
Q18	Feedback on my work has been within the agreed timeframe			85.3%	1530	88.6%	1086

It is encouraging to see that the clarity of assessment requirements has maintained a high level of satisfaction, increasing by nearly 2ppt. It is encouraging to see that there has also been an increase by just over 3ppt since last academic year for Q18. Emphasis at induction regarding the published timeframes regarding feedback will be useful.

Academic Support

		17/18		18/19		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q19	I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies	88.0%	1482	89.4%	1603	92.4%	1132
Q20	I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	93.0%	1564	93.1%	1676	95.2%	1169
Q21	I know who my academic support contact is and how to contact them					91.0%	1108

Students continue to express a high level of satisfaction about the level of support and advice received, with all questions receiving over 90%. Q21 was a new question for 2019-20 survey. It is encouraging to see this level of response, and could be linked to the embedding of the new PDA role.

Organisation

		17/18		18/19		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q22	Overall, the course has run smoothly throughout the year	86.0%	1445	82.1%	1480	86.2%	1063
Q23	The timetable has worked effectively			84.9%	1522	88.0%	1072
Q24	Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively	83%	1398	85.3%	1531	89.1%	1091

Whilst this section scores slightly lower than some of the other sections overall, with all responses coming in at just under 90%, each question has experienced an increase in positive responses between 3.1 – 4.1ppt. This is a good shift for Q22, where several curriculum areas fell under the 82.1% college benchmark last year.

The response by School can be seen below, the range of responses from 77.59% (Forestry) to 96.09% (C&BE). Discussions through CCMs, greater clarity around class or timetable

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changes, may have helped to contribute to the overall increase. Individual Schools will need to analyse responses to determine any specific areas or themes emerging.

		School – Satisfied %						
		Business, Computing & Hospitality	Care, Health & Wellbeing	Construction & the Built Environment	Creative Arts	Education & Applied Science	Engineering Technology	Forestry
Q22	Overall, the course has run smoothly throughout the year	87.69%	87.08%	96.09%	80.00%	81.18%	87.97%	77.59%

Learning Resources

		18/19		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q25	I have been able to access IT resources when I need to	94.48%	1693	96.52%	1182
Q26	The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning	94.29%	1685	96.15%	1173
Q27	I know where to access help and support to use IT resources	92.85%	1650	95.41%	1164
Q28	The library resources (e.g. books, online services) have supported my learning	88.39%	1576	88.82%	1081
Q29	I had suitable access to study space	91.31%	1628	92.37%	1126

A new question set for 2019, there remains a high level of satisfaction across each of the questions. Some further analysis around the response to the library resource question will be needed to fully understand the overall result. This response seems out of kilter to the levels of satisfaction expressed by service users in the latter section of the survey.

Digital Skills

		18/19		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q30	The College helps me stay safe online.	86.85%	1545	86.85%	1063
Q31	I have regular opportunities to review and update my digital skills.	79.57%	1406	81.51%	992
Q32	My course provides me with the right digital skills for my career.	85.25%	1509	87.18%	1068

This set of questions was new to the survey for 2019. The levels of satisfaction remain the same or have marginally increased (1.9ppt) since last year's survey. Q31 remains the lowest scoring in this set. Further analysis by School shows three Schools fall under the

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college overall score of 81.51%, and four score above this. Last academic year, five curriculum areas fell below the overall college score. This gives both curriculum teams and those support teams with a link to digital technology the opportunity to consider how digital skills are embedded within the classroom and support areas.

		School – Satisfied %						
		Business, Computing & Hospitality	Care, Health & Wellbeing	Construction & the Built Environment	Creative Arts	Education & Applied Science	Engineering Technology	Forestry
Q31	I have regular opportunities to review and update my digital skills.	80.00%	76.15%	87.01%	83.15%	83.56%	84.09%	77.19%

Brightspace Learning Environment

		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q33	The Brightspace Learning environment is effective in general at supporting interactions with students and staff on the course	90.58	904
Q34	The Brightspace Learning environment is effective in general at supporting collaborative activities	85.32	814
Q35	The Brightspace Learning environment is effective in general at providing the course information and help required for the course	93.35	954
Q36	The Brightspace Learning environment is effective in general at supporting teaching and learning activities	92.77	937

This question set was new for 2019-20 to determine the level of satisfaction with the new VLE, Brightspace and any areas for improvement. All questions scored highly, Q34 the lowest scoring at just over 85%.

Free text comments are mixed, with students reflecting on the functionality of Brightspace, the approaches taken by lecturers and the transfer from the previous VLE platform.

IC UHI survey questions

The following questions feature as part of ICUHI SSES survey and are not part of a regional return. This is due to specifics of the context in which we operate.

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		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q37	The support provided by my PDA meets my needs	92.6%	811

A new question for 2019-20 to gauge students' satisfaction with the level of support provided by their PDA, it is pleasing to see a high satisfaction level after the first year of engagement by the PDAs.

		19/20	
		%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Q38	I found HISA's elections easy to engage with	82.33%	615
Q39	I knew who the candidates were and who I could vote for	76.96%	608

A new question set included in this year's survey as a result of the partnership working with HISA. HISA have a target to improve awareness of elections and voting numbers; this data will be used to inform that work.

Quality of Service

Table Key: Green shading represents an increase from the previous year, amber a decrease. No shading represents no change.

Service	Satisfaction %					
	17/18		18/19		19/20	
	%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)	%	Total (Satisfied Count)
Admissions/Applications	95%	1326	94%	1366	96%	931
ASN	92%	547	93%	697	93%	483
Cafeterias	86%	1125	86%	1383	88%	955
Cash Office	90%	738	92%	805	93%	510
ELCC	93%	411	93%	381	93%	254
Funding	85%	1064	87%	918	89%	636
Guidance	91%	908	90%	993	93%	636
Hairdressing & Beauty Salon	92%	528	95%	519	95%	375
HISA	91%	794	89%	649	92%	473
ICT	94%	1028	95%	958	96%	683
Lecturing Staff	94%	1371	93%	1503	95%	1009
Library	97%	1246	94%	1109	96%	742
LRC	95%	1076			96%	879
Reception	95%	1332	97%	1469	98%	966
SkillZone	94%	749	94%	688	96%	473
Wellbeing & Counselling	91%	618	93%	570	91%	400
Estates & Campus Services					95%	399

In all areas, students are satisfied with the quality of service provided by individual areas. The range is 88 to 98%, and there have been marginal increases in 12 areas, 1 area has a marginal decrease, and 2 areas maintaining the same score as the previous year. Teams will need to make use of granular data to identify any themes emerging from those students expressing dissatisfaction, and to evaluate the split between the very satisfied and satisfied responses.

Free Text Responses

Students were asked to provide free text comments about learning and teaching, and their student experience. Students took the opportunity to provide feedback about a range of topics in both categories. Over 250 individual comments were received.

Learning & Teaching comments (119) related to expectations about resource requirements, cost of courses, the age range in classes and sector requirements. Students expressed a more pro-active approach in ensuring training was provided for different systems they needed to use as part of their course, and links to learning materials would be a more beneficial approach than resolving issues along the way. Students indicated their course felt compressed, with not enough time to cover key topics.

Canteen comments (20) related to the expense of the food provided, and the poor choice for various dietary requirements.

Comments about support (18) were largely positive and related to students' PDAs or PATs.

Comments about study space (8) related to the amount of space available (restrictive), and noise levels.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

Recommendations:

- Exploration and engagement with sector wide debate about the suitability of the question set for students who may not associate themselves with the college, for example, apprentices and school pupils
- Individual teams to reflect on the engagement with the survey in their area, and ways to increase the response rate at a local level in conjunction with the results of the YLE survey.
- Individual teams to reflect on the satisfaction rates in their area to identify potential areas for improvement in conjunction with the results of the YLE survey.

It is recommended there is a college-wide focus on improvement in the following areas:

- The use of digital skills within the (virtual) classroom linked to the opportunity's students have to review and improve their own skill set
- Consistently high standards of teaching practice
- The brand, transparency and effectiveness of the class rep system
- Greater transparency of the use of student feedback at programme, School and support team levels

Next Steps

- Dissemination of curriculum area response rates to allow benchmarking and sharing of good practice (Programme level results are already available to teams through the publication of SSES pivot table tool).
- Individual area evaluations as part of overall self-evaluation process, to feed into the review of the Enhancement Plan

National Student Survey results 2020

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1 Executive summary

RESPONSE RATE

The **response rate** decreased by 8% compared to 2019 with **72%** (734 of 1018) targeted students responding to the survey. This, however, compares favourably with the average response rates for Scotland (70%) and the UK (69%).

OVERALL SATISFACTION

There has been a decrease in the university's score for **Overall satisfaction to 82.2 %** in comparison to 2019 results which is below both the Scottish and UK average.

RESULTS BY QUESTION SCALE

Scores for **four of the eight question scales** have seen a 1-2% increase compared to 2019. For 2020, the university score equals, or exceeds **the Scottish average for four question scales**: Assessment and Feedback (+7% compared to the average score for Scottish HEIs), Academic Support (+3%), Learning opportunities (+3%) and Student Voice (+1%).

RESULTS BY ACADEMIC PARTNER

Of the eleven Academic Partners that published results in 2020, three have improved Overall Satisfaction scores compared to previous years: **SAMS UHI (100%)**, **Orkney College UHI (94%)**, **Moray College UHI (84%)** all achieved increased rates in comparison to 2018 and 2019. **Highland Theological College UHI scored 100%** for the second year running.

RESULTS BY SUBJECT NETWORK

There were small increases in overall satisfaction for three subject networks: **Creative and Cultural Industries (+5%)**, **Humanities, Education and Gaelic (+3%)**, and **Science, Technology and Environment (+2%)**. Nursing reported for the first time this year scoring **74%** for overall satisfaction.

RESULTS BY PROGRAMME

Results were received for 28 programmes in 2020 with the seven programmes achieving 100% overall satisfaction: **Geography BScH**, **Theological Studies BAH**, **Applied Music BAH**, **Literature BAH** (all for the second consecutive year), **Marine Science BScH** (+14% on 2019), **Audio Engineering BScH** and **Architectural Technology BScH**. Other notable increases were achieved by: **Fine Art BAH** (75%, +42% on 2019), **Engineering Systems HND** (79%, +17%) and **Sport and Fitness BScH** (69%, +11%).

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

569 students (**78%**) chose to leave comments for at least one of the three open-ended questions. The three categories relating to teaching (quality, content and mode of delivery), and Academic Support attracted the greatest number of positive comments. Organisation and Management, Teaching on my Course (content) and Assessment and Feedback attracted the largest number of negative comments

2 Background

2.1 The survey

The National Student Survey (NSS) is an annual survey of final year undergraduates, which has been conducted by Ipsos Mori on behalf of the UK Funding Councils since 2005. The University of the Highlands and Islands took part for the first time in 2013.

The survey (revised in 2017) consists of 27 multiple-choice questions relating to eight aspects of the learning experience, including one question about overall satisfaction. There are three additional questions chosen from a bank of optional questions. For each question, students are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with various statements using a 5-point Likert-type scale (Definitely Agree/ Mostly Agree/ Neither/ Mostly Disagree/ Definitely Disagree). Students are also invited to leave comments about particularly positive or negative aspects of their experience.

2.2 Results

Anonymised results for the multiple-choice questions and student comments are made available to the university in July via a password protected intranet facility. The data relating to the multiple-choice questions is publicly available through 'Key Information Sets' (KIS), which are published on the websites of universities and colleges and the Unistats website. The release of these results is subject to meeting a threshold of ten respondents and a 50% response rate (at any level of disaggregation). Results meeting the threshold of ten respondents but not the 50% response rate are made available to the university but not to the public. These thresholds are set in order to protect the anonymity of respondents and ensure the statistical robustness of the data. Students' comments are released to the university only and are redacted prior to this release to remove the names of any individuals.

3 NSS 2020

3.1 The impact of COVID-19

The 2020 survey opened on 01 February 2020 and closed on 30 April 2020, thus straddling the period when COVID-19 hit the UK. However, the majority of responses to the survey were received prior to the UK entering lockdown on 23 March 2020 (a 61% response had been achieved by that date, and the overall response rate was 72%). Analysis of responses to the open-ended questions (see section **Error! Reference source not found.**) also revealed no mention of 'COVID', 'coronavirus' or 'lockdown' and the content of the comments appear to reflect on students' experiences over the duration of their programme. It can be reasonably assumed, therefore, that this year's results have not been greatly skewed by the pandemic and are for the most part genuine reflections on the student experience at UHI.

3.2 Enhanced data reporting

The university was able to employ a placement student for part of summer 2020 who investigated how to manage and present data from the university's three main surveys (ESES, SSES, NSS) more effectively. One of the outputs from this work is a dynamic spreadsheet to which all staff have access (Survey Central- NSS) and which allows for the interrogation of NSS data by the usual levels of disaggregation (Academic Partner, Programme and Subject Network) as well as by student characteristics (age, gender, disability, ethnicity etc.). This report summarises the headlines arising from NSS 2020 but should be read in tandem with this other data source which will allow individuals to explore areas of relevance to them.

4 Response rates

1018 students were eligible to participate¹ in the survey this year. The overall response rate achieved was 72% (**734 respondents**). Table 1 shows the comparable average response rate for all UK and Scottish HEIs.

	2020	2019	2018
University of the Highlands and Islands	72%	80%	83%
Scottish HEIs	70%	73%	73%
UK HEIs	69%	72%	70%

Table 1: NSS response rates: UHI vs. Scotland and UK, 2018-2020

Response rates by academic partner and subject network are shown in tables 2 and 3 below:

	2020 no. of responses	2020 NSS sample	2020 response rate
Argyll College UHI	10	14	71%
Highland Theological College UHI	23	24	96%
Inverness College UHI	198	275	72%
Lews Castle College UHI	27	34	79%
Moray College UHI	69	106	65%
North Highland College UHI	29	42	69%
Orkney College UHI	16	19	84%
Perth College UHI	223	316	71%
SAMS UHI	20	23	87%
Shetland College UHI	10	11	91%
West Highland College UHI	23	33	70%
University of the Highlands and Islands	734	1018	72%

Table 2: NSS 2020 Response rate by academic partner

Subject Network response rates			
	2020 no. of responses	2020 NSS sample	2020 response rate
Applied Life Studies	126	184	68%
Business, Management and Leisure	131	192	68%
Creative and Cultural Industries	142	187	76%
Engineering and the Built Environment	63	88	72%
Humanities, Education and Gaelic	118	143	83%
Nursing	77	110	70%
Science, Technology and the Environment	77	114	68%
University of the Highlands and Islands	734	1018	72%

Table 3: NSS 2020 Response rate by subject network

¹ The NSS sample is identified using data from the annual submission to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). A flow diagram for identifying eligible students can be found in Appendix 1.

5 Overall satisfaction: Results for question 27

5.1 UHI vs. Scotland/UK

The result for Question 27 ‘Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my course’, is the key measure of the survey. Table 4 shows that **82%** of the respondents agreed with this statement² against a benchmark of 82%. Benchmarks reflect the sector average percentage agree scores but are adjusted to reflect the mix of students and subjects at the provider. The adjustment takes account of the following factors: subject of study, age, sex, ethnicity, disability, and the mode of study. The column headed ‘+/-’ shows where a score is statistically significantly above/below its benchmark.

Institution	2020	2020 Benchmark	+/-	2019	2018
University of St Andrews	93	85	+	95	94
Robert Gordon University	90	82	+	89	85
Abertay University	89	82	+	87	79
University of Dundee	88	84	+	90	88
University of Glasgow	87	85		86	88
University of Stirling	87	83	+	83	84
University of Aberdeen	87	84		87	86
University of Strathclyde	86	83	+	86	84
Edinburgh Napier University	86	81	+	79	74
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	86	80		73	77
Glasgow Caledonian University	85	81	+	81	81
Scottish HEI Average	85			84	83
University of the West of Scotland	85	82	+	84	85
Heriot-Watt University	84	83		85	81
UK HEI Average	84			84	83
Queen Margaret University	83	81		82	82
University of the Highlands and Islands	82	82		84	85
University of Edinburgh	78	84	-	78	77
SRUC	72	85	-	72	70
Glasgow School of Art	58	79	-	69	67

Table 4: NSS 2020 % agree for question 27 ‘Overall Satisfaction’ for Scottish HEIs

² ‘% agree’ rates referred to in this report are calculated as the number of students responding ‘definitely agree’ or ‘agree’ to each of the items, expressed as a percentage of the total number of respondents to that item.

5.2 By academic partner

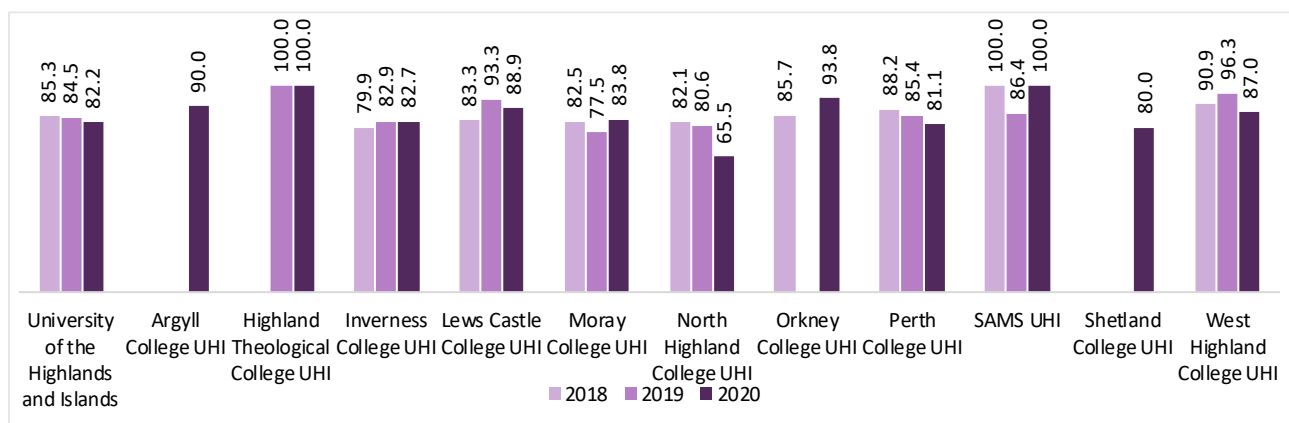


Figure 1: NSS 2018-2020 % agree for question 27 'Overall satisfaction' by academic partner³

Of the eleven Academic Partners that published results in 2020, three have improved Overall Satisfaction scores compared to previous years: **SAMS UHI (100%)**, **Orkney College UHI (94%)**, **Moray College UHI (84%)** all achieved increased rates in comparison to 2018 and 2019. **Highland Theological College UHI** scored 100% for the second year running, **Inverness College UHI** maintained a score of 83% and **Argyll College UHI (90%)** and **Shetland College UHI (80%)** published results for the first since the survey questions were updated in 2017. Rates fell at other Academic Partners as well as for the university overall with North Highland College UHI showing the biggest decrease from 81% in 2019 to 66% this year.

5.3 By subject network

There were small increases in overall satisfaction for three subject networks: **Creative and Cultural Industries (+5%)**, **Humanities, Education and Gaelic (+3%)**, and **Science, Technology and Environment (+2%)**. Nursing reported for the first time this year scoring **74%** for overall satisfaction.

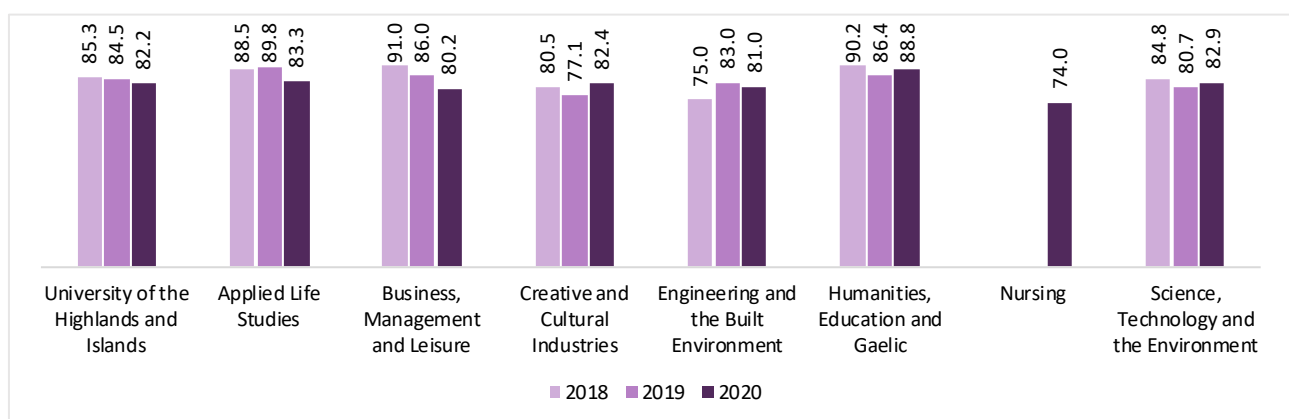


Figure 2: NSS 2018-2020 % agree for question 27 'Overall satisfaction' by subject network.

³ Results are not included for Sabhal Mòr Ostaig as the number of responses at this partner fell below the 10 required for data publication. There were no students at NAFC UHI within the NSS pool for 2020.

5.4 By programme

Results were received for 28 programmes in 2020⁴ and these are shown in Figure 3. The notable success stories are the seven programmes that reported 100% overall satisfaction:

- Geography BScH (second consecutive year)
- Theological Studies BAH (second consecutive year)
- Applied Music BAH, Literature BAH (second consecutive year),
- Marine Science BScH (+14% on 2019)
- Audio Engineering BScH
- Architectural Technology BScH.

Other notable increases were achieved by: **Fine Art BAH** (75%, +42% on 2019), **Engineering Systems HND** (79%, +17%) and **Sport and Fitness BScH** (69%, +11%). **Civil Engineering BEng** (92%) had results published for the first time this year, alongside **Adult Nursing BSc** (83%), and **Mental Health Nursing** which had a disappointing result at **31%**.

The biggest decreases in Overall Satisfaction came from **Visual Communications and Design BAH** (46% from 86% in 2019) and **Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy DipHE** (67% from 90% in 2019).

⁴ Only results for programmes with more than 10 respondents are released

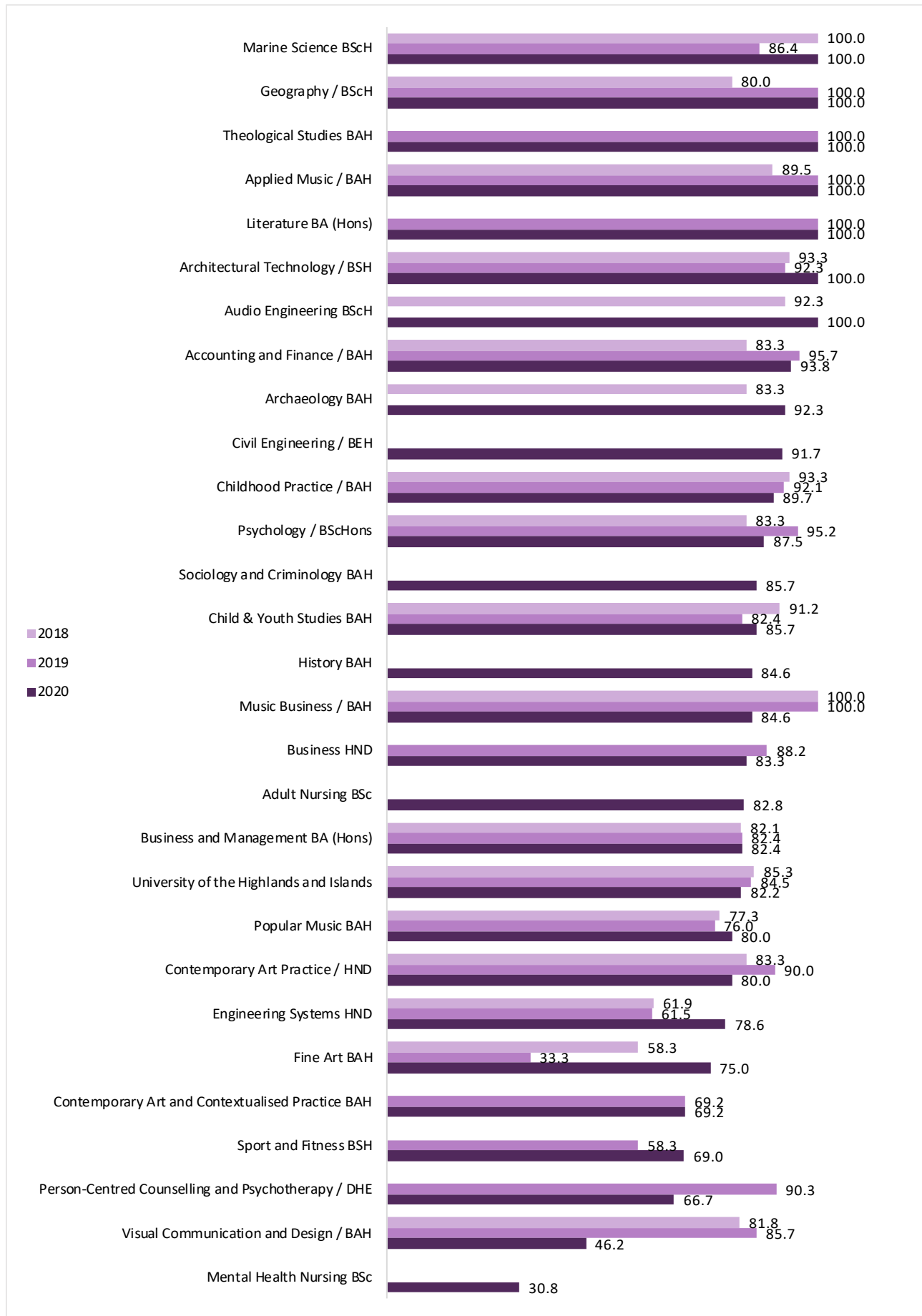


Figure 3: NSS 2018-2020 % agree for question 27 'Overall satisfaction' by programme

5.5 Action planning programmes

An NSS action planning process has been in place since 2015 to help improve NSS scores. Programmes were included in the process during 2019-20 if the % agree score for Overall Satisfaction (Q27) was either:

- below the University score for that year or
- had fallen 10% or more from the previous year.

Of the 14 programmes or programme clusters who were included in action planning after NSS 2019 (and for which we have results for NSS 2020) all have either increased or remained static. Results for action planning programmes are summarised in Table 5 below:

Programme	Overall satisfaction 2019	Overall satisfaction 2020	Change
Sociology and Criminology / BAH	66.7	85.7	+19.0
Fine Art BAH	33.3	75	+41.7
Engineering Systems HND	61.5	78.6	+17.1
Sport and Fitness BSH	58.3	69.0	+10.7
Popular Music BAH	76	80	+4
Child & Youth Studies BAH	82.4	85.7	+3.3
Business and Management BA (Hons)	82.3	82.3	0
Contemporary Art and Contextualised Practice BAH	69.2	69.2	0
Marine Science BScH	86.4	100	+13.6
Child & Youth Studies BAH	82.4	85.7	+3.3
Forestry cluster	54.6	Didn't report	-
Archaeology	81.8	92.3	+10.5
History/Scottish History cluster	81.8	89.5	+7.7
Applied Science	80	Didn't report	-

Table 5: Action planning programmes 2019; comparison of Overall Satisfaction in NSS 2019 and 2020

Programmes action planning in advance of NSS 2021 will be those scoring below the Scottish average of 85% for overall satisfaction. These are shown in Table 6.

Programme	Overall Satisfaction NSS 2020
History BAH	84.6
Business HND	83.3
Adult Nursing BSc	82.8
Business and Management BA (Hons)	82.4
Sustainable Development cluster	82.4
Contemporary Art Practice / HND	80.0
Popular Music BAH	80
Engineering cluster	80
Engineering Systems HND	78.6
Fine Art BAH	75
Computing cluster	70

Contemporary Art and Contextualised Practice BAH	69.2
Sport and Fitness BSH	69.0
Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy / DHE	66.7
Visual Communication and Design / BAH	46.2
Mental Health Nursing BSc	30.8

Table 6: Action planning programmes in 2020-21

An established process supports action planning programmes, initiated by a meeting between Faculty Deans, programme teams (including curriculum managers), academic partner quality staff and student representatives at the beginning of the academic year, and overseen by the NSS Strategic Steering Group thereafter.

6 Results for all question scales

6.1 UHI vs. Scotland/UK

Scores for **four of the eight question scales** have seen an increase of 1 or 2% compared to 2019. For 2020, the university score equals, or exceeds **the Scottish average** for **four question scales**: Assessment and Feedback (+7% compared to the average score for Scottish HEIs), Academic Support (+3%), Learning opportunities (+3%) and Student Voice (+1%). It is encouraging to see scores for Student Voice remaining the same as in 2019, as this is an area of focus, both through programme action plans and initiatives at Academic Partners. Learning Community is an area where scores fall below both the UK and Scotland, perhaps due to the amount of networked and online delivery that we offer. It will be interesting to see how scores in this area are affected nationwide in NSS 2020/1 given the move to online and remote teaching prompted by COVID-19.

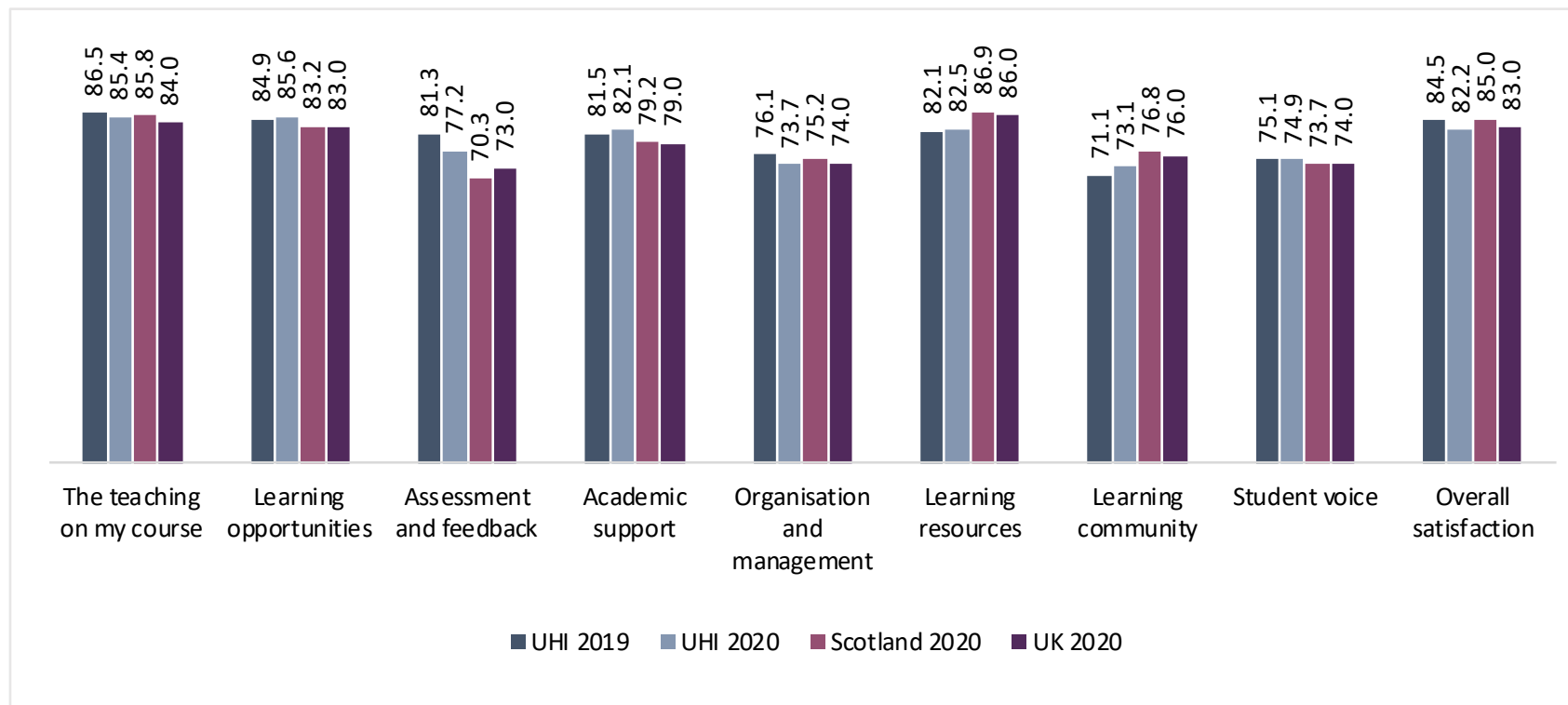


Figure 4: NSS 2020 % agree for all question scales, University of the Highlands and Islands, plus Scotland and the UK

6.2 By subject network

Figures 5 and 6 show data relating to the question scales in which there is the greatest variation at Subject Network level. Figure 5 shows that whilst there has been only a small change in institutional scores between 2019 and 2020 (0-4%), there have been some sharp increases and decreases at Subject Network level. For Assessment and Feedback, Science, Technology and Environment scores increased by 8.3% whereas those for Business Management and Leisure and Engineering dropped by 12.4% and 9% respectively. Similar variation is found within Learning Communities with Applied Life Studies increasing their score by 7.5% and engineering scores dropping by 12.7%; the increase for the overall university score in this area accounted for by larger numbers within some Subject Networks.



Figure 5: Difference in % agree for NSS 2019 and NSS 2020 for selected question scales by Subject Network

Figure 6 shows 2020 scores for those same question scales and includes scores for Nursing whose programmes participated in the NSS for the first time in 2020. These were the lowest for many question scales and will be action planning in advance of NSS 2021. There are also low scores for Business Management and Leisure in some areas (particularly Assessment and Feedback, and Organisation and Management). These can be explained by low scores for some individual items within those scales for: Business HND, Business and Management BAH and Accounting and Finance BAH.

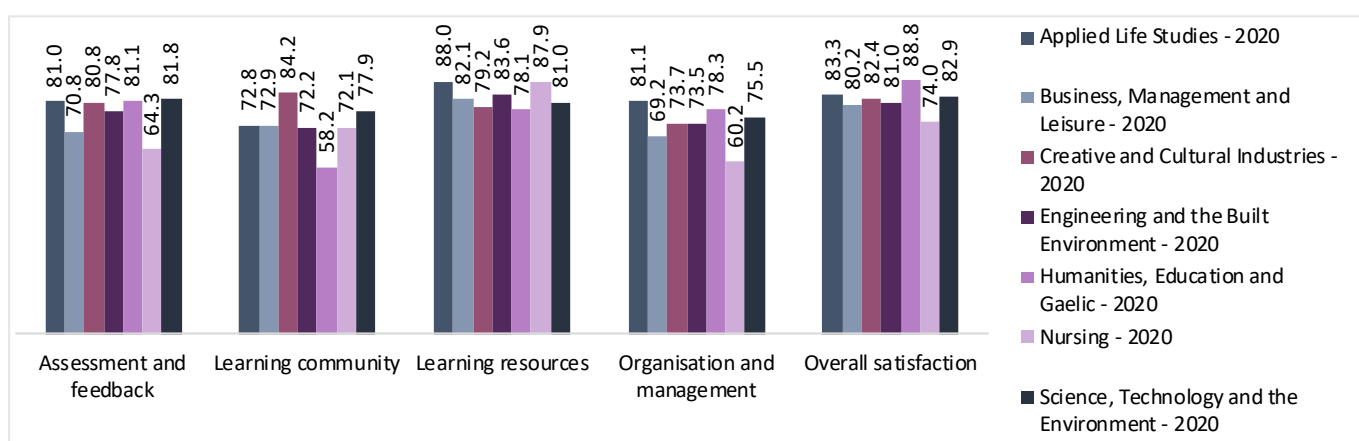


Figure 6: NSS 2020, % agree for selected question scales by Subject Network

6.3 By academic partner

Table 7 below shows % agree scores for each of the question scales by Academic Partner. Scores are shaded **amber** where they are below the university score for that question scale, and **green** where they are equal to or above. This presentation of the data shows clear areas of excellence, and for enhancement for some Academic Partners. Highland Theological College UHI, SAMS UHI and Inverness College UHI have performed excellently across most question scales for 2020. North Highland College UHI fell below the university scores for all question scales with this being partly due to scores for Engineering Systems HND (scoring 79% for Overall Satisfaction from a sample of 14). Whilst these, and other low scores at Argyll College UHI and Shetland College UHI must be taken in the content of the low sample sizes at these Academic Partners, there is no room for complacency: given that the overall sample size for the university is small in comparison to other HEIs, even small groups of students have the potential to affect overall scores both positively and negatively.

Academic Partner (sample size)	The teaching on my course	Learning opportunities	Assessment and feedback	Academic support	Organisation and management	Learning resources	Learning community	Student voice	Overall satisfaction
Argyll College UHI (10)	85.0	93.3	82.5	83.3	86.7	71.7	60.0	66.7	90.0
Highland Theological College UHI (23)	95.7	89.9	87.0	91.3	95.7	88.4	84.1	84.1	100.0
Inverness College UHI (198)	86.6	85.9	78.4	83.7	72.5	89.5	74.1	74.7	82.7
Lews Castle College UHI (27)	86.1	86.4	89.8	88.9	75.3	74.1	66.7	80.3	88.9
Moray College UHI (69)	88.0	90.3	79.7	84.5	76.6	87.3	71.7	77.5	83.8
North Highland College UHI (29)	78.5	75.9	68.1	74.7	70.1	69.0	55.2	60.9	65.5
Orkney College UHI (16)	93.8	85.4	79.7	87.5	77.1	70.8	65.6	77.1	93.8
Perth College UHI (223)	84.3	85.2	78.1	84.1	74.6	76.8	73.2	78.6	81.1
SAMS UHI (20)	88.8	96.7	78.8	78.3	83.3	90.0	92.5	81.7	100.0
Shetland College UHI (10)	82.5	80.0	62.5	63.3	63.3	83.3	75.0	56.7	80.0
West Highland College UHI (23)	81.5	82.6	77.2	79.7	78.3	79.7	82.6	66.7	87.0
University of the Highlands and Islands (734)	85.4	85.6	77.2	82.1	73.7	82.5	73.1	74.9	82.2

Table 7: NSS 2020, % agree for all question scales, by academic partner

6.4 Optional question banks

In addition to the 27 questions in the main survey, students, the University selected some additional questions from a list of optional banks (provided by the Office for Students). Results for these questions are shown in Table 7 below:

	2018	2019	2020
OB2.0 Students' Union (Association or Guild)	27.6	26.2	22.2
OB2.1 The Students' Union (Association or Guild) had had a positive impact on my sense of belonging to the university or college.	30.4	30.3	26.7
OB2.2 The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has had a positive impact on the local community.	30.4	27.4	23.9
OB2.3 The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has helped me develop useful life skills.	21.5	20.6	15.6
OB3.0 Careers	72.7	73.9	71.5
OB3.1 As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects.	86.5	90.1	86.0
OB3.2 Good advice is available for making career choices.	63.0	64.1	62.4
OB3.3 Good advice is available on further study opportunities.	68.4	67.1	66.0
OB6.0 Social Opportunities		45.2	44.6
OB6.1 I have had plenty of opportunities to interact socially with other students.		63.4	65.6
OB6.2 I am satisfied with the range of clubs and societies on offer.		36.5	35.4
OB6.3 I am satisfied with the range of entertainment and social events on offer.		33.5	30.5
OB7.0 Course Delivery	79.3	82.3	79.6
OB7.1 Learning materials made available on my course have enhanced my learning.	86.0	86.4	82.6
OB7.2 The range and balance of approaches to teaching has helped me to learn.	77.8	80.9	80.9
OB7.3 The delivery of my course has been stimulating.	76.7	78.0	74.4
OB7.4 My learning has benefited from modules that are informed by current research.	81.5	85.7	79.8
OB7.5 Practical activities on my course have helped me to learn.	74.2	80.1	80.4
OB9.0 Welfare Resources and Facilities		71.1	66.7
OB9.1 There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.		71.6	65.1
OB9.2 When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.		70.4	68.5
	2018	2019	2020
no. of responses	357	440	386

Table 8: NSS '% agree' for optional bank survey questions

7 Open-ended questions

7.1 Methodology

In addition to the 27 multiple-choice questions in the core survey, students are also invited to respond to three open-ended questions:

- Are there any particularly positive aspects of your experience on your course that you would like to highlight?
- Are there any particularly negative aspects of your experience on your course that you would like to highlight?
- 'Institution own' question: If you could change one specific thing about your experiences on your course, what would it be?

Responses to these questions are analysed using a taxonomy whose primary categories reflect the themes in the multiple choice questions. Secondary categories have been created underneath each primary category for a more thorough analysis.

7.2 Overview

Of the 734 students who responded to the main survey, **78%** of those (569) chose to respond to at least one of the three open-ended questions. After analysis, the total number of comments was 1624⁵ (722 positive, 580 negative, 322 institution own) with distribution by primary category shown in Figure 7 below:

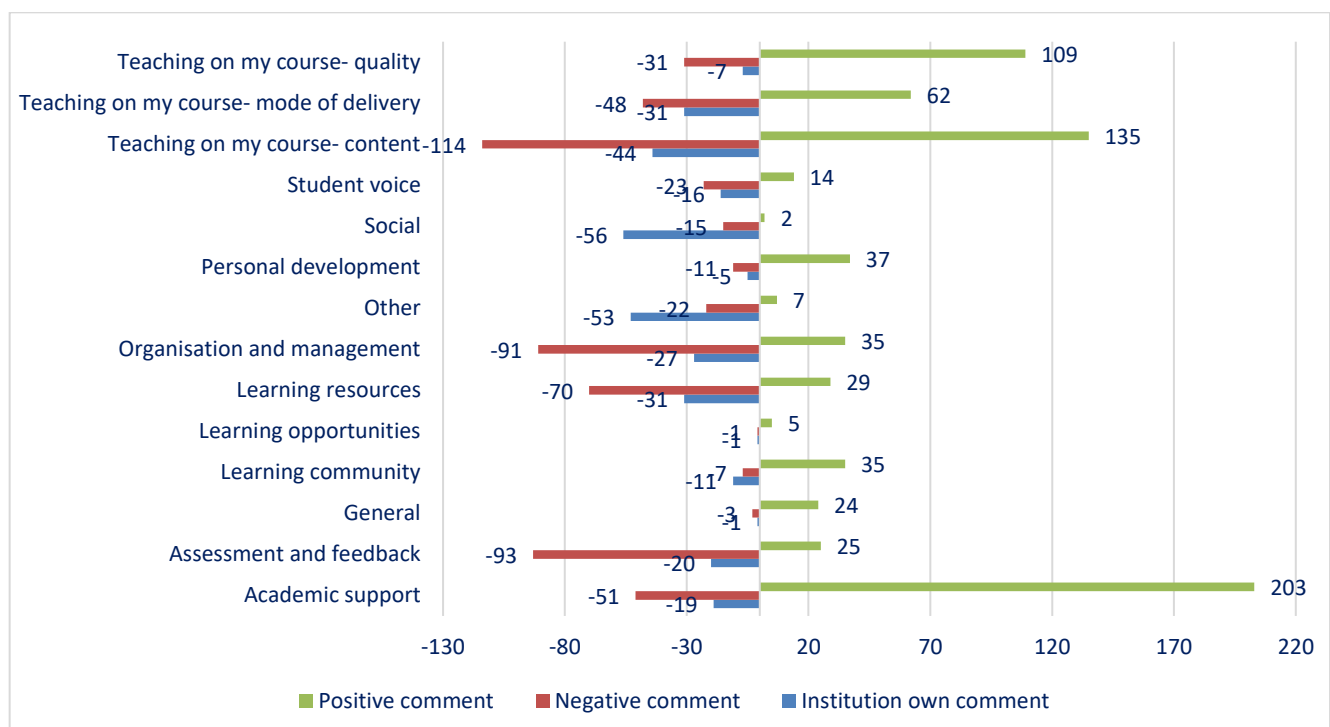


Figure 7: Distribution of student comments by primary category, NSS 2020

⁵ Many comments are lengthy and address several aspects of the student's university experience. In analysis, these responses have been counted in more than one category. Where reference is made in the remainder of this section to the numbers of comments these will not equal the number of individual students making these comments

The distribution of comments by category closely mirrors that seen in previous years with a few notable changes:

- Decrease in proportion of negative comments under 'organisation and management'
- Increase in proportion of negative comments for 'social'
- Decrease in proportion of positive comments for 'teaching on my course- content'

As in previous years, the three categories relating to Teaching (quality, mode of delivery and content), and Academic Support attracted the greatest number of positive comments with Organisation and Management, and Assessment and Feedback attracting the largest numbers of negative comments. There were also many negative comments concerning Teaching (content, and mode of delivery), and Learning Resources. These, and other themes of interest are explored in the following sections.

7.3 Teaching quality and Academic Support

Positive comments concerning teaching quality far outnumbered negative ones and mentioned the high level of enthusiasm and knowledge displayed by teaching staff and the fact that they made classes interesting and engaging. Most positive comments within Academic Support concerned support from academic staff (rather than support or specialist staff) which is a change from previous years. Students commended the fact that staff are supportive, helpful, and approachable, as can be seen in the word cloud based on comments within this category in Figure 8 below.



Figure 8: Word cloud, based on positive comments within the category 'Academic Support'

Whilst positive comments greatly outnumbered negative ones within Academic Support, there were two new areas of interest within negative comments with students mentioning the need for mental health support, and commenting on the need for support from the transition from HN to degree level study:

Mental health support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support not equipped to deal with mental illness issues • Better understanding of mental health issues • 3-6 month review with each student to ensure there settling in well & to ensure mental health is okay.
HN to degree transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I progressed from an HND at one establishment to 3rd year BSc at another. I did not feel adequately prepared for the level of academic writing and research required in 3rd year because my HND was poorly delivered and the teaching staff were not academically minded themselves. • 3rd year should have been a step up transition; however, for me, it was a complete culture shock. • when progressing from HN to degree level, I found it difficult to write essays as had no experience in this as at HN level there only have been reports.

Table 9: NSS 2020, Selection of negative comments from Academic Support

7.4 Teaching on my course: content

As in previous years, this was the category for which the greatest number of comments was received overall (135 positive, 114 negative, 44 'institution own'). The positive comments greatly outnumbered negative ones with the most popular secondary categories within **all** sets of comments being:

- Practicals, placements, fieldwork within the course;
- Currency, relevance, interest of course content;
- Breadth of content (including module choice and course structure).

Again, these secondary categories have also been found to attract the most comments in previous surveys. It is worth noting a change within comments relating to practical, placements and fieldwork this year due to the inclusion of Nursing students in the NSS. Whilst in previous years practical and placement experiences were overwhelmingly positive for students and their absence noted negatively, this year negative comments included those students reporting bad experiences rather than just the absence of good ones. Several students this year also chose to comment on the inclusion, or lack of, guest speakers (often from within industry) within their programme, and these have been included within this sub-category. A selection of comments is included in Table 10 below:

Positive comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have had great opportunity to work with outside clients during my course which is beneficial for my own experience and learning • Was given a great opportunity to work within a radio station to build up my experience in broadcast. It now has the added benefit of the fact. I am now maybe getting employed as a freelance broadcast engineer with them. • Residential was great, very important to help us get to know each other
-------------------	---

Negative comments

- I would like to have the opportunity to learn more from people from the industry and have the opportunity to watch and learn from them in their workplace.
- More internships opportunities during the year, even short terms (1-2 weeks). This would make the student experience more practical and give us the opportunity to build a network of people in our industry to get advices from or work for them.
- Developmental opportunities lost due to placement mentor absence and/or mismatched personality types.

Table 10: NSS 2020, Selection of comments from secondary category 'Practicals, placements, fieldwork'

7.5 Teaching on my course: mode of delivery

There were 141 comments within this category including 62 positive comments and 48 negative comments. Class sizes and location were mentioned as positives, with the Virtual Learning Environment mentioned only in negative comments this year; relating to the change to Brightspace which was disruptive for final year students, and students' dislike of discussion boards.

Again, learning by VC or online produced a split in opinion with some students regarding this as a high-quality learning experience, and others as inferior to face to face methods. Students acknowledged the pros and cons of VC/online study as offering flexibility, and accessibility to degree level study but also noted feelings of isolation from studying remotely. A selection of negative comments is given below, and these are more relevant than ever this year given that much teaching will take place online in 2020/21:

I found this method of learning (by VC) challenging, as there is a lack of confidence asking questions.

The material made available (in an online module) was vast and in-depth; however, without the class-based teaching style or discussion many of the key nuances required were missed.

It would have been good to meet more of the lecturers face-to-face, but obviously, this is an issue of distance, so cannot be helped. More connections with other students would have been useful but learning in a remote location limited this.

You have no one to teach you - you are teaching yourself as it is online.

There is a clear desire for students to interact with tutors and with other students where possible; for discussion to aid understanding, and to alleviate feelings of isolation. Within the online environment this is often best achieved through synchronous methods such as VC, but interaction may not occur naturally or spontaneously as in a face to face environment and tutors will need to design learning activities to encourage online interaction in a way that is not always required in a classroom setting.

7.6 Organisation and management

Despite a drop in score for the multiple-choice questions relating to organisation and management, the proportion of negative comments within this category has declined in comparison to previous years. The breakdown of comments by secondary category is shown in Figure 9 below.

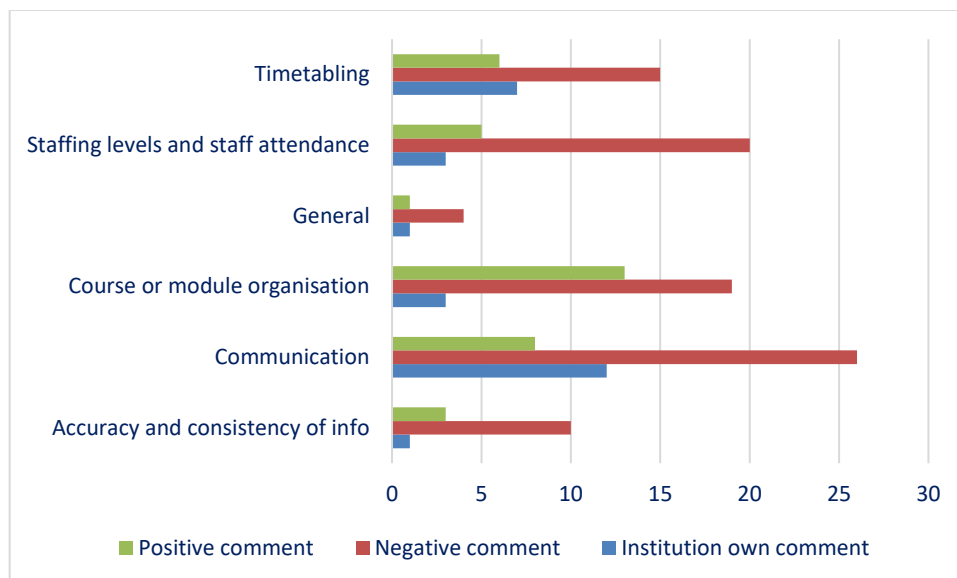


Figure 9: NSS 2020, comments by secondary category within Organisation and Management.

Communication attracted the highest number of negative comments covering both staff-student communication; with students feeling uninformed, or having difficulty contacting staff when required, and staff-staff communications; where students reported receiving conflicting or repeated information from different staff members, leading to frustration and confusion:

Communication between lecturers could be better. To inform each other of what the class has completed to reduce crossover where students are confused in class or have already learned something so are disengaged

Lack of replying from some staff over emails, etc., doesn't help us as students when we are stuck in a pickle.

Better communication from higher up. We, and even staff, are left hanging too often.

The high number of comments under 'staffing levels and staff attendance' relate mainly to the disruption that staff absences and changes create for students. Whilst these are often unavoidable, it is striking how the negative experiences caused by staffing issues can colour a student's entire course experience; many comments in this sub-category related to staffing issues that had occurred in the early to mid stages of a student's experience, and many selected to feed back about this in the NSS:

In the absence of a Programme Leader and adequate staffing for several years, the department was not a good place to study. Morale and communication were very low

I have not had one semester where I have had a complete teaching year. Every year at least one of my tutors has been off on long-term sick leave and not replaced.

Severe lack of support when switching staff members and when staff have suddenly left. These intense severely harmed my work and we were offered little to no support.

7.7 Assessment and feedback

This category attracted the second highest number of negative comments (93) this year. Themes within this category are familiar from previous years:

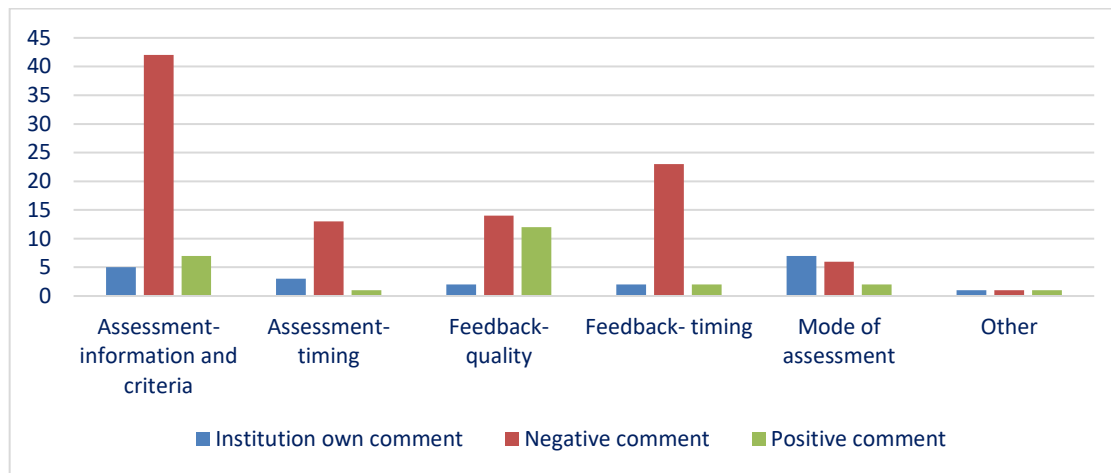


Figure 10: NSS 2020, comments by secondary category within Assessment and Feedback.

As in 2017, 2018 and 2019, the largest number of negative comments within this category concerned assessment information and criteria, followed by the timing of feedback. The issues mentioned are very familiar:

- Unclear assessment criteria;
- Late release of assessment requirements and marking criteria;
- Changes being made to assessment dates and criteria;
- Late receipt of marks and feedback;
- Inconsistencies between marking amongst academic staff.

Last semester I got marked down for answering in a style I have been taught and noted for too many references which is something I haven't heard anyone be marked down for before.

There was an email sent by the lecturer about one week before the deadline that conflicted with what was in the assignment paper

Some of the markings seemed harsh in my opinion. A definite lack of advice on what mark is needed to attain what grade in my final year. Either no one knows or they refuse to say.

Feedback can be very different depending on who is marking so you have to write each essay different depending on who the lecturer is

Whilst the university scores for assessment and feedback are still above the average for Scotland, there remains room for improvement in this area which is so central to the student learning experience.

7.8 Social

This was introduced as a new category after NSS 2019 due to an increased number of comments concerning both traditional social activities (clubs and societies, social events) as well as the extent to which students work and socialise with one another both within and across courses. Whilst not attracting a great number of positive or negative comments in comparison to other categories, it was the category for the most responses in relation to the question “If you could change one thing about your experiences on your course, what would it be?”. As well as mentioning the need for social spaces, like student union buildings and bars, many comments concerned the desire to connect with other students both within their own campus (on other courses), and across the different campuses on the same course.

Across and within campuses

- It would have been to connect with more people in the college. I was studying at Campus A, but as a distance student, the content of the course was provided by Campus B. I feel because of this (...) I've really not got much out of the social side of college. (...) I've just not been presented a reasonable opportunity to connect with others.
- Coming into the Uni at 3rd year, I found it harder to connect with others in the class. More opportunity to bond with classmates when new to the campus would be good.
- Improved methods of socialisation with campuses being so spread apart; it can be difficult when your own class is few in numbers. Lecture-arranged social gatherings would be great, even if still on an online platform.

Social spaces

- More team building in areas, like the gym and social gathering so that people open up
- Needs a student bar or at least a more active hub.
- Lack of social places for on campus, I highly encourage there is bar on campus because it does promote students getting to know each other and can provide a profit to the college
- A student common room to encourage interactions outside of the course.
- there is very little to do at the campus when you are not in class

Table 11: NSS 2020, Selection of comments within the category ‘Social’

As face to face socialising and social events will be reduced as a result of COVID-19, there is a need for both Academic Partners, programme teams and HISA to consider how social opportunities for students might be created.

8 Conclusion

NSS results for 2020 are mixed. It is disappointing that overall satisfaction for the university has dropped which, in combination with increases in scores at other Scottish HEIs, has led to the university appearing towards the bottom of the table in Scotland. However, the reduction in satisfaction can be traced to identifiable areas at both Academic Partner and programme level meaning that these can be targets for enhancement for NSS 2021.

However, there remain high levels of satisfaction within individual programmes and Academic Partners, and the high scores for Teaching on my course, Learning opportunities, Assessment and feedback and Academic support (scores for the latter three all being above both the Scottish and UK average) attest to the high quality of most students' experiences at UHI.

8.1 Actions to prepare for NSS 2021

The process around the NSS has evolved over the years in which the university has participated in the survey to encompass a wide range of events and activities to enable staff to reflect and act upon NSS results, and prepare for the next iteration of the survey. These will continue in 2020-21:

- Targeted action planning: Given the proven efficacy of action planning, programmes with overall satisfaction scores for Q27 below the Scottish average score of 85%, will meet with relevant AP senior staff, Faculty Deans and Subject Network Leaders to agree an action plan for the coming academic year;
- NSS Programme Leader Forum, October 2020; to bring together Programme Leaders; including those from action planning programmes to reflect on results and consider enhancements. This event ran for the first time in 2019 and was highly successful;
- The Dean of Students will run bespoke workshops and briefings with students and staff at a local level;
- NSS Strategic Steering Group: This group will meet three times in the academic year to oversee actions from the programme action plans and provide leadership on institution-wide strategies to improve NSS satisfaction scores;
- NSS Process Management Group: This group will continue to oversee the day-to-day running of the NSS including finalising the sample for NSS 2021, and staff and student communications.

Dr Iain Morrison
Dean of Students

Dr Heather Fotheringham
Evidence-Based Enhancement Lead

August 2020

9 Appendix 1: HESA flow diagram for NSS-eligible students

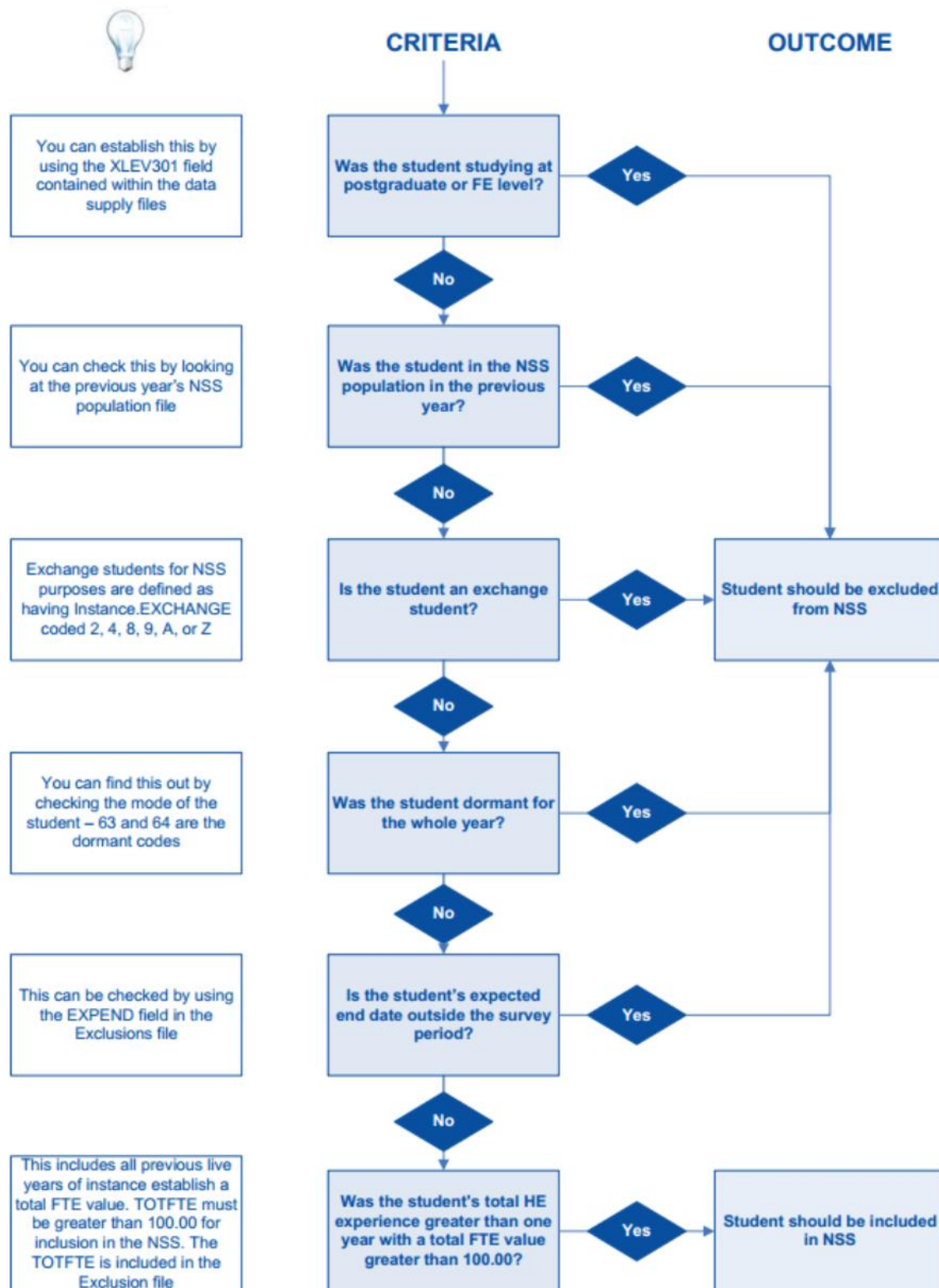


Figure 11: HESA flow diagram to identify NSS-eligible students

10 Appendix 2: Results for all questions

NSS Item	UHI 2018	UHI 2019	UHI 2020	Scotland 2020
A00 The teaching on my course	85.1	86.5	85.4	85.8
A01 Staff are good at explaining things	88.6	89.1	90.2	90.1
A02 Staff have made the subject interesting	84.6	86.4	83.9	84.3
A03 The course is intellectually stimulating	85.7	86.6	84.9	86.8
A04 My course has challenged me to achieve my best work	81.5	84.1	83.0	82.1
B00 Learning opportunities	83.8	84.9	85.6	83.2
B05 My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth	83.6	88.7	86.8	84.7
B06 My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics	87.7	85.8	88.5	85.0
B07 My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt	80.1	80.2	81.6	79.9
C00 Assessment and feedback	77.4	81.3	77.2	70.3
C08 The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance	77.7	80.1	74.6	71.5
C09 Marking and assessment has been fair	81.4	84.9	79.1	73.8
C10 Feedback on my work has been timely	71.8	76.0	73.1	65.6
C11 I have received helpful comments on my work	78.7	84.1	82.0	70.5
D00 Academic support	82.2	81.5	82.1	79.2
D12 I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	87.0	87.1	88.4	87.1
D13 I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course	81.2	82.2	81.3	77.9
D14 Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course	78.2	74.6	76.1	72.5
E00 Organisation and management	75.2	76.1	73.7	75.2
E15 The course is well organised and running smoothly	65.1	69.9	64.3	67.9
E16 The timetable works efficiently for me	82.8	81.5	82.4	80.3
E17 Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively	77.5	77.3	74.5	77.5
F00 Learning resources	78.6	82.1	82.5	86.9
F18 The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well	78.4	81.1	80.7	84.2
F19 The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well	78.2	82.2	82.2	88.2
F20 I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to	79.9	83.5	85.1	88.5
G00 Learning community	70.9	71.1	73.1	76.8
G21 I feel part of a community of staff and students	66.8	67.0	68.0	67.7
G22 I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course	75.7	76.3	78.4	86.1
H00 Student voice	74.8	75.1	74.9	73.7
H23 I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course	86.3	86.8	88.1	88.0
H24 Staff value students' views and opinions about the course	77.1	79.9	78.9	75.7
H25 It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on	60.7	58.5	57.4	57.3
H26 The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests	47.0	45.4	49.0	54.5
I00 Overall satisfaction	85.3	84.5	82.2	85.0

Your Learning Experience in Lockdown Survey – Headline Report

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Key Findings

- The student response rate was 17.61%
- There were higher response rates from full time students
- The overall satisfaction rate is lower than typical student surveys at 75%
- Those students with a declared disability have been less satisfied with the COVID arrangements than those with no declared disability.
- Older students are more satisfied with the arrangements put in place by the college than younger students

Background

To support the ongoing provision as a result of COVID-19 pandemic, it was identified that a student survey would be useful to provide a level of feedback about the arrangements put in place. This in relation to teaching and learning arrangements and experience; and the level of support students received, thus determining what had worked well and where there were further areas for improvement.

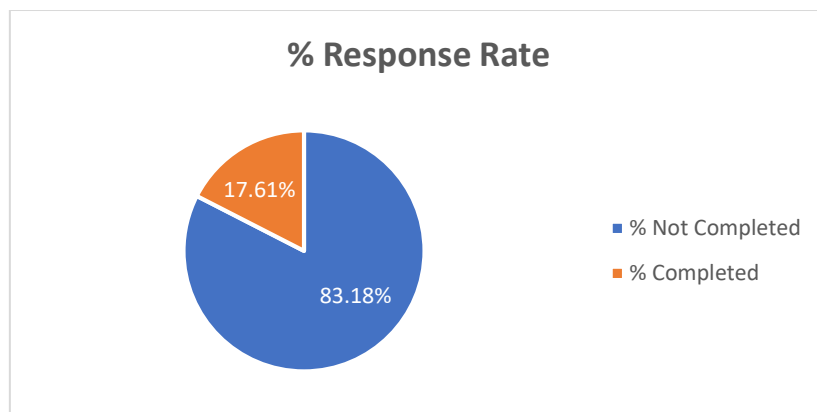
The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the approach to administer the survey, and a cross-organisation summary of the outcomes from the responses provided. The responses to the survey have been made available to curriculum and support teams to inform future planning.

Methodology

The survey was put in place as a result of COVID pandemic, and as such was pulled together in a much shorter timeframe than usual. The survey, open for two weeks, was administered using the usual survey software. An email was sent to all students with an individualised email link to the survey. PDAs and PATs promoted the survey through their contact with students.

Response Rate

4549 students were sent the survey, with 801 students completing the survey resulting in a response rate of just over 17%.



Response Rate by Level and Mode

Level & Mode	Sample Size	Number of Responses	% of Level & Mode Response Rate
FEFT	937	247	26.36%
FEPT	1613	175	10.85%
HEFT	1193	287	24.06%
HEPT	806	92	11.41%

There was a greater response rate seen for full time students, both for FE and HE.

Responses by School

School	Sample Size	No. of Responses	Curriculum Area Response Rate %
Business, Computing & Hospitality	717	147	20.50%
Care, Health & Wellbeing	1176	169	14.37%
Construction & the Built Environment	595	49	8.24%
Creative Arts	926	211	22.79%
Education & Applied Sciences	441	134	30.39%
Engineering Technology	435	57	13.10%
Forestry	224	34	15.18%
Business Solutions	35	0	0.00%

Education & Applied Science, Creative Arts and Business, Computing & Hospitality received the highest percentage of responses. The low response rate seen for Construction & the Built Environment.

Interpretation of the results

In analysing the data, percentages throughout the survey are calculated on the basis of the respondents to the questions.

Within the free text responses, it should be recognised that there are highly individualised responses, and should be noted the free text analysis adds colour to the quantitative data available. It provides assistance to teams by contextualising the quantitative data to identify what is working well or what requires enhancement for their particular service or curriculum area.

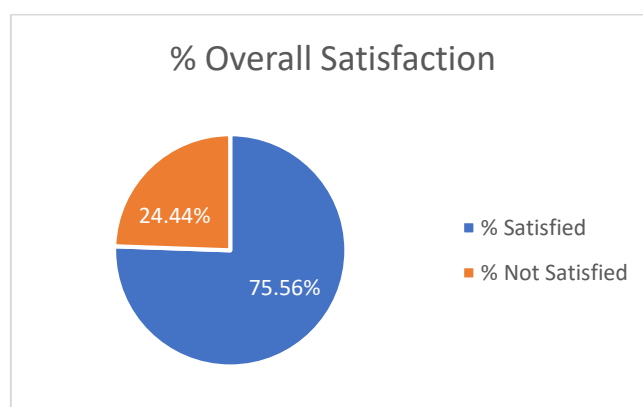
Key:

	Score over 80%
	Score between 70–79%
	Score under 70%

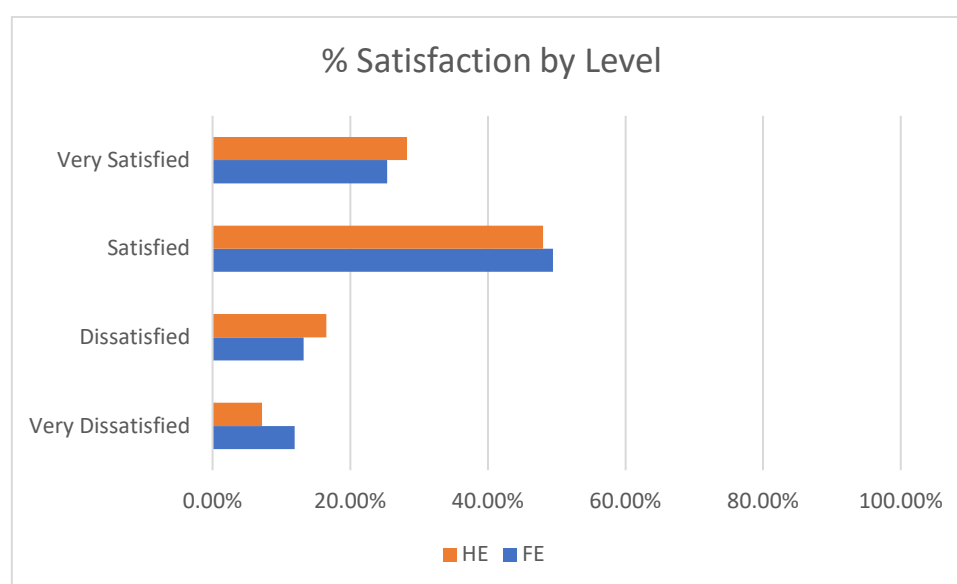
Findings

The data for the satisfaction graphs has been drawn from Question 2: *'I am happy with the way my course has been taught since lockdown and given the restrictions in place'*.

Overall Satisfaction with Learning Experience



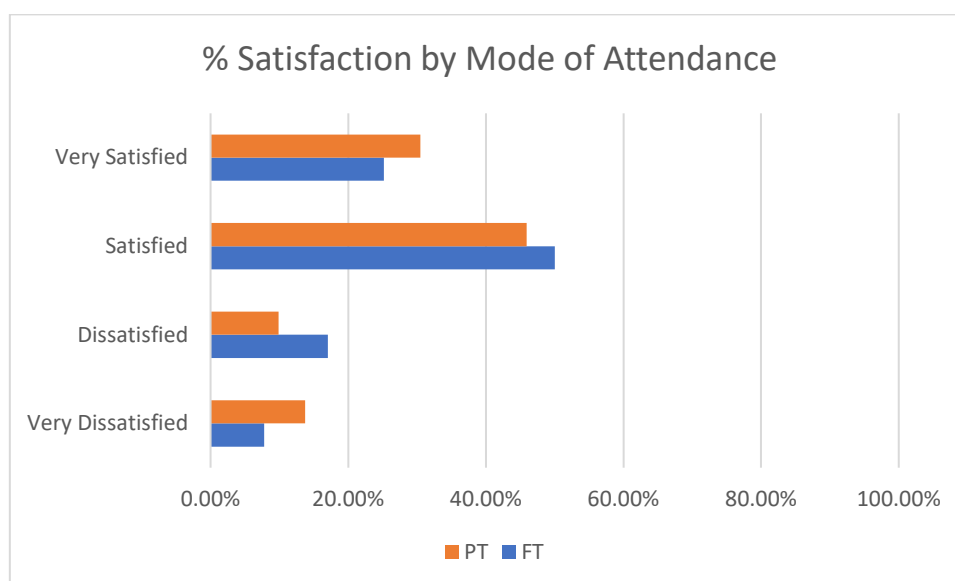
Satisfaction – Level of Study



Level of Study	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
FE	98	191	51	46	386	78.87%
HE	106	180	62	27	375	76.27%

Satisfaction rates broadly comparable across levels.

Satisfaction – Mode of Attendance



MOA	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
FT	133	264	90	41	528	75.19%
PT	71	107	23	32	233	76.39%

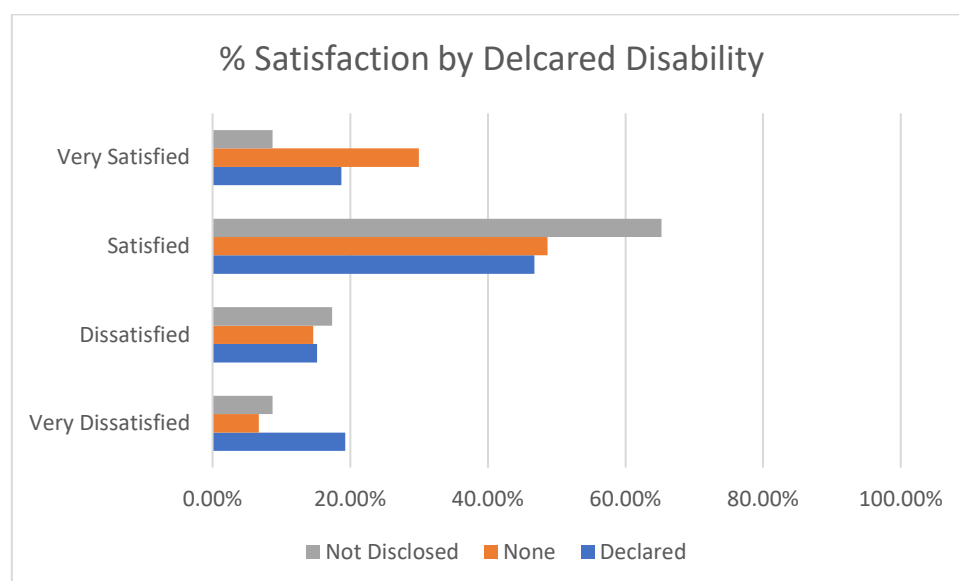
Satisfaction rates are broadly comparable across modes.

Satisfaction - Ethnicity

Ethnic Background	% Satisfaction	Total No. of Responses
BME	83.50%	100
British	72.73%	88
Not given	60.00%	15
Polish	81.25%	48
UK and Irish	85.75%	510

Satisfaction rates are broadly comparable across the majority of categories. Those who did not share their ethnic group are those who respond with lower satisfaction levels.

Satisfaction – Declared Disability



Declared Disability	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
None	170	276	83	38	567	78.66%
Declared	32	80	26	33	171	65.50%
Not Disclosed	2	15	4	2	23	73.91%

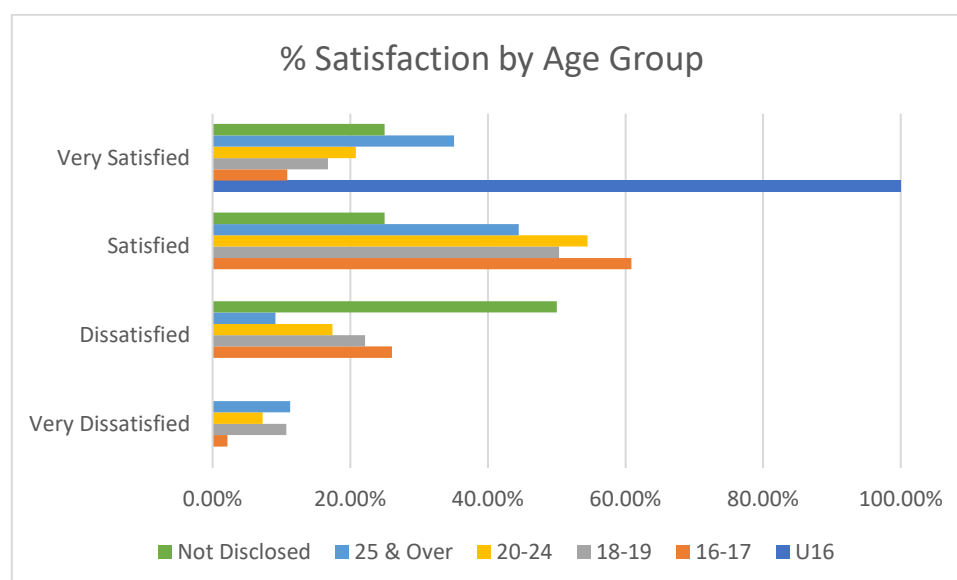
The level of satisfaction for those with a declared disability is lower (over 13%) than those who have not disclosed or do not have a disability. The free text comments give some insight into individual situations but there does not appear to be a strong theme emerging.

	Declared Disability		No Disability		Not Disclosed	
	% Satisfaction	Count	% Satisfaction	Count	% Satisfaction	Count
Business, Computing & Hospitality	72.22%	18	81.30%	123	66.67%	3
Care, Health & Wellbeing	69.57%	23	85.40%	137	80.00%	5
Construction & the Built Environment	87.50%	8	56.76%	37	0%	1
Creative Arts	66.67%	48	75%	156	85.71%	7
Education & Applied Sciences	59.65%	57	90.24%	41	66.67%	6
Engineering Technology	61.54%	13	75%	44	N/A	N/A
Forestry	50%	4	72.41%	29	100%	1

The table above shows disability category by School Area. All Schools scored a lower % satisfaction for the 'Declared Disability' category than the 'No Disability' category with the exception of Construction and the Built Environment.

The categories used to describe the declared disability are broad in nature, and do not highlight individual disabilities. Curriculum teams and the learning support team will need to carry out further analysis to determine whether there are specific support measures that could be put in place for different disabilities within the Schools.

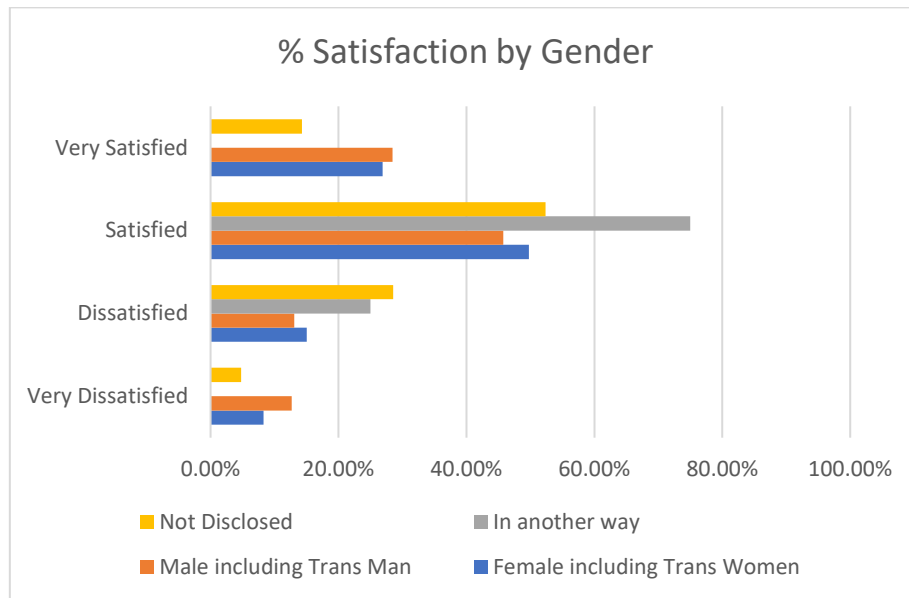
Satisfaction – Age Group



Age Group	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
U16	2	0	0	0	2	100.00%
16-17	5	28	12	1	46	71.74%
18-19	25	75	33	16	149	67.11%
20-24	37	97	31	13	178	75.28%
25 & Over	134	170	35	43	382	79.58%
Not Disclosed	1	1	2	0	4	50.00%

Those students between the ages of 16-19 yo are less satisfied with the arrangements put in place than older students, with a combined satisfaction rate of 68% compared to 75 – 79%.

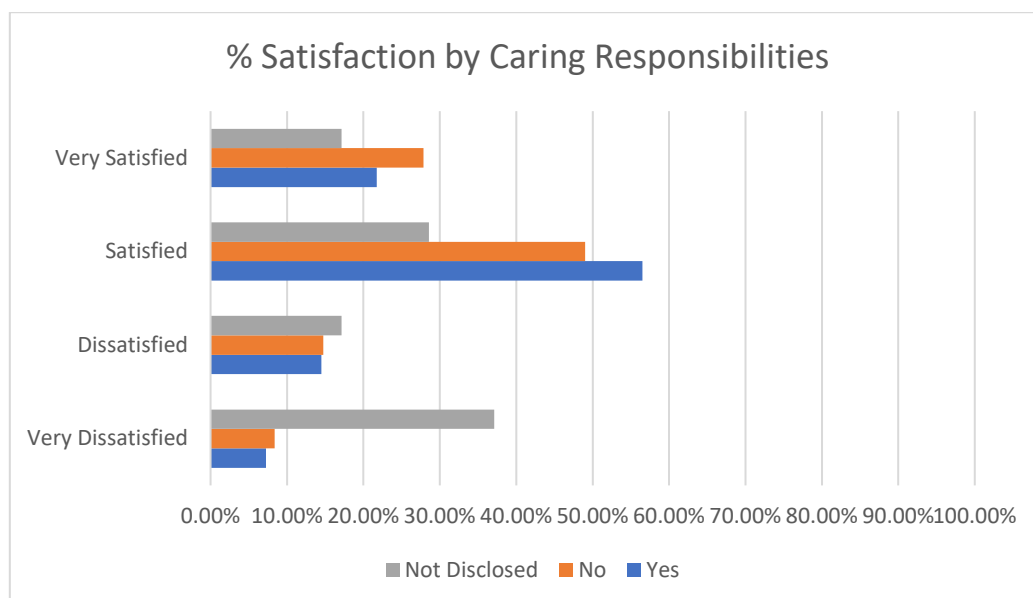
Satisfaction – Gender



Gender	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
Female including Trans Women	127	235	71	39	472	76.69%
Male including Trans Man	74	119	34	33	260	74.23%
In another way	0	6	2	0	8	75%
Not Disclosed	3	11	6	1	21	66.67%

Satisfaction rates broadly comparable across genders.

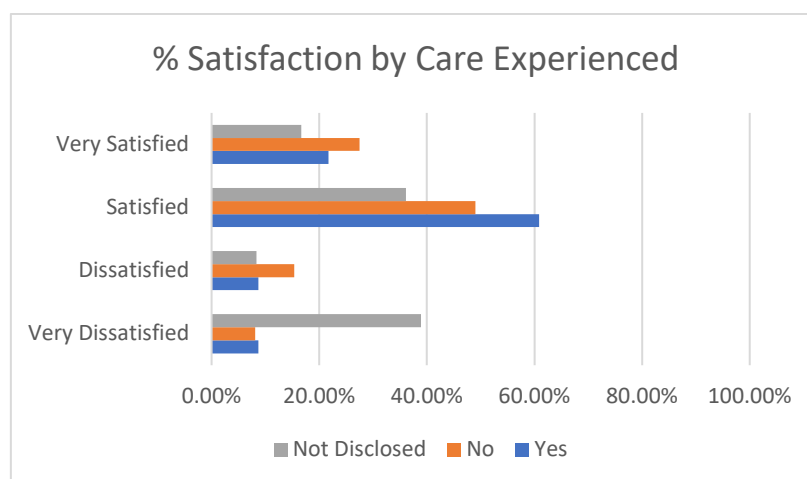
Satisfaction – Caring Responsibilities



Caring Responsibilities	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
Yes	15	39	10	5	69	78.26%
No	183	322	97	55	657	76.86%
Not Disclosed	6	10	6	13	35	45.71%

Satisfaction rates broadly comparable across those groups of students who chose to declare whether or not they have care responsibilities. Those who didn't declare are significantly less satisfied with arrangements. Of the 19 students, 12 are enrolled within the School of Education and Applied Science, 3 in Creative Arts, 2 in Care, Health & Wellbeing, and 1 in each of Business, Computing & Hospitality and Engineering Technology.

Satisfaction - Care Experienced



Care Experienced	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
Yes	5	14	2	2	23	82.61%
No	193	344	108	57	702	76.50%
Not Disclosed	6	13	3	14	36	52.78%

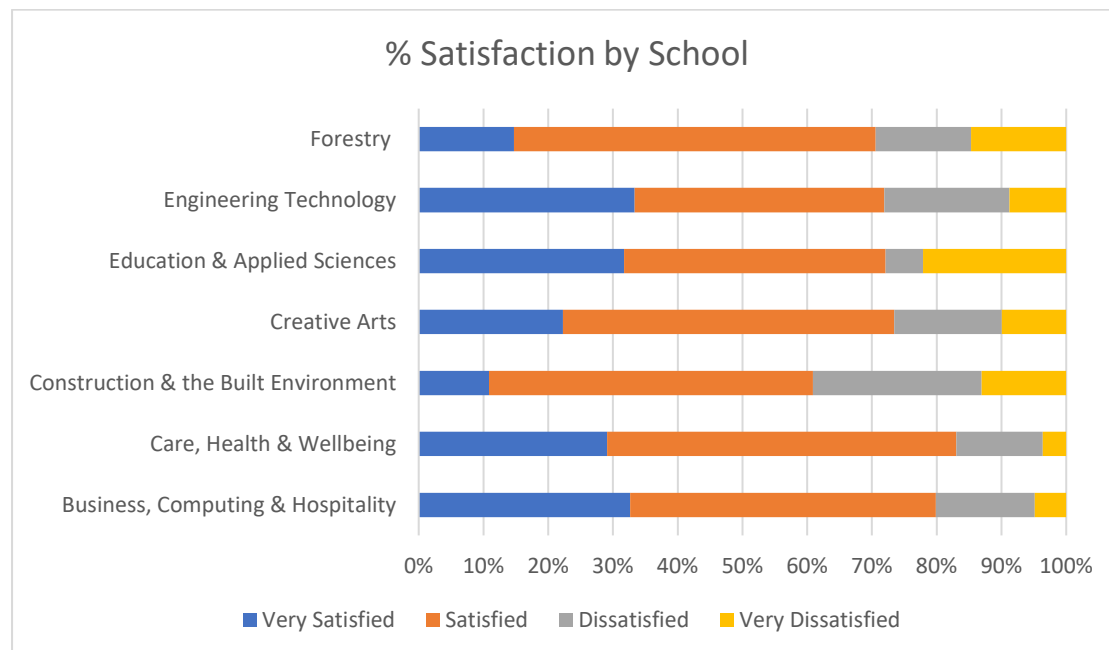
Care experienced students have a higher satisfaction rate than those who are not care experienced.

Satisfaction Rate - School

School	Overall Satisfaction 2020 %	Total (Raw Count)
Business, Computing & Hospitality	79.86%	144
Care, Health & Wellbeing	83.03%	165
Construction & the Built Environment	60.87%	46
Creative Arts	73.46%	211
Education & Applied Sciences	72.12%	104
Engineering Technology	71.93%	57
Forestry	70.59%	34

Two Schools, Care, Health & Wellbeing and Business, Computing & Hospitality, have overall satisfaction rates higher than the overall college satisfaction rate of 75.56%. Construction & the Built Environment is significantly lower at 60.87%. The School will need to review the responses, in line with the number of respondents, to determine the main areas of concern and what could be implemented to improve the experience.

The chart below is provided to demonstrate the spread of the respondents satisfaction.

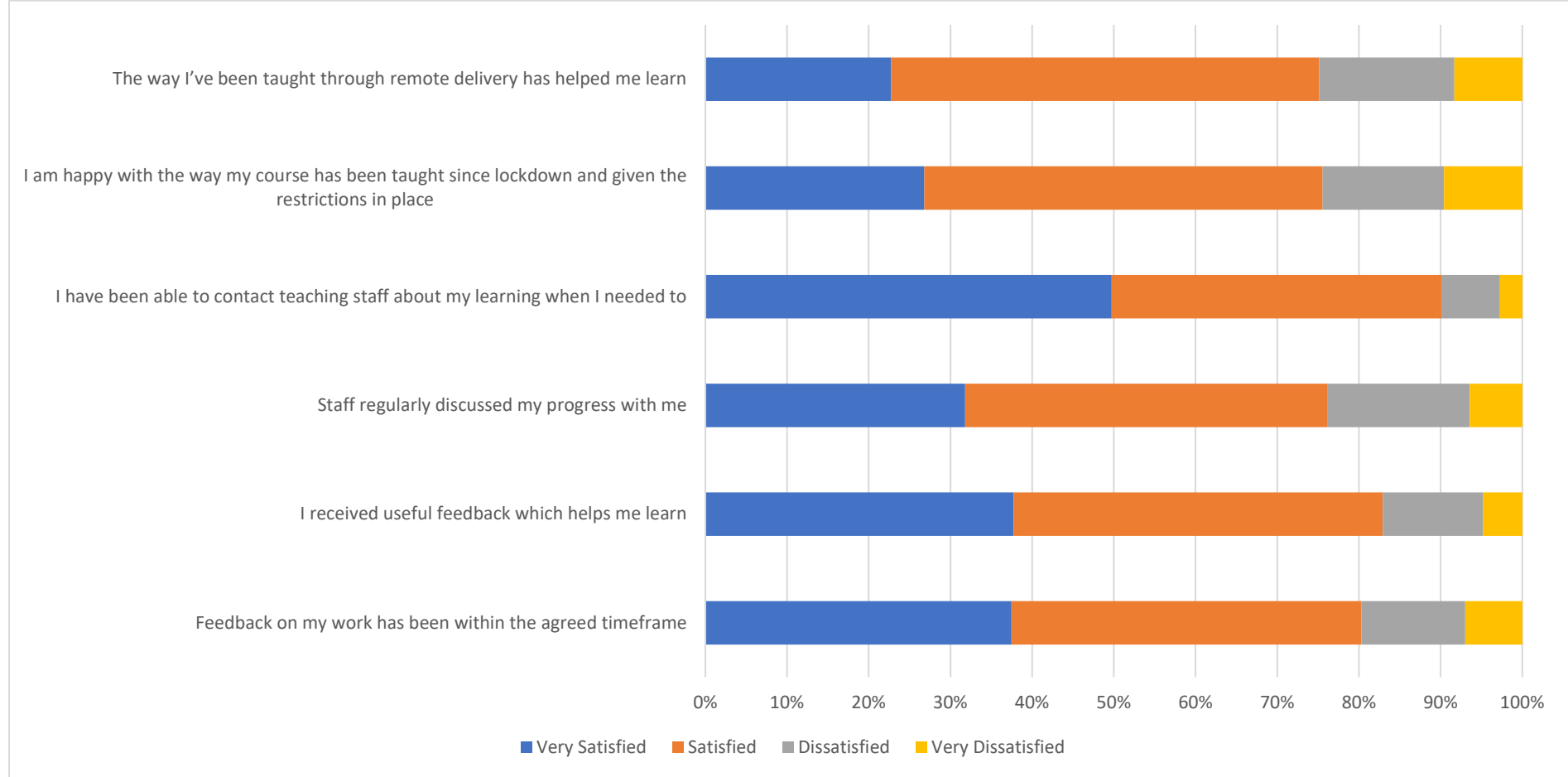


Learning Experience Questions

	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied		Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
1. The way I've been taught through remote delivery has helped me learn	172	22.75%	396	52.38%	125	16.53%	63	8.33%	756	75.13%
2. I am happy with the way my course has been taught since lockdown and given the restrictions in place	204	26.81%	371	48.75%	113	14.85%	73	9.59%	761	75.56%
3. I have been able to contact teaching staff about my learning when I needed to	381	49.74%	309	40.34%	55	7.18%	21	2.74%	766	90.08%
4. Staff regularly discussed my progress with me	237	31.81%	330	44.30%	130	17.45%	48	6.44%	745	76.11%
5. I received useful feedback which helps me learn	285	37.75%	341	45.17%	93	12.32%	36	4.77%	755	82.91%
6. Feedback on my work has been within the agreed timeframe	274	37.48%	313	42.82%	93	12.72%	51	6.98%	731	80.30%

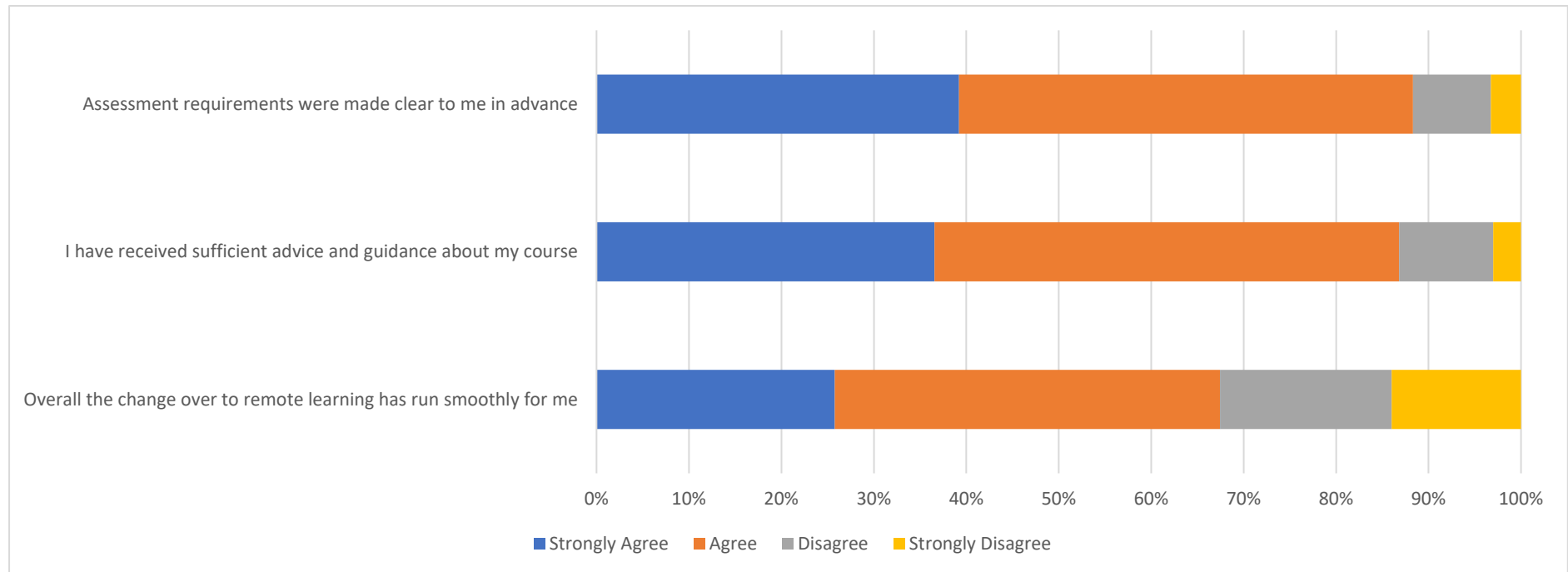
Contact with teaching staff, receiving valuable feedback have scored highly in this section. There is a tension between these responses and response to the question regarding progress. General satisfaction and the method of teaching score the lowest for this section.

The chart below is provided to demonstrate the spread of the respondents' satisfaction.



		Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
7	Assessment requirements were made clear to me in advance	289	39.21%	362	49.12%	62	8.41%	24	3.26%	737	88.33%
8	I have received sufficient advice and guidance about my course	280	36.55%	385	50.26%	78	10.18%	23	3.00%	766	86.81%
9	Overall, the change to remote learning has run smoothly for me	190	25.78%	307	41.66%	137	18.59%	103	13.98%	737	67.44%

Q9 is the lowest scoring response of the survey. The free text comments shed some light on this in relation to individual circumstances. In some cases, students express the college have done all they could, but individual commitments have had the biggest impact on study. Further analysis is required at School and service team level. The chart below is provided to demonstrate the spread of the respondents' satisfaction.



		Business, Computing & Hospitality	Care, Health & Well-being	Construction & the Built Environment	Creative Arts	Education & Applied Sciences	Engineering Technology	Forestry
1	The way I've been taught through remote delivery has helped me learn	78.32%	81.55%	60.00%	74.16%	70.30%	75.00%	70.59%
2	I am happy with the way my course has been taught since lockdown and given the restrictions in place	79.86%	83.03%	60.87%	73.46%	72.12%	71.93%	70.59%
3	I have been able to contact teaching staff about my learning when I needed to	91.72%	89.88%	86.96%	86.12%	97.20%	92.98%	85.29%
4	Staff regularly discussed my progress with me	75.36%	75.76%	66.67%	70.30%	89.62%	81.82%	76.47%
5	I received useful feedback which helps me learn	80.85%	77.84%	71.74%	82.30%	92.16%	92.86%	91.18%
6	Feedback on my work has been within the agreed timeframe	80.71%	77.30%	73.33%	75.61%	94.51%	88.68%	79.41%
7	Assessment requirements were made clear to me in advance	88.89%	89.76%	80.00%	86.27%	97.78%	83.64%	84.85%
8	I have received sufficient advice and guidance about my course	89.73%	87.50%	80.43%	81.73%	96.33%	87.27%	79.41%
9	Overall the change over to remote learning has run smoothly for me	71.94%	75.82%	57.78%	66.18%	64.15%	62.50%	50.00%

The Schools of Creative Arts, Education & Applied Science, Engineering Technology and Forestry have reasonably high levels of satisfaction across all of the questions with the exception of Q9. Business, Computing & Hospitality and Care, Health & Wellbeing score well for this question, suggesting these two Schools may have implemented the change to remote learning in a more effective way for their students than the other Schools. The amount of existing on line delivery may also have impacted on this more positive score. Construction & the Built Environment have received a broad spread of satisfaction across the questions, which gives interesting insight into the overall satisfaction level of just over 60%. The extent of practical skills required within individual programmes may have impacted on the lower scoring questions.

Platforms

	Very Satisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied		Total (Raw Count)	% Satisfaction
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
10 BrightSpace	239	35.15%	354	52.06%	63	9.26%	23	3.53%	680	87.21%
11 Collaborate	111	27.14%	210	51.34%	53	12.96%	35	8.56%	409	78.48%
12 E-mail	343	46.48%	346	46.88%	34	4.61%	15	2.03%	738	93.36%
13 Google Classroom	35	27.13%	67	51.94%	19	14.73%	8	6.20%	129	79.07%
14 Google Hangouts	17	18.28%	54	58.06%	15	16.13%	7	7.53%	93	76.34%
15 Mahara	22	22.00%	51	51%	16	16%	11	11%	100	73.00%
16 Proof Positive	43	36.13%	56	47.06%	14	11.76%	6	5.04%	119	83.19%
17 Skype	46	31.08%	78	52.70%	17	11.49%	7	4.73%	148	83.78%
18 VC Webex	108	27.91%	211	54.52%	48	12.40%	20	5.17%	387	82.43%

Email and Brightspace have scored most highly in relation to the platforms used by staff to deliver the programmes, and had the most respondents. Teams will be able to make good use of the feedback received about Brightspace through the SSES to further enhance modules for students in terms of accessibility, consistency, content. Consideration needs to be given to the use of varying platforms, and how each platform has been received by student groups.

Departments

		Completely Met My Needs		Partially Met My Needs		Did Not Meet My Needs		Total (Raw Count)
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
19	Additional Learning Support Needs	106	59.89%	57	32.20%	14	7.91%	177
20	Library Resources	233	58.40%	143	35.84%	23	5.76%	399
21	SkillZone	93	64.14%	44	30.34%	8	5.52%	145
22	Wellbeing & Counselling	92	56.10%	55	33.54%	17	10.37%	164
23	PDA / PAT	445	73.31%	129	21.25%	33	5.44%	607
24	ICT	159	59.55%	94	35.21%	14	5.24%	267
25	HISA	86	51.81%	57	34.34%	23	13.86%	166
26	Student Funding	217	65.96%	85	25.84%	27	8.21%	329

PDAs and PATs met over 70% of students needs completely during this lockdown period. This is the highest scoring response in this section. Other areas range from 51.81% (HISA) to 65.96% (student funding). HISA have the highest percentage of respondents expressing they did not meet students' needs, followed by wellbeing and counselling at 10.37%. The proportion of responses that indicated their needs had been partially met is high, ranging from 21.25% (PATs / PDAs) to 35.84% (library resources). Support teams will need to further analyse the data to determine the potential reasons for this pattern.

Free Text Comments – Student Support Services

- PDA / PAT feedback generally very positive
- Wellbeing emails and communications well received

Student suggestions:

- Could e-books be made available for a longer timeframe?
- Sessions on specific software needed for course to be delivered before needed for coursework and assessment

Free Text Comments – Learning & Teaching Experience

Comments are highly individualised. Broad themes emerging include:

- Lack of consistency on Brightspace with regards to module organisation
- Bongo, collaborate, mahara are not well liked – confusing, limited capacity (Bongo)
- Shift to online learning a transition – some students coped better than others
- Concerns around continued IT issues – specification, internet connectivity

- Inconsistency of lecturers approaches within same curriculum area – response to emails, confidence with software,
- Strong sense of even if things weren't quite right, lecturers were doing their best to help.
- A sense that just because it's possible to do online it may not be the best approach, for example, supported education, art & design

Student suggestions:

- Phone calls with lecturers
- Agreed dates for assessments (those from closed to open, but with time limit)
- A greater number of Webex live lectures to replicate face to face delivery

Recommendations:

- Schools to share experience of transition to online learning and teaching in order to share effective practice
- Collation and publication of organisation wide staff development opportunities to support staff with on-line delivery
- Positive feedback for PDAs / PATs received through this survey and SSES. There may be a tension between remote working and the building of a similarly effective relationship. Explore feasibility of face to face inductions and PDA sessions at the start of the new AY.
- Consider how students with declared disability can be better supported through online learning. Explore the possibility of peer mentors.
- Confirm position of IT platform usage, and determine steps to better equip students to use them
- Explore the feasibility of the student suggestions presented

University of the Highlands and Islands

Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is a national survey, co-ordinated by Advance HE, and run by the university using 'Online Surveys' software.
- 1.2 The survey was run by EO Student Services.
- 1.3 The survey ran from 13/04/20 until 05/06/20.
- 1.4 It is the opportunity for taught postgraduates to feedback their experiences on teaching and learning, and the most significant survey of taught postgraduates in the UK.
- 1.5 The survey is confidential, and the results are anonymised so that no individual can be identified during the reporting.

2. Executive summary

- 2.1 The overall satisfaction rate for UHI was **85%** while the average overall satisfaction rate for Scottish institutions was 78%.
- 2.2 In 2019 the overall satisfaction rate for UHI was **89%**, while the Scottish average was 80%.
- 2.3 The overall response rate for the survey at UHI was **14%** with a Scottish response rate of 19.6%.
- 2.4 Response rates have decreased from 2019 when it was 31.5% with a national response rate of 31%.
- 2.5 At UHI the survey took place entirely within the COVID-19 lockdown. In order to provide a reliable comparison, HEA have only analysed data gathered during lockdown.
- 2.6 When ranked, UHI placed **13th out of 57 participating institutions for overall satisfaction.**
- 2.7 In 2019 we ranked 10th out of 84 participating institutions (some did not participate this year due to COVID-19)
- 2.8 As in 2019, the statements with the **highest scores** were related to **teaching, assessment and information.**
- 2.9 Statements with the **lowest scores** related **to information, resources and skills development,** the latter two in common with 2019.
- 2.10 The university is still performing **above the Scottish average in all but one area,** which is resources.
- 2.11 **Resources** is also the only area we rank significantly lower than other institutions overall – being **50th out of 57 institutions UK wide.**

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- 2.12 This year, for the first time, each student was sent a personal login removing the need to enter a username and password. This resulted in a significant reduction in survey access issues reported to us.

3. Summary of results by area and benchmarking

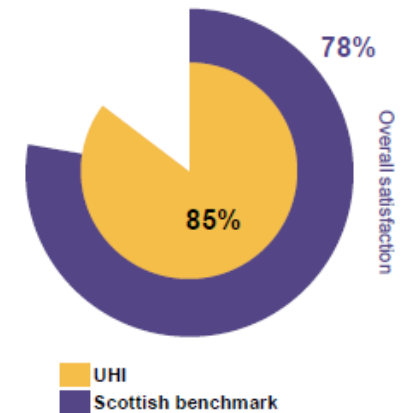
- 3.1 The University has received a higher overall satisfaction level than the Scottish average. UHI is also ahead of the Scottish average in all areas other than resources. In comparison to 2019 our overall satisfaction level has reduced from 89% to 85%, while the Scottish average reduced from 80% to 79%.

PTES 2020: UHI and the Scottish Benchmark

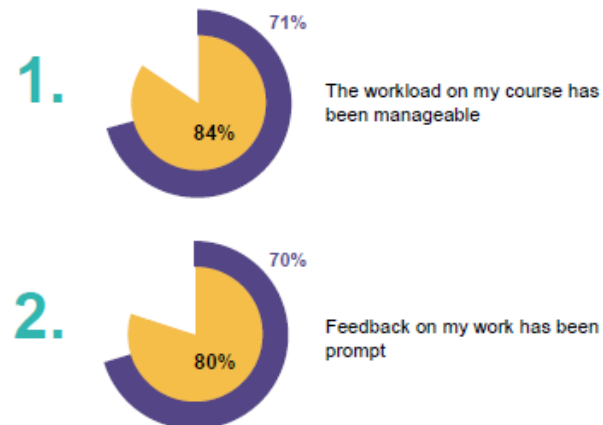
Overview

At UHI there were 117 respondents to PTES 2020. The overall satisfaction they had with their studies was 85%, this was 7% higher than the score for the Scottish arithmetic mean.

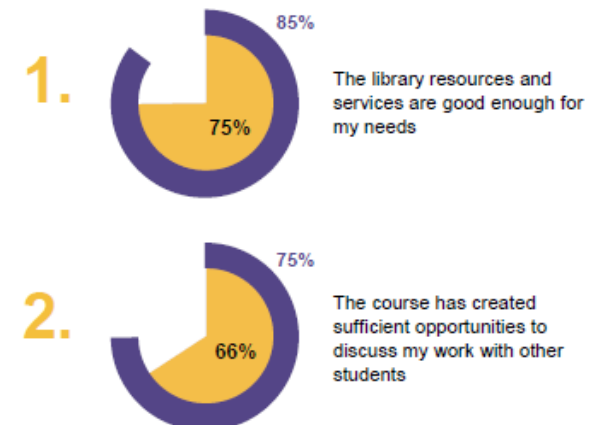
84% of students stated the workload on the course was manageable, 13% above the Scottish arithmetic mean benchmark. Less positively, relative to the benchmark, just 75% of respondents stated the library resources and services were good enough.



Most positive statements



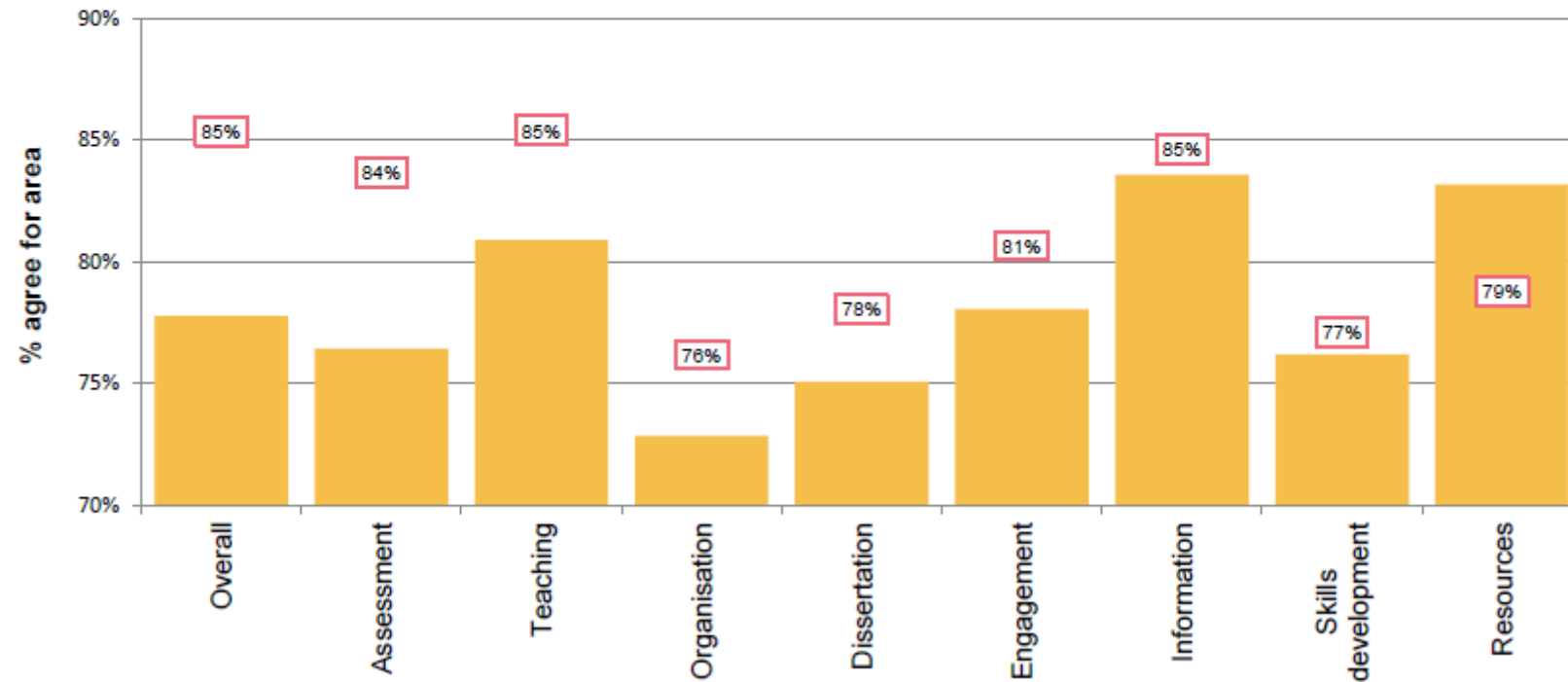
Most negative statements



Scores by area of experience

The graph below shows the position of UHI in relation to institutions in the Scottish arithmetic mean benchmark. UHI mostly had more positive responses than the average.

Key:	50%	UHI
		Average score for Scottish arithmetic mean institution



3.2 The University is placed 13th overall in the UK out of 57

PTES 2020 sector ranking for University of the Highlands and Islands

At a glance

13th

out of 57

Overall

13th

out of 57

Teaching

21st

out of 57

Engagement

12th

out of 57

Assessment

19th

out of 57

Organisation

50th

out of 57

Resources

33rd

out of 57

Skills development

32nd

out of 56

Information

part. A number of institutions did not participate this year due to COVID-19.

4. Comparison of programmes and academic partners

- 4.1.1 Detailed information on programmes is available on request.
- 4.1.2 To the overall satisfaction question, our programmes are ranked as follows. The first column shows all who chose 'definitely' or 'mostly' agree that they are satisfied with their course. The reporting threshold for individual courses is five students.
- 4.1.3 Response rates are shown as a percentage of possible responders and the actual number of students who responded.
- 4.1.4 The lower response rate this year accounts for why relatively few courses met the reporting threshold.

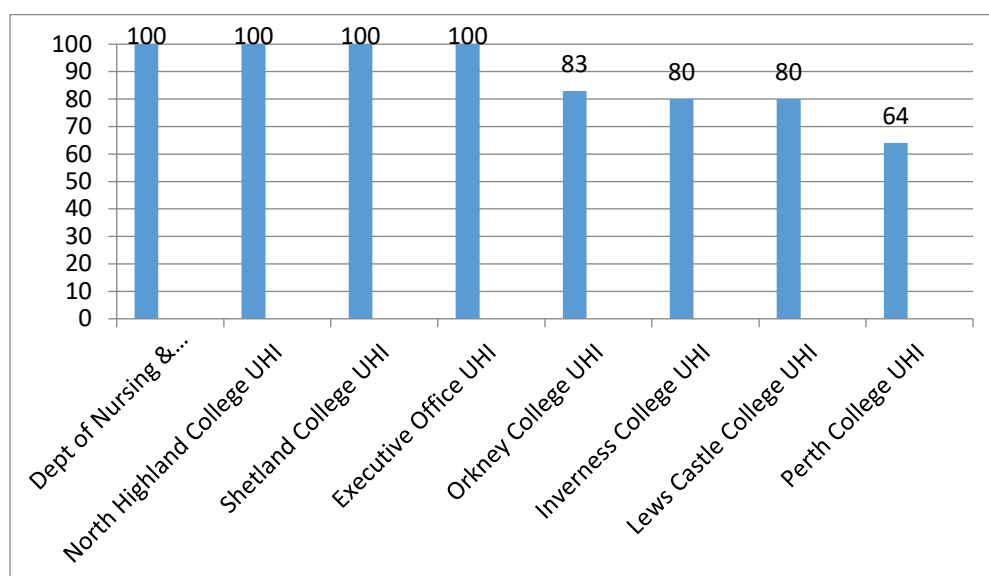
	Combined satisfaction rate %	Definitely agree (satisfaction) %	Mostly agree (satisfaction) %	Response Rate %	Response Rate – Number
Art and Social Practice MA	100	75	25	33	12
Sustainable Rural Development MSc	100	78	22	35	9
Archaeological Studies MLitt	88	63	25	22	8
University average	85	57	28	14	117
Viking Studies MLitt	83	83	0	24	6
Health and Wellbeing MA	80	60	20	9	5
Leadership and Management MSc	66	33	33	21	6
Tertiary and Higher Education Med	66	44	22	20	9
Advanced Nurse Practitioner MSc	-	-	-	5	4
Aquaculture, Environment and Society MSc	-	-	-	3	1
Archaeological Practice MSc	-	-	-	10	1
Aviation MBA	-	-	-	10	1
British Studies MLitt	-	-	-	29	2
Business Administration MBA	-	-	-	11	3
Coastal and Maritime Societies and Cultures MLitt				0	0
Critical Enquiry MEd	-	-	-	6	2
Developing Low Carbon Communities MSc	-	-	-	25	1
Digital Pedagogy MEd	-	-	-	15	2
Engineering Scheme MSc	-	-	-	25	2
Global Entrepreneurship PGCert	-	-	-	40	2
Health Leadership and Management PGCert				0	0
Highlands and Islands Culture MLitt	-	-	-	25	1
Highlands and Islands Literature MLitt	-	-	-	33	1

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History and Archaeology of the Highlands and Islands MLitt	-	-	-	10	1
History MLitt	-	-	-	17	2
History of the Highlands and Islands MLitt	-	-	-	16	3
Human Resource Management MSc	-	-	-	5	1
Infection Prevention and Control MSc	-	-	-	4	1
Interpretation - Management and Practice MSc	-	-	-	11	1
Island Studies MLitt	-	-	-	11	1
Material Culture and Gaidhealtachd History MSc	-	-	-	33	2
Midwifery PgDip	-	-	-	3	3
Music and the Environment MA	-	-	-	40	4
Orkney and Shetland Studies MLitt	-	-	-	50	1
PG Dip Teaching Qualification (practitioner route)	-	-	-	6	2
Psychology Conversion MSc	-	-	-	15	4
Research Methods PGCert	-	-	-	30	3
Resilience Leadership and Management PGCert	-	-	-	33	1
Specialist Qualification in Headship MEd				0	0
Sustainable Energy Solutions MSc	-	-	-	13	3
Sustainable Mountain Development MSc	-	-	-	12	3
Tourist Guiding North Highlands CertHE	-	-	-	17	3
Web Technologies MSc	-	-	-	0	0

4.1.5 The chart below shows the overall course satisfaction rate % for each academic partner.

S.A.M.S UHI, Sabhal Mor Ostaig UHI and West Highland College UHI had response rates below 5 so are not included.



5. Table of all responses by category and question

- 5.1 In all overall categories and individual questions other than resources, the university has a higher score than the Scottish average.
- 5.2 Students often express a greater satisfaction with their course as a whole than individual aspects of their student experience.
- 5.3 Teaching – most questions score highly in this area with the exception of contact time and support from staff on the course.
- 5.4 Engagement – scores highly with the exception of opportunities to discuss the course with other students.
- 5.5 Assessment and dissertation – high scores are recorded with the exception of feedback, progress support and timescales for marking.
- 5.6 Organisation – support at the start of the course, organisation and involvement in decision making are the weaker areas in this section.
- 5.7 Resources – library resources and course – specific resources score lower than other areas.
- 5.8 Skills development – within the course and in terms of career preparation are lower scoring areas.

	UHI - 2020	Scottish sector - 2020	UHI – 2019	Scottish sector – 2019
Overall Satisfaction	85%	79%	89%	80%
Teaching	85%	81%	85%	83%
1. Staff are good at explaining things	87%	86%	89%	87%
2. Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	91%	86%	93%	89%
3. The course is intellectually stimulating	91%	85%	95%	86%
4. The course has enhanced my academic ability	90%	83%	91%	86%
5. The learning materials provided on my course are useful	86%	82%	86%	83%
6. There is sufficient contact time to support effective learning	72%	69%	67%	66%
7. I am happy with the support for my learning I receive from staff on my course	80%	76%	75%	74%
Engagement	81%	78%	81%	78%

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1. I am encouraged to ask questions or make contributions in taught sessions	88%	88%	92%	86%
2. The course has created sufficient opportunities to discuss my work with other students	66%	75%	63%	75%
3. My course has challenged me to produce my best work	85%	81%	86%	81%
4. The workload on my course has been manageable	84%	71%	78%	71%
5. I have appropriate opportunities to give feedback on my experience	79%	76%	84%	77%
Assessment	84%	76%	82%	72%
1. The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance	83%	80%	85%	75%
2. Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair	86%	79%	85%	72%
3. Feedback on my work has been prompt	80%	70%	73%	67%
4. Feedback on my work has been useful	86%	77%	84%	72%
Dissertation	78%	75%	82%	79%
1. I understand the required standards for the dissertation / major project	81%	77%	80%	81%
2. I am happy with the support I received for planning my dissertation / major project	74%	68%	73%	72%
3. My supervisor has the skills and subject knowledge to adequately support my dissertation / major project	82%	82%	93%	84%
4. My supervisor provides helpful feedback on my progress	75%	72%	84%	78%
Organisation	76%	73%	75%	73%
1. The timetable fits well with my other commitments	84%	77%	77%	76%
2. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively	81%	82%	78%	78%
3. The course is well organised and is running smoothly	78%	71%	81%	72%
4. I was given appropriate guidance and support when I started my course	79%	77%	82%	75%

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5. I am encouraged to be involved in decisions about how my course is run	60%	57%	54%	61%
Resources	79%	83%	80%	85%
1. The library resources and services are good enough for my needs	75%	85%	79%	86%
2. I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to	84%	86%	84%	89%
3. I have been able to access subject specific resources necessary for my studies	73%	80%	83%	85%
4. I am aware of how to access the support services at my institution	82%	80%	72%	78%
Skills Development	77%	76%	74%	77%
1. As a result of the course I am more confident about independent learning	82%	81%	82%	82%
2. My confidence to be innovative or creative has developed during my course	80%	76%	74%	73%
3. My research skills have developed during my course	86%	81%	87%	83%
4. My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my course	75%	76%	66%	75%
5. I have been encouraged to think about what skills I need to develop for my career	65%	72%	64%	74%
6. As a result of the course I feel better prepared for my future career	73%	71%	69%	75%
Information	85%	84%	87%	84%
1. Information for prospective students was easy to find	85%	84%	88%	86%
2. Information for prospective students was useful	83%	85%	89%	87%
3. Information for prospective students was accurate	86%	81%	84%	80%

6. Analysis of free text comments

6.1 Due to the limited number of free text comments, and the breadth of their content, it is difficult to draw conclusions on a programme level. However, selected comments that are representative of comments received have been identified and grouped into themes in this section.

6.1.1 Free text comments tend to have a more negative tone than overall scoring. This is likely because respondents are being asked to think carefully about the question and in particular if there are areas they would like to see improvement.

6.1.2 The analysis below is provided to give an idea of areas that could be enhanced.

6.2 Quality of learning and teaching comments

6.2.1 The responsiveness of / general contact with academic staff was a recurring theme:

- “During this time it has been difficult to gain clear updates from tutors – I appreciate the timing and holidays but the uncertainty has been disconcerting.”
- “Haven't had any direct feedback from my department since the uni shut down although my PAT did email me. But I have been in the dark other than by generic statements.”
- “I have had no synchronous contact with staff. The only learning contact is via a forum where we answer pre-set questions, and there are only written notes in the guise of lectures. I have found this uninspiring and frankly difficult to remain engaged with.”

6.2.2 However, other students remarked on the high level of contact with and support from academic staff:

- “Two modules have been great, really well set up and organised with lots of contact and support.”
- “As always, teaching staff are of a very high level and always available for feedback.”
- “Tutors go above and beyond their responsibilities to work around students requirements and if anything are likely to compromise their own wellbeing by giving up chunks of their own time into late evening etc to accommodate awkward requests.”

6.2.3 The quality of module learning resources was frequently mentioned:

- “Some of my modules had excellent resources, in particular the [module]run by [lecturer]. Some have been nothing short of atrocious. The [module] had significant and repeated errors in the learning materials which led to me finding the module almost impossible.”
- “The instructor is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about his course. However since COVID he simply uploaded lectures from last year.”
- “The learning materials have not fulfilled the expectations I have of course. I feel this is case in regards to both the nature and content of the learning materials and in terms of their overall quality.”
- “Most if not all the materials recommended for reading were out of date. Are courses ever updated?”

6.2.4 Students also commented on their desire for discussion and participation opportunities:

- “Some classes are more friendly and interactive than others and for me personally, I find it better if the lecturer can manage to encourage more participation during the online classes.
- “I feel that there was not enough stimulation from tutors on the discussion board when it started to flag and falter, as it always seems to do on all modules I have done. Not enough injection of stimulating thought to add to the lectures if they haven't sparked enough discussion in themselves.”
- “I wonder if the number of students enrolled directly affected the experience during face to face (virtual) contact time - the smaller class made it difficult to get more discussions going.”

6.2.5 Many students made reference to their appreciation of staff:

- “I completed this course under challenging personal circumstances and was supported by the staff to get myself through.”
- “Really helpful tutors who are very engaging and explain things really well.”
- “[This is] an acknowledgment to the determination and hard work of the staff to provide support to students through this difficult time.”

6.3 Engagement comments

6.3.1 Within engagement the most frequent comments related to opportunities for online discussion:

- “There has been little to no engagement in some of my modules however I appreciate it is a fully online course and therefore some participants will choose not to engage with the discussion boards made available. I don't think the 10% of module grade attached to discussion boards is sufficient to encourage engagement.”
- “Discussion boards are very good resources but lecturers use them in different ways- some more effectively than others.”
- “A number of lectures did not provide the chance for the more timid or some people on the VC to engage in debate or discussion. Many lectures were dominated by the same students contributing and I felt that more could have been done at times to include others.”
- “Some classes make full use of the discussion boards, actively encourage small groups and tutor sessions. Others have not.”

6.3.2 The second largest group of comments were related to managing the workload, partly due to the impact of coronavirus:

- “Workload is well placed throughout the course, however Covid 19 has impacted in that I am now juggling [childcare], my own employment + home schooling in addition to [course].”
- “The course work has not been manageable for me but that has been in the context of the CV outbreak, severe difficulties at work with funding, having to home school the children and caring for my [relative]. That is not the fault of the course, but it has made it very difficult to manage this year's work.”
- “The workload on learning materials are too much.”
- “The amount of reading and writing within tight deadlines is utterly unmanageable. It would be hard work for someone who was studying fulltime, let alone in a few grabbed hours of an evening. No compensation has been made for the fact that I work a 6 day week in my [workplace]. UHI seems deadline-obsessed rather than supporting each student individually.”

6.4 Assessment and feedback comments

6.4.1 The most frequent comments related to the usefulness of feedback, with many students saying that it was not useful:

- “The feedback on two modules I attend have been very brief, which is annoying as I want more explanation.”
- “Marking is poor, usually a shortish comment which doesn't explain how to achieve a higher mark next time; too often comments hone in on one small point in my assignment, which feels ridiculous when nothing else is referred to. The comments do not refer to the assessment criteria at all...”
- “I find it difficult to know from the feedback what to improve. So, great written feedback, really complimentary and positive and then I get [mark]. The feedback doesn't tell me how to improve to get a higher score. I'd like that information.”
- “More developmental feedback would be beneficial, but again this varies from tutor to tutor. A tutorial to give further feedback was useful however the feedback given did not reflect the mark.”

6.4.2 However, many students commented that feedback had been useful:

- “Feedback from [tutor] has always been very helpful and constructive.”
- “Feedback good, tutors always willing to give additional feedback.”
- “...quality and usefulness of comments had been excellent...”
- “Feedback is always thorough and helpful.”

6.4.3 Many comments related to the timeliness or lack of feedback:

- “Took months to get a mark from the [course].”
- “Some modules did not provide feedback until the very end of the marking deadline, which in some cases was too close to the submission deadline of the next assignment. As a result, any criteria highlighted by the lecturers was hastily applied to the assignments due.”
- “I never got feedback for my dissertation presentation in my dissertation module.”
- “For semester two, I received no written feedback on the assignments due in May. If there was any I have not been able to access it or have missed it. There were [a number of assignments] due at that time. I am not sure where to look if feedback is not emailed to me.”

6.4.4 Others said they would like more information on marking criteria:

- “It would be useful to have a copy of the marking grid and detailed assessment grid with the assessment itself, so that I didn't have to search/ask for it.”
- “No use of rubrics or indications of what assessment criteria would be.”
- “I'm none the wiser as to the marking criteria. I just follow what I'm told to do but to be frank I don't really understand what I actually need to do to pass. This should be in a document online. Maybe it is?”
- “The marking criteria sheet was not supplied in advance, just some generic statements regarding the expected content.”

6.5 Dissertation or major project comments

6.5.1 The most frequent comments related to supervisor support, with the majority of comments expressing satisfaction:

- “[Lecturer] is my supervisor and he has been really helpful, he has encouraged a group of 2 other students and myself to work together which is also helping with motivation. I'm in the early stages of writing my dissertation but [lecturer] has been helpful in providing advice and helpful feedback so far.”
- “My supervisor was better than I could ever have imagined. A real professional.”
- “Very happy with my supervisors and their enthusiasm and knowledge has been a great help. Contact was regular and they were easy to approach with any questions.”
- “My supervisor has been brilliant, very supportive and knew a lot about my topic.”

6.5.2 However, some students had negative comments about their supervisor's support:

- “I do not consider myself to have a research supervisor. I was not assigned a supervisor until [time] into the course... [The support from the supervisor has been extremely lacking]...I asked for a new research supervisor...however I was told this could not happen in time.”
- “I have had very limited contact with my supervisor.”
- “I wasn't happy with the amount of support I got from my supervisor. They were quite disorganised...[I received conflicting advice and feedback]. They also didn't take an active role with setting deadlines...and didn't really seem to be engaged or care about my process that much.”

6.5.3 A few students commented that they would have benefited from more general guidance:

- “I have been given no information at all about how to plan my dissertation (due to start at the beginning of next semester. I am strongly considering not continuing.”
- “I just felt not quite enough guidance at the end.”
- “Currently awaiting guidelines for changes to structure due to COVID.”
- “I think it would have been helpful prior to submitting the project proposal last year to have had discussions about the scale of projects - some have been much larger and more complicated than others.”

6.6 Organisation and management comments

6.6.1 Comments were wide ranging with few patterns. One theme related to communication about changes or out-of-date information:

- “...frequent changes with little communication...”
- “There have been several schedule changes that have been confusing and the course flow has become somewhat disjointed.”
- “...even before [coronavirus] there were a lot of class cancellations or re-scheduling dates repeatedly. Often people show up to a class on VC, and the lecturer does not show up...there’s no clarity, but when we ask for clarity, we are just told ‘look in your handbook/revised diary – it’s crystal clear’. But it really isn’t crystal clear. As evidenced by the fact that staff themselves miss these events, or [day] dates are labelled [day] etc/last year’s data is still visible online, issuing of previous years handbooks, etc.”
- “The course handbook contain lots of out of date or missing information especially around the timetables section. It would be good to have clarity regarding the timetabling of modules especially when trying to coordinate choices between semester 1 and 2. Many of the modules contain old information - dates on assessments etc are often from 2 years ago, leading to confusion.”

6.6.2 Students also mentioned issues to do with the VLE and other technological challenges:

- “...occasional technological issues which aren't the fault of the course organisers e.g. guest speakers sound over Webex is difficult to hear.”
- “...there was no orientation to the individual idiosyncrasies of UHI's ICT systems as a distance learner.”

- “There have been IT issues over accessing some journals remotely and I feel tutors may not believe or want to be troubled by such issues – they definitely seem to feel it is initially an issue from a student not being aware of how to search electronically rather than try to help with resolving the issue. The IT desk are very helpful. Lecture notes are still citing Blackboard, and some lecturers still don't know how to upload their notes so all can see them - I have often had to let tutors know that their links/notes/references are missing.”

6.6.3 However, there were also many positive comments made:

- “Again the two academic modules have been well organised and prepared.”
- “Due to COVID there have been some changes, but we are always kept informed and have regular Webinar updates that keep us informed if any issues and opportunity to voice concerns.”
- “All very well run.”
- “I was especially impressed by how well the residential went having been rescheduled to take place virtually rather than face to face at such short notice.”

6.7 Resources and services comments

6.7.1 Most comments were in relation to the library service, either online or local libraries.

6.7.2 A frequent theme was difficulties accessing online library resources:

- “I have found that the online library catalogue isn't as extensive as I'd like eg JSTOR not accessible.” *[UHI does have access to JSTOR]*.
- “Some access issues for some journals. There seem to be specific ways to access some journals, once you know the trick then it works fine but it is time consuming to ask IT for help each time. Should it be like that?”
- “I have found that the overwhelming majority of the books I have wanted/needed to access have not been available through the university library as ebooks, which has been extremely difficult at times. While the resources available online via the library are generally very good, I have really struggled in accessing books/ebooks of my particular subject [course].
- “I found the library was sometimes not containing or showing relevant literature and I used Google scholar more often.”

6.7.3 However, some students did make positive comments about the online library resources:

- “There were previously issues sometimes in accessing the online library on weekends which was problematic, but this seems to have improved lately.”
- “The online Library is mostly very good - not all books are available as advertised on the course but I think that's an issue for the course coordinator to have sorted before we hit the reading?”
- “Good availability of resources online although it was not possible to access the [on-site library] during this particular module making this challenging at times.”

6.7.4 Some comments related to problems navigating or accessing IT systems or software:

- “A dedicated workshop for some of the more technical programmes would have been useful for me. e.g. SPSS and the design capabilities in PowerPoint.”
- “Whole interface and library resources for the course provide everything needed. However, even with upgrading from black board, this remains confusing and complex to negotiate and can sometimes put you off studying as it can be hard to navigate where things are... Efforts to simplify navigation at IT level would always be helpful on this particular course I think.”
- “IT at UHI is rubbish. IT Staff are very helpful but system is not fit for purpose.”
- “It would be good if we were able to access academic license software e.g. Geoplot for the geophysics course, either as remote login, VPN etc .”

6.7.5 There were also frequent comments praising library and IT staff:

- “...the librarians are very helpful.”
- “Library services are knowledgeable and very useful and able to help with queries.”
- “ IT Staff are very helpful.”
- “IT support has been fantastic and quick, even when "shut".”

6.8 Skills development comments

6.8.1 Comments were wide ranging with few patterns, however, one theme related to issues of confidence:

- “I have become more confident in some ways but also realise there's even more to know about my subject which makes me feel less confident again!”

- “I just feel at the moment I have lost my confidence a bit due to COVID 19 and the stress of worrying about changes and having to work in [workplace] worrying about potentially infecting my family.”
- “I have improved in confidence...”
- “The challenges of this year have created a crisis of confidence. I feel like I am clinging on by my fingernails. Although my grades were good for my first semester, that felt like a complete surprise and that’s a reflection, I think of my lack of control.”

6.8.2 Students made comments which seemed to express feeling lost about future career plans, partly due to coronavirus:

- “I had hoped to grow but seem stuck at mid range and no further forward in understanding if I have what it takes to be researcher. So if not then I need to consider other options, and that means abandon what I was aiming to do.”
- “Would love some specific career guidance as to how to proceed once the [course] is finished. Sad that due to Covid I have been unable to take up the offer of a work experience placement with [workplace].”
- “I have tried to get help through UHI career and business services but there seems to be little available at postgraduate level. People tend to assume that as a mature student studying at a high level, you must have everything sorted out for a career. Sadly that’s not quite the case.”
- “I had fantastic help to produce a PhD proposal for [opportunity] but when that was unsuccessful, I didn’t really know what to do next.”

6.8.3 However, other students talked about what they have gained from studying, in particular research skills:

- “My research, literacy and analytical skills have been further enhanced by this course of study.”
- “I have improved in confidence and in my research skills.”
- “Presentation assignments and assessments have been very helpful.”
- “My career opportunities have already opened up due to undertaking this course.”

6.9 Overall positive comments

6.9.1 Overall comments on the thing that students valued most about their course focused on good staff, the opportunity to interact with other students (and staff), developing knowledge and skills, interest and enjoyment of the course, quality of the course, impact on job or career, the variety of subjects and guest speakers:

6.9.2 Good staff:

- “The lecturers made every class fun and interesting, they are all very knowledgeable and very helpful whenever there have been questions on assignments or class work.”
- “The [lecturer] is a renowned and wonderful expert and writes very well. His lectures and seminars are fun (I would like "fresh" ones however). He is eager to share his knowledge and is approachable and enthusiastic about the topic. He encourages creative and synthetic thinking.”
- “Particularly happy about the excellent tutor for [module]. [Lecturer] is an exceptional tutor who provides outstanding support for her students.”

6.9.3 Opportunity to interact with other students (and staff):

- “Meeting a diverse group of students from all ages and locations, with varying interests.”
- “Getting to know other students and tutors and sharing ups and downs and inspiring one another even though we are very different from one another and far away.”
- “Meeting new people and being able to hear other people’s different ways of working.”

6.9.4 Developing knowledge and skills:

- “Developing my overall critical learning and seeing how it connects with all aspects of pedagogy.”
- “Learning more interesting techniques for locating and assessing data.”
- “Developing the skills to perform [projects] in a cohesive and evidenced manner.”

6.9.5 Interest and enjoyment of the course:

- “An interesting and most enjoyable course.”
- “The most enjoyable module has been the [module] as I was interested in the subject matter and the tutor was very enthusiastic.”

- “I find the subject matter really interesting. We've been signposted to really interested reading and resources.”

6.9.6 Quality of the course:

- “The course so far has been excellent and exceeded my expectations – very stimulating with great tutor, material and discussions.”
- “Many of the lectures have been outstanding.”
- “Overall Course Design - Agile delivery of material by staff combined with a fantastic programme of guest speakers.”

6.9.7 Impact on job or career:

- “I have definitely learned a lot and I am a much better [professional] because of doing the [course]. My [clients] and colleagues have both benefited from this.”
- “...it has encouraged me to be more open minded about varying [work] practices in different types of organisations. The course has also enabled me to become a [professional body] member which has enabled me to network and continue my personal development.”
- “I have been inspired to think of new ways of developing my professional practice which could further my career.”

6.9.8 The variety of subjects:

- “Being able to access such a variety of subjects.”
- “I have enjoyed the diverse range of topics presented by the modules of the course.”
- “The wide range of topics covered within the course modules.”

6.9.9 Guest speakers:

- “Guest lectures - Having real access (lecture +discussions, q&a's, follow ups etc.) to the expertise of outstanding professional practitioners helps cement the quality and standard of delivery on the course overall.”
- “The variety of external speakers. Invaluable experience.”
- “...fantastic programme of guest speakers.”

6.10 One thing that would most improve the course experience

6.10.1 Overall comments on what students felt would improve the course included: student participation in online discussions and activities, IT problems, videoed lectures, lecturer communication / contact / organisation, provision of guidance and face-to-face contact.

6.10.2 Student participation in online discussions and activities:

- “Better online discussion of the materials. It can be very stiff and regulated, but also more than half the students each course don't participate and no one can force them, so not sure this can be fixed.”
- “I feel like a lot of students do not participate in the weekly activities or VC's and it was often just myself attending which really put me off as I was the only one to be asked questions etc.”
- “Some live sessions for facilitated discussion with classmates on some of the topics.”
- “A greater number of students would have provided for better discussion during online sessions.”

6.10.3 IT problems:

- “Nearly every session we have had problems with Webex, either sound or visual not working, someone not being able to log in, the classroom set up not working for the tutor. It eats up a lot of time.”
- “We rely on technology and often the connections are weak and we lose contact with some of the participants. Better internet connections would improve the experience.”
- “IT. The video conferencing, online access to apps, everything is slow, cumbersome, difficult to use and often doesn't work. For a university that is based on IT this is a constant source of failure.”
- “As a student studying abroad there have been technological difficulties engaging with the course. An awareness of this among the IT department at the university may help to alleviate these issues in the future.”

6.10.4 Videoed lectures:

- “Even a video of a lecture would have been welcome to break the reliance on written word as the principle form of communication.”
- “I think that more video resources or similar would break up the amount of reading we're expected to do, just as a different approach to learning/communicating key theory.”

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- “I think online / filmed lectures would have helped my understanding of certain aspects of the course. I resourced these myself, mostly on youtube, which made a big difference in helping get to grips with [topic]. I find that I personally struggle with just reading alone. Listening / watching a lecture helped a great deal.”
- “I found pre recorded video lectures very useful and felt this helped greatly with me being able to gain an understanding while combining this with class notes. I think seeing and hearing a lecturer talk about theoretical ideas had more value than simply reading the notes.”

6.10.5 Lecturer communication, contact and organisation:

- “More direct communication from the departments you are working with.”
- “Better organisation, better quality lecturing, some consideration about the amount of taught time on the course (e.g. more than [time] per module).
- “Contact between student/ supervisor.”
- “Better organisation of staff and clearer procedures for e.g. dissertation module.”

6.10.6 Provision of guidance:

- “Inductions to UHI guidelines (referencing/assessment) etc should be clear from the beginning of the course, not after assessments.”
- “Stronger guidance at the beginning.”
- “Some of the guidance around submitting work for assessment has changed quite frequently. Whilst I understand this comes about due to student feedback it is not always easy to keep up with changing requirements.”
- “Clearer guidance on what is required for assessments, including a more concise assessment brief, alongside more developmental feedback.”

6.10.7 Face-to-face contact:

- “One face to face meeting at the start of each module.”
- “Face to Face groups encouraged and set up by the tutor.”
- “The course is fully on line and it means you never interact or share face to face interaction with other students or staff.”
- “Perhaps built in face to face online sessions with tutors or with other students would be good going forward. We have all become much more video conference capable as a result of

covid 19, that could offer great opportunities for building a stronger community of post graduate students.”

6.11 The information provided to help you choose your course

6.11.1 The most frequent comments were in relation to wanting more detailed information about module content:

- “I liked the information about the course provided on the web pages but would have liked more on specific units.”
- “I had to email for more detail about the course modules before I signed up. Greater detail about modules would be helpful to prospective students - there's just not enough about the course (PGCert Research Methods) on the website to explain what the course covers.”
- “I had to ask for more detail on each module in advance - it wasn't accessible to see until I had become a student - so it is there just not accessible for a non-student to see, when it would be most useful.”
- “I think the website could do a lot better in communicating content of the different modules available.”
- “I do find module details difficult to find, although the whole course details are easily accessible.”

7. Conclusions and possible areas for development

- 7.1 Our taught postgraduate students are generally happy with their student experience.
- 7.2 Many students expressed their appreciation for staff: lecturers, dissertation supervisors, and library and IT staff. Where specific staff were named, they have been notified of this praise.
- 7.3 Further research will be carried out to understand why the area of 'research' has a lower score, and in particular what this refers to.
- 7.4 Similarly, data will also be examined to determine why one academic partner had lower scores than others.
- 7.5 Availability of staff for student contact and support is an area that may benefit from enhancement.
- 7.6 Greater facilitation and encouragement by lecturers for use of the discussion boards would increase students' opportunities for discussion and participation.
- 7.7 Students would like more opportunities to build learning communities with their peers, both face to face and online.
- 7.8 There appears to be a desire for greater opportunity for students to consider career development within their programme of study and to access individual careers support.
- 7.9 There may be benefit from reviewing the robustness and ease of use of IT systems as well as provision of greater induction and/or guidance in their use. In particular students would welcome videoed lectures.
- 7.10 Course organisation is very important to students. The accuracy and timeliness of communication around changes, as well as up-to-date course administration and course content are areas where improvements could be made.
- 7.11 Students would like more detailed information about modules to help them choose their course.

Kevin Sinclair
Student Engagement Manager

August 2020

Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Student Activity 2019-20 and Student Recruitment 2020-21
Author: [Name and Job title]	Roddy Henry, Depute Principal – Planning and Student Experience
Meeting:	<i>Learning, Teaching and Research Committee</i>
Meeting Date:	22 September 2020
Date Paper prepared:	14 September 2020
Brief Summary of the paper:	To provide the committee with a summary of student activity in 2019-20 and an update on student recruitment so far in 2020-21.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change 	This paper links to the strategic plan, particularly in relation to the student experience and the curriculum.
Resource implications:	Yes – income and costs relating to student activity
Risk implications:	Yes - sustainability
Equality and Diversity implications:	No
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	n/a

ITEM 07

Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-confidential		
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]	Yes		
*If a paper should not be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.			
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

Student Activity 2019-20 and Student Recruitment 2020-21

Executive summary

The outturn for FE student activity (credits) in 2019-20 is 97% of target, pending the final return to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The outturn for HE funded undergraduate FTE is 95% of target. SFC has confirmed that there will be no clawback of credit funding if the shortfall is due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Full-time recruitment for 2020-21 so far shows a **negative variance for full-time FE** and a **positive variance for full-time HE** overall compared to this time last year. Part-time enrolments are ongoing.

Main body of information

Student activity against targets 2019-20

The core credit target for 2019-20 was 28,915, with an additional ESF credit target of 296, making a total target of 29,211 credits.

FE	2019-20
Core Credit Target	28,915
ESF Target	296
Total Target	29,211
Total Credits as at 17 September 2019	28,368

The total credit outturn (post-audit and pending FES return) is 28,368 credits, which is 97.1% of our target. The shortfall is largely due to Covid -19 restrictions, which prevented further enrolments after lockdown towards the end of March 2020. Evidence of this has been submitted via UHI to the SFC.

SFC will not penalise colleges for any credit shortfall due to Covid.

HE

The 2019-20 PPF target (undergraduate students, excluding PGDE, with a fee status of Scottish or European) was 1,604 FTE. The final outturn is 1,525.5 FTE, 95.1% of target.

PPF Target HE FTE (Undergraduate students, including SC and EU fee statuses, excluding PGDE)	1,604.0
Current HE students as at 28/06/2019 - count by Module attachment.	1,525.5

The table below provides a summary of all HE activity in 2019-20 by level and fee category/funding source:

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Level	PPF/TEMG Target	Current estimated FTE	Variance
Undergraduate Scottish & EU	1603.9	1525.5	-78.4
Postgraduate Taught Scottish & EU	21.9	60.8	38.9
Undergraduate International & RUK	(2+19) 21	(10.1+20.2) 30.3	9.3
Postgraduate Taught Int & RUK	-	(0.7+10.3) 11	11.0
PGD Education (Primary & Secondary)	41	37	-4
TOTAL	1687.8	1664.6	-23.2

Student Recruitment 2020-21

Student recruitment targets for 2020-21 are shown in the table below:

Target	2020-21
FE Credits	28,915
HE FTE (UG SFC funded)	1,491

At the time of writing, student enrolment for Semester 1 and for most full-time programmes has just completed and a significant number of part-time FE and HE full-time enrolments are still sitting at 'provisional' status.

Early indications compared to target and to this time last year are of a **negative variance** for full-time FE enrolments and of a **positive variance** for full-time HE enrolments. The tables below provide a summary by curriculum area and comparisons to last year at a similar point post-enrolment.

It should be noted that the 2019 full-time FE figures included the Modern Apprentice groups that count towards our full-time numbers, and that these groups are yet to enrol this year due to the need to clear the Covid-related deferred groups from 2019-20. These groups amount to between 90 and 100 enrolments. Some ESOL provision is still to enrol and some activity in engineering and construction has been postponed until Semester 2 due to Covid restrictions.

Full-time HE enrolments are up on last year in all areas apart from Education and Applied Science.

Roddy Henry
Depute Principal – Planning and Student Experience

Full-time Enrolments on 14 September 2020

FE FT	Current	Current on 18.09.19	Did Not Start (DNS)	Provisional, but completed online enrolment	Provisional	Total
Business, Computing & Hospitality	128	118	19		11	158
Care, Health & Wellbeing	221	242	58	8	43	330
Construction & the Built Environment	6*	91	1		1	8
Creative Arts	330	353	41	7	53	431
Education & Applied Sciences	65	89	17	4	4	90
Engineering Technology	90*	159	7	2	29	128
Scottish School of Forestry	43	41	6	1	9	59
Grand Total	883	1093	149	22	150	1204
<i>Total FE FT enrolments on 18 Sept 2019</i>	<i>1093</i>		<i>220</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1318</i>

*does not include apprenticeship activity

HE FT	Current	Current on 18.09.19	Did Not Start (DNS)	Provisional, but completed online enrolment	Provisional	Total
Business, Computing & Hospitality	316	245	34		29	379
Care, Health & Wellbeing	423	410	42	3	33	503
Construction & the Built Environment	110	91	14	3	8	136
Creative Arts	391	381	23	2	29	452
Education & Applied Sciences	103	118	8		9	120
Engineering Technology	52	48	5		8	65
Scottish School of Forestry	70	61	3		6	79
Grand Total	1465	1354	129	8	122	1734
<i>Total HE FT enrolments on 18 Sept 2019</i>	<i>1354</i>		<i>164</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1561</i>

Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-23 and UHI Partnership Approach to Equalities Reporting
Author: [Name and Job title]	Lindsay Snodgrass, Director of Student Experience
Meeting:	Learning, Teaching and Research Committee
Meeting Date:	22 nd June '20
Date Paper prepared:	14th June '20
Brief Summary of the paper:	To provide a draft of the Corporate Parenting Plan for 2020-23 and an update on the regional approach to equalities reporting.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change 	<i>Strategic Plan –</i> To further develop our accessible and inclusive support for students to enable all to achieve their potential
Resource implications:	No If yes, please specify:
Risk implications:	No If yes, please specify: Operational: Organisational:
Equality and Diversity implications:	No If yes, please specify:
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	

ITEM 08

Status – [Non confidential]			
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes]			
*If a paper should not be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.			
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

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http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

Corporate Parenting

Executive summary

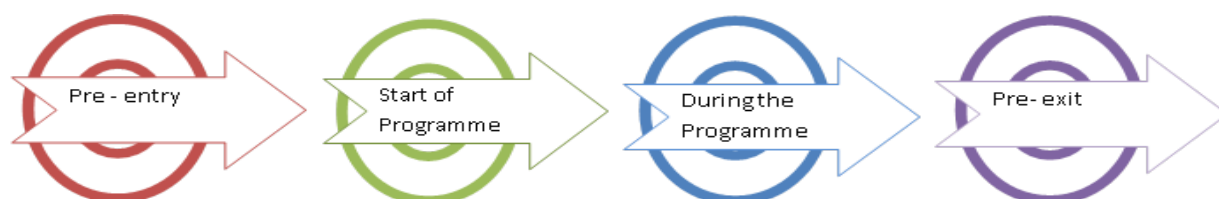
The college has updated its Corporate Parenting Plan for the period 2020-23. The new plan provides a summary of progress made over the period of the 2017-20 plan and details the specific areas of future action in response to a variety of sector publications.

Background information

Since the conception of corporate parenting legislation in 2014, as part of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, the College have made good progress with all legislative duties. We have since moved into a new phase of enhancing the good practice which has been established and responding to the significant national reviews which help to shape our future priorities:

- [The Care Review 2020](#)
- [Celcis, Being a Student with Care Experienced is Very Daunting, 2019](#)
- [SFC's National Ambition for Care Experienced Students, 2020](#)
- [15-24 Learner Journey Review, 2018](#)

The direction of travel continues to be around widening access to encourage applications from care experienced learners in both further and higher education and to bring about equity in outcomes through closing the attainment gap. Equity in the outcomes of care experienced learners by 2030 has been set as a target for the sector to achieve by 2030. To do this, our plan identifies incremental improvements across the learner journey from pre-entry to exit taking account of various recommendations made to the sector. An annual update and refresh of the action plan will be provided to take account of progress made each academic year.



Regional Approach to Equalities

There continues to be uncertainty around the expectations of both the Access and Inclusion strategy and the Gender Action Plan and how the UHI partnership will approach these. The proposal of these being taken forward at a partnership level has stalled and, in recognition of the additional workload for colleges around Covid-19, SFC guidance has outlined that colleges are not expected to produce an Access and Inclusion Strategy this calendar year. It is anticipated that further information will come out to the sector later this year. In the

meantime, the college will continue to scrutinise outcomes by priority group as part of our ongoing evaluative activity and our approach to access and inclusion.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Update

In August '20 the sector received an update from the Scottish government on PSED reporting. The key points from this communication are summarised below:

Summary of key points

- The PSED remains a legal duty and of critical importance at this time
- The review of the operation of the PSED has been delayed
- There will not be a full public consultation in summer 2020
- Changes to the Scottish Specific Duty Regulations will not be introduced before the 2021-2025 cycle
- Public bodies should continue to plan for a new equality outcome cycle beginning in April 2021.

The college will need to liaise with the UHI lead on Equalities to gain a better insight into this aspect of work, in the absence of a Director of Organisational Development, which predominantly focusses on staff but also encompasses students.



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Inverness College

Corporate Parenting Plan



2020-2023

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Introduction

What is Corporate Parenting?

Inverness College UHI is a Corporate Parent as defined by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. As a Corporate Parent, the college has specific duties and responsibilities for care experienced learners to ensure that the support and opportunities, provided by any parent to their child, are offered by the college to students who are care experienced.

Inverness College UHI is proud to be a Corporate Parent and acknowledges this as a great privilege with significant responsibilities. We have made a firm commitment to make our college accessible and inclusive to all learners. The college has established a positive declaration environment and recognise individuals with lived care experienced as a priority learner group in both strategic and operational planning.

Our organisation's values define who we are, our expectations of ourselves and of each other. They describe how we interact with one another and how we interact with our students and partners. The values that underpin the culture of Inverness College UHI are:

- **Respect**
- **Integrity**
- **Accountability**
- **Passion**



These values underpin our behaviours at work and the commitments we make to ourselves and one another.

Inverness College UHI recognises the strength, determination and resilience of our care experienced learners but also some of the additional challenges they experience. As corporate parents we are continually working to enhance the services available to our care experienced learners through feedback from them and prospective applicants, from the various partner agencies whom we engage with, and by responding to local and national reviews.

Our three-year action plan takes account of the progress the college have achieved to date and is underpinned by The Scottish Funding Council's [National Ambition for Care Experienced Students](#) to achieve equity of outcomes by 2030. Our plan provides a structured approach to continual improvement across the learner journey and the need to create early connections with our prospective learners by further enhancing the relationships with external partners who have supported their journey so far.

Our Approach

Whilst Inverness College UHI gained early external recognition for our work with care experienced learners (Buttle UK Quality Mark), we recognise the need to continually strive for excellence in providing the care our learners are entitled to. Our approach is ever evolving and is founded on:

- Research to inform our practice, including attachment theory
- A clear understanding of developmental process and the impact of adverse childhood experience
- The principles of trauma responsive care
- The application of children's rights

To ensure the continuous enhancement of provision for care experienced learners, we regularly review:

- The Corporate Parenting Action Plan
- Transition planning processes
- The quality and responsiveness of student support services

We involve care experienced learners in all discussions about our provision and seek their feedback on how we can make further improvements. Across the entirety of the student journey we have taken steps to ensure that individuals feel supported through our positive declaration environment and are further supported by the processes which follow.

Placing the learner at the centre of all we do is the overarching principle which guides our work and helps us to encourage learners to take an active role in their learning. Our student support teams, in conjunction with curriculum colleagues, work together to provide holistic support and to find solutions to any barriers that may exist.



Working in partnership with partners agencies, the college has developed a robust transition planning process to encourage applications. The college has simplified the application process and has clear wording around declaring care experience to ensure declarations are supported at the earliest point. Funding processes have been updated to ensure those with care experience are prioritised.

The Access and Transitions Co-ordinator role enables support to be coordinated according to the needs of the individual. The Access and Transitions Co-ordinator role also ensures that the college continuously seek to develop professional relationships and collaborative activity with a wide range of external partners in support of care experienced learners.

Ref: Image available from www.celcis.org



In ensuring that we first and foremost meet our legislative duties, we have developed and improved our systems, processes and support services to uphold the rights of, and safeguard the wellbeing of, care experienced learners in line with the eight wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI).

Our focus will continue to be on staying alert and responsive to matters which may adversely affect the wellbeing of our care experienced learners.

We continue to actively listen to the student voice and encourage regular engagement and feedback from individuals on their college experience. We continually encourage our all teams to be reflective and responsive to feedback, identify areas for improvement and take the appropriate actions to implement change.

Professional Practice

The college recognises that people have the greatest influence on our success and that of our learners and as such we have had a focus on the professional development of staff. We support our staff to understand the needs of care experienced learners and their extended role as corporate parents. We now include an information session on corporate parenting as part of our staff inductions and follow this up with an online mandatory training module. The college also has additional opt in professional development on corporate parenting which is held bi-annually to ensure professional knowledge is relevant and up to date.

Ongoing help and advice are offered by the Access and Transitions Co-ordinator to staff who are supporting learners with their transition and regular reviews with our learners ensure that we are meeting their ongoing and changing needs.

Happy, Healthy and Secure

We understand that having financial security and a safe and welcoming place to study reduces the additional pressures faced by care experienced learners. In September 2016, the University of the Highlands and Islands opened its halls of residence on the Inverness Campus. Through negotiation with City Heart and UHI, the college have been instrumental in securing a 365 day lease for care experienced learners to ensure that no one will find themselves without accommodation during the summer period when students traditionally go home to their families.



We have also established a designated contact in the Student Funding Team to ensure care experienced students have their bursaries or SAAS funding in place at the earliest point possible and to act as a personal contact should students experience financial difficulties during their studies. Managing the Care Experienced Bursary has proved to be challenging for some learners so the College have financial planning and budgeting advice available by means of support with this.

The college also provides a wide range of wellbeing and support services, both on campus and online, to help our learners keep fit, healthy and active. A dedicated referral system provides access to relevant services at any point throughout the learning journey.

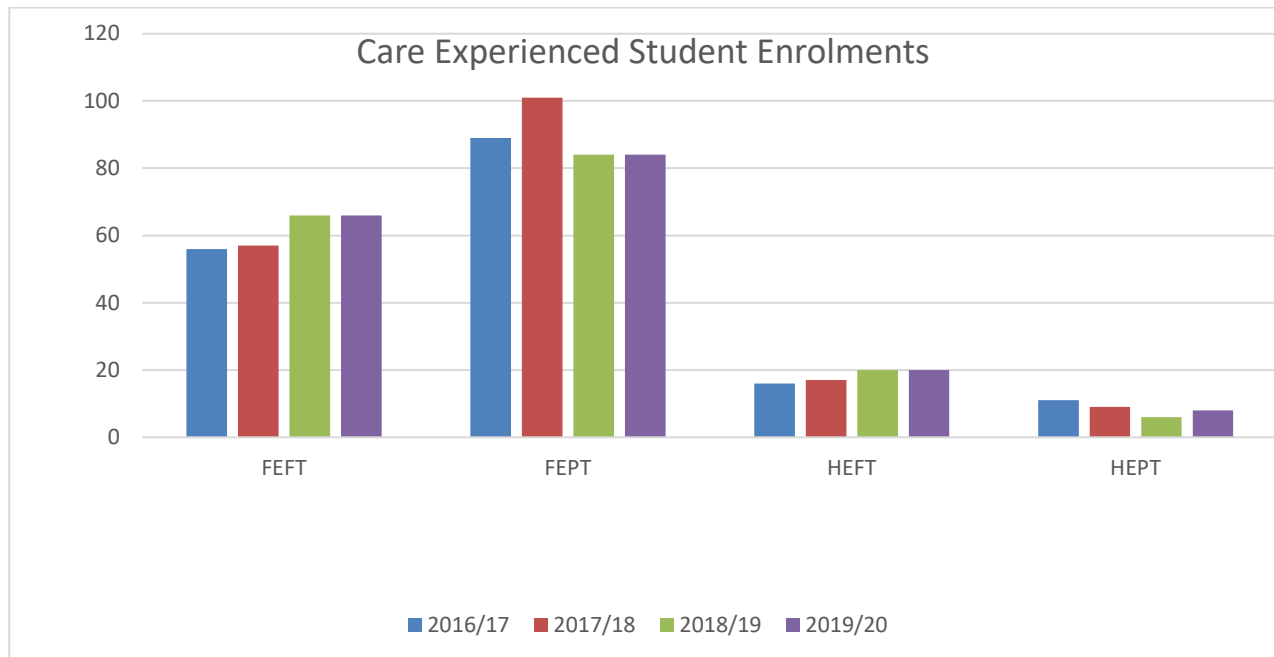
The National Picture

Despite efforts to close the opportunity and attainment gap, care experienced young people do not have the same life chances as their peers and studies have shown that this group are more likely to become vulnerable to a range of socioeconomic disadvantages including offending behaviour and health problems. Research from 'Who Cares? Scotland,' (2020) indicates that:

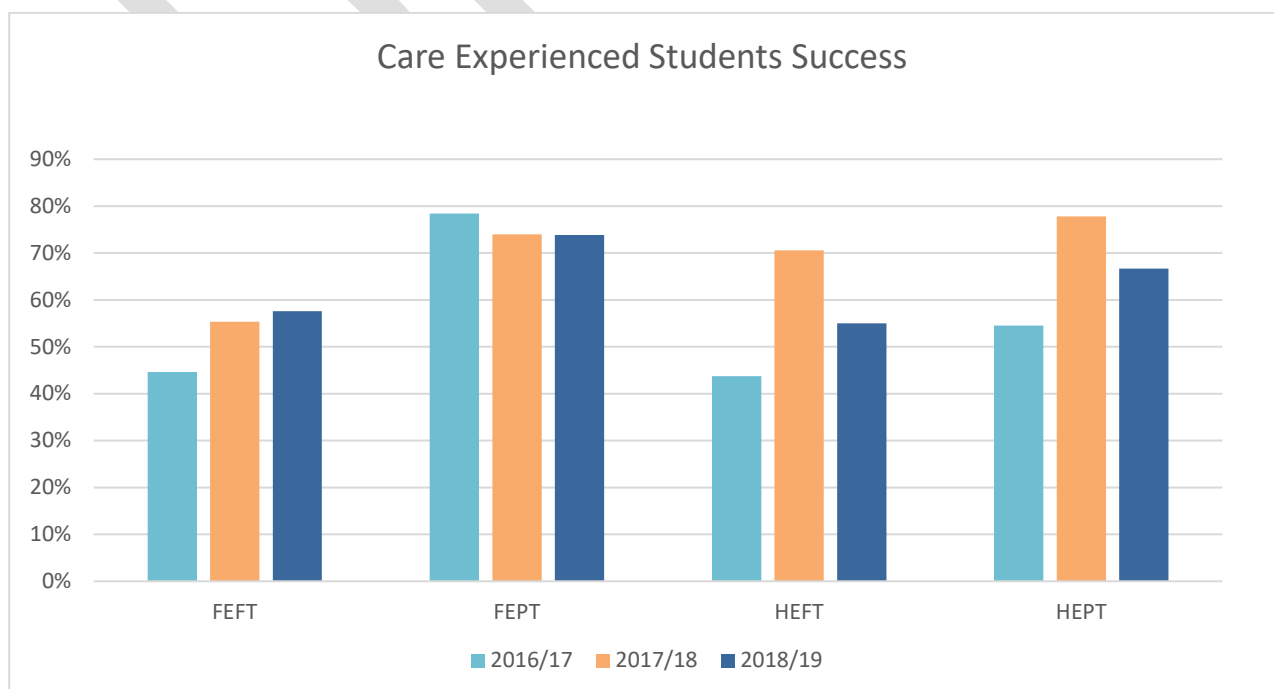
- Care Experienced young people are **less likely to be in positive destinations** nine months after leaving school
- **Participation and retention rates in post compulsory education are very low** with only 4% of Scottish care experienced young people engaging in Higher Education (Children and Young People's Commissioner, Scotland, 2019).
- At all levels, Care Experienced learners have **lower rates of completing courses compared to all learners at university and college**
- There is a **15.6% gap in successful outcomes** for full-time further education courses between care experienced learners and their non-care peers (SFC, 2019)

Such poor educational outcomes also correlate to other socioeconomic issues experienced by this learner group including higher unemployment, homelessness, criminalisation, and health.

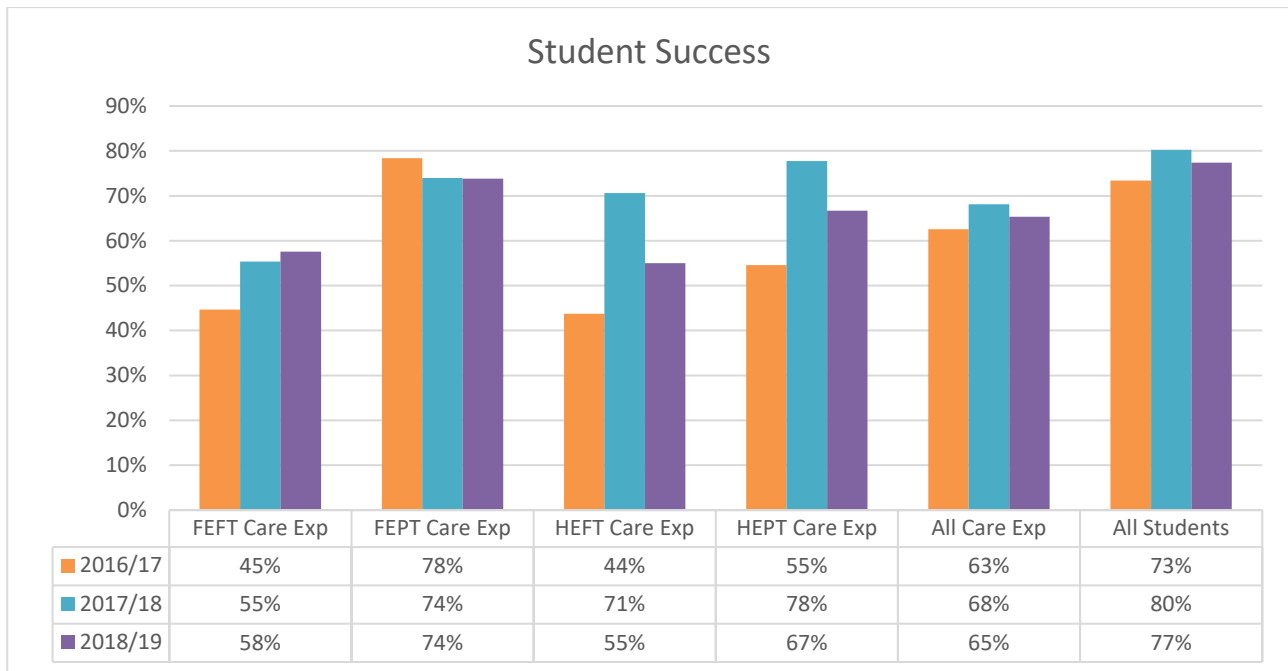
Our Picture so Far



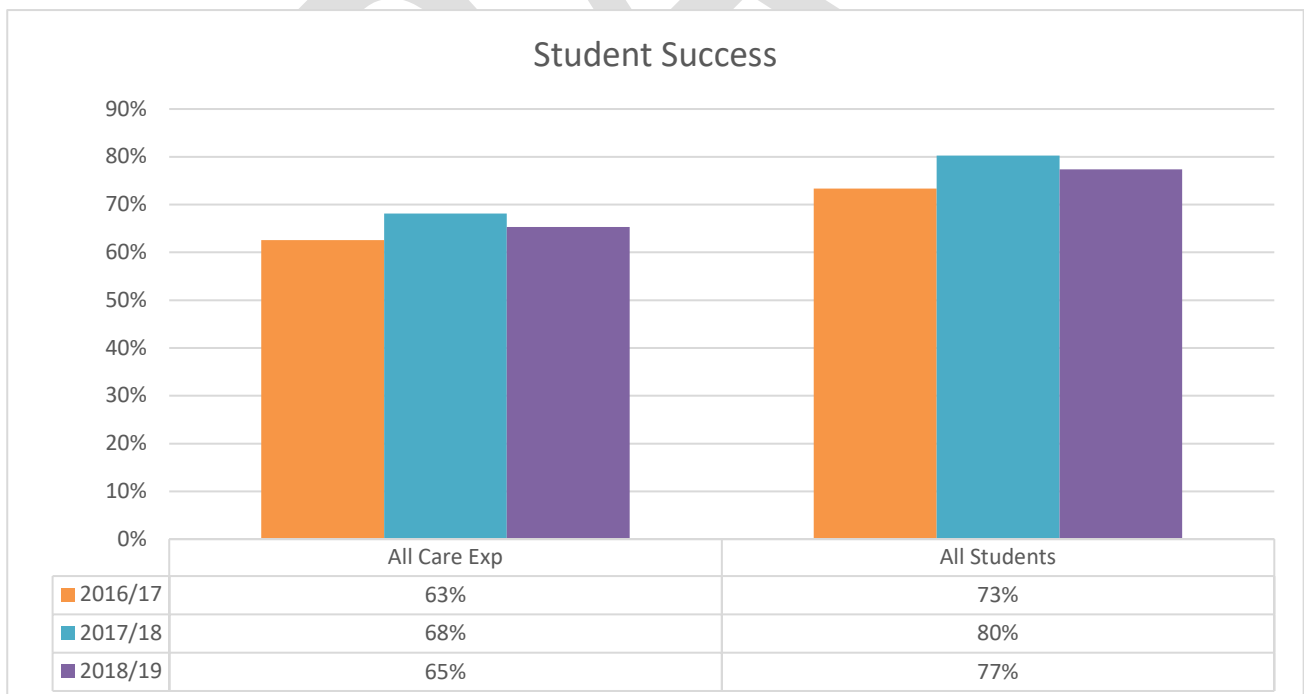
The college and the wider UHI partnership have had placed a significant focus on the experience and outcomes of care experienced learners since the conception of corporate parenting legislation in 2014. We continually achieve our recruitment target for this learner group, as set in the Regional Outcome Agreement, and we have experienced a marginal increase in the number of care experienced learners who engage in FT FE and FT HE. We are well ahead of the SFC ambition of 1.5% of college headcount being care experienced learners and local intelligence tells us that we do well in attracting this learner group.



Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023



The college has seen a sustained improvement in the outcomes of care experienced learners on FT FE programmes with outcomes improving by 13pp in the period 2016-17 to 2018-19. However, despite efforts to provide tailored and personalised support to care experienced learners, and data showing we perform above sector norm for this learner group, we have not seen a sustained and consistent improvement in outcomes across *all* levels and modes of study.



Outcomes for care experienced learners across all modes of study have stubbornly remained lower than those of their non-care peers and across the sector the gap in the outcomes of care experienced learners has widened.

Our Future Focus 2020-23

As we introduce our new Corporate Parenting Plan for 2020 - 2023, our aims and objectives continue to be grounded by our legislative duties. However, the sector has seen a wealth of new research on care experienced learners since the conception of Corporate Parenting in 2014.

Our 2020–23 plan not only builds on our previous work but also responds to the recommendations as set out in:

- [The Learner Journey Review 2019](#)
- ['Being a Student with Care Experience is Very Daunting', Celcis 2019](#)
- [National Statement of Ambition for Care Experienced Learners, Scottish Funding Council 2020](#)
- [The Care Review 2020](#)
- [Principles of Good Transition 3](#)

Our ambition moving forward is to encourage a relationship-focussed approach to the care and support of care experienced learners, where we seek to further enhance our systems and processes to be person-centred and not process centred and ensure they are free from jargon, inequity and difficulty.

We embrace Scotland's ambition for children and young people to achieve equity of opportunity and outcomes and will commit to further improvements across the learner journey to support this. As set out in the Care Review 2020, through the identification of the five founding principles, we will strive to further enhance the learner voice and will continue to create an environment where our care experienced learners can achieve their full potential through being able to form relationships which are '*nurturing, patient, kind, compassionate, trusting and respectful*'.

The Care Review (2020)

The Foundations

The Promise is built on Five Foundations.

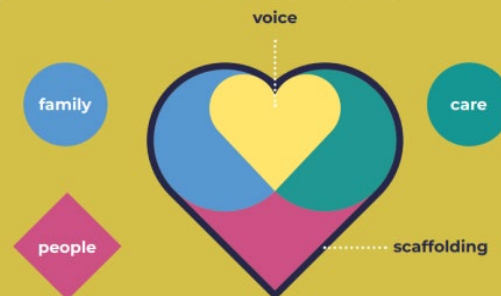
Voice: Children and young people must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what they want and need. There must be a compassionate and caring decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust.

Family: Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together, to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.

Care: Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so, and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.

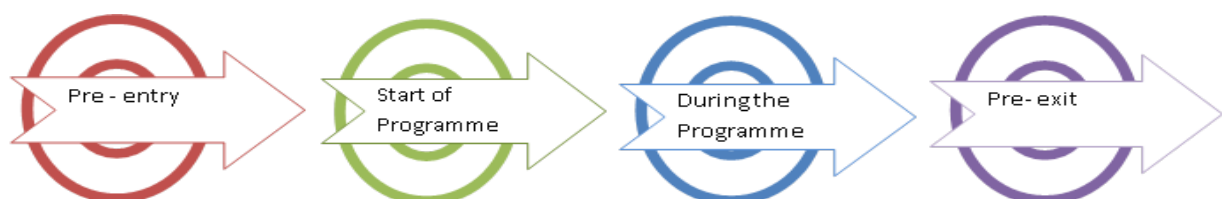
People: The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care.

Scaffolding: Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.



Extract from the Care Review 2020

Part 2 of this document comprises of our action plan which takes account of the entirety of the learner journey from pre-entry. An overview of the current status is provided alongside our future focus and specific actions for each stage. An annual update and refresh of the action plan will be provided to take account of progress made each academic year.



2020-23 ACTION PLAN



The college operates a positive declaration environment and encourages declarations of care experience at the earliest point to enable timely and appropriate support. At the earliest possible point, we work with partner agencies and schools to support the transition of care experienced learners to college. Care experienced learners are invited to discuss their requirements for an effective transition and the college creates a person centred Transition Plan based on the needs of each individual. This draws together any relevant support needed both from the college and from external partners.

Prior to applying for college, care experienced learners are provided with preparatory support such as help in identifying suitable routes of study, completing application forms, writing personal statements, preparing for interview and tours of the campus setting. The college applies contextualised admissions for all applicants with care experience to ensure a guaranteed interview and a guaranteed offer of place on the course of choice, or a suitable alternative.

Over the summer months, the college offers a tailored programme to support transition to college including advice around funding and accommodation, budgeting and financial planning, and ongoing support arrangements are put in place prior to enrolment.

Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023

	Action	Owner	Timescale	In response to:
1.1	Seek feedback from care experienced learners on the new Transition Plan through a focus group ensuring the language and content meets their needs and expectations	Access & Progression Manager	By April 2021	Principles of Good Transitions 3 Principle 1 <i>Planning and decision making should be carried out in a person-centred way</i>
1.2	Work collaboratively with current care experienced learners and the Student Engagement Officer to design and produce a video detailing their experience at college / services available to support care experienced learners. <i>(This can be used at transition events, meetings with third sector agencies and schools and will also be placed on the College website)</i>	Access and Transitions Co-ordinator	By June 2021	Principles of Good Transitions 3 Principle 3: <i>Planning should start early and continue up to age 25</i> Learner Journey Review Key Priority 2: Recommendation 7 <i>Raise aspirations and improve offer of support for looked after young people</i>
1.3	Create a point of contact with every Highland Council secondary to enhance information sharing prior to support early identification of individuals.	Access and Transitions Co-ordinator	August 2021	Principles of Good Transitions 3 Principle 3: <i>Planning should start early and continue up to age 25</i>
1.4	Work collaboratively with Highland Council to develop professional learning opportunities for teachers to cascade best practice in transitions planning.	Access and Progression Manager	Nov 20 – June 21	SFC Ambition 1: Intake of care-experienced students <i>To continue to increase the number of care experienced learners engaging in post-compulsory education</i> Key Priority 2: Recommendation 7 <i>Raise aspirations and improve offer of support for...looked after young people</i>
1.5	Continue to promote prioritisation of places for care experienced learners on Senior Phase programmes	Access & Progression Manager	Nov 20 - March 21	Key Priority 2: Recommendation 7 <i>Raise aspirations and improve offer of support for looked after young people</i> SFC Ambition 1: Intake of care-experienced students <i>To continue to increase the number of care experienced learners engaging in post-compulsory education</i>

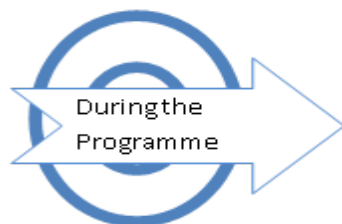


Declarations of care experience are encouraged at enrolment and at the start of the course. Care experienced individuals, alongside those from other priority groups, are flagged to the Personal Development Adviser / Personal Academic Tutor through the Student Hub and on INSIGHT for FE and HN programmes. A referral system is in place to pass on any 'on course' declarations to the Access and Transitions Co-ordinator who can offer support to learners. Ongoing support is provided by the Access and Transitions Co-ordinator in addition to the assigned Personal Development Adviser / Personal Academic Tutor and any relevant Support Team.

Ongoing means of support is highlighted via the college website, including a directory of local services, and also on our Student Support Brightspace hub, *'The Bothy'*. Care experienced learners can continue to gain support from the Access and Transitions Co-ordinator to secure accommodation, including in halls of residence for 365 days a year, and for any financial support they may require early into the course.

Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023

	Action	Owner	Timescale	In response to:
2.1	Establish a data sharing agreement between UHI and IC UHI that allows for information sharing relating to the wellbeing and safety of any care experienced students that reside in the halls of residence	Access and Transitions Co-ordinator	August 2021	Principles of Good Transitions 3 Principle 2: <i>Support should be coordinated across all services</i> Principle 4: <i>Young people should get the support they need</i>



During the academic year care experienced learners, along with their peers on FE programmes, have timetabled weekly pastoral support with their Personal Development Adviser and additional 1:1 support as required. HN / HE learners have their Personal Academic Tutor as a point of contact throughout the year and additional access to the Student Support Team and the Access and Transitions Co-ordinator.

As part of our continued commitment to improving outcomes for care experienced learners, the college regularly monitors the attendance and engagement of all FE FT learners through INSIGHT monitoring and tracking system. Care experienced learners, amongst other priority learner groups, are flagged for additional consideration. Early interventions are made for learners who show signs of poor engagement. Following discussion with the PDA / PAT referrals to various forms of support are made – for example, wellbeing; funding; additional learning support – to try to get the learner the support required to get back on track.

Transition Plan Review meetings are held between the Access and Transitions Co-ordinator and individual care experienced learners twice each year. This ties in with the key stages of the learner journey and to review and update any support measures in place. Where care experienced learners do not have an active Transition Plan in place, contact at key stages of the learner journey are in place to check in on wellbeing and remind students of the support available to them.

The college welcomes the views of care experienced learners throughout the year and their voice is captured at several points through the academic year including through student surveys and specific focus groups.

Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023

	Action	Owner	Timescale	In response to:
3.1	Establish a peer mentoring scheme to give informal support to fellow care experienced students both within the college and those who are considering college as an option	Access and Transitions Coordinator	December 2021	<p>Principles of Good Transitions 3</p> <p>Principle 4: <i>Young people should get the support they need</i></p> <p>Learner Journey Review</p> <p>Key Priority 2 Recommendation 7: <i>Raise aspirations and improve offer of support for...looked after young people</i></p> <p>The Care Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Scaffolding: <i>Universities and colleges in Scotland must also act on their responsibilities towards care experienced students, ensuring they are provided with access to mentoring and support throughout their studies.</i>
3.2	<p>Work with partner agencies to plan and promote practical activities available during academic holiday periods, particularly holiday periods centred on family experiences.</p> <p>In partnership with external agencies, establish a structured approach to providing support during periods of academic holiday to overcome the additional challenge caused for care experienced learners due to a loss of routine/separation from meaningful relationships.</p>	Access and Transitions Coordinator	March 2020	<p>Principles of Good Transitions 3</p> <p>Principle 2: <i>Support should be coordinated across all services</i></p> <p>Principle 4: <i>Young people should get the support they need</i></p> <p>The Care Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ People ➤ Scaffolding <p>CELCIS: Recommendation 9 <i>Consideration should be given to how students can access support during holiday periods to ensure continuity of support services. Particular attention should be given to Christmas and summer holiday periods as students report particular difficulties in relation to both emotional and practical support during these times.</i></p>



Towards the end of the course of study, Personal Development Advisers / Personal Academic Tutors hold exit interviews to discuss progression opportunities or to provide support in taking the next steps to employment. Learners are supported to create a skills profile and find employment opportunities utilising '*My World of Work*' or '*Future Me*' engagement activities, 1:1 career adviser meetings with SDS coaches, and attendance at careers and employability events organised at both departmental and college level.

The outcomes and destinations of our care experienced learners are carefully monitored and analysed and used to inform future planning.

	Action	Owner	Timescale	In response to:
4.1	<p>Establish longitudinal tracking of learner data to better understand learner journeys from pre-entry to exit.</p> <p>Establish a means of gathering on-going qualitative feedback from care experienced learners, particularly at point of early withdrawal, to gain better insight into the student experience to help inform robust evaluation and future planning.</p>	<p>Access and Progression Manager & MIS Manager</p> <p>Access and Progression Manager & Quality Manager</p>	From January 2021	<p>Learner Journey Review Key Priority 17: Recommendation 217: <i>Better share data, monitor and track learner journeys more coherently from 15-24 years</i></p> <p>CELCIS Recommendation 16: <i>Colleges and universities should try to ascertain the reasons for care experienced students leaving their course early. These reasons should be systematically recorded, and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) should work closely with colleges and universities to use this data to improve completion rates and retention.</i></p> <p>SFC Ambition 2: College successful completions <i>To reduce the gap of the successful completion rate of full-time FE care-experienced students from 15.6 percentage points in 2017-18 to 10 percentage points in 2022-23.</i> <i>To reduce the gap of the successful completion rate of full-time HE care-experienced students from 10.5 percentage points in 2017-18 to 6 percentage points by 2022-23.</i></p> <p>SFC Ambition 3: University retention <i>To reduce the gap that progress to year 2 of their course from 6.0 percentage points in 2017-18 to 3.5 percentage points by 2022-23.</i></p>

Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023

Ongoing organisational commitments

Inverness College UHI continues to make an explicit commitment to support care experienced learners and will continue to maintain their status as a priority learner group in operational and strategic plans. In our efforts to expand our knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by care experienced learners and the support available to them on a local, regional and national level, we will continue to engage in regional and national forums and regularly liaise with other local corporate parent strategic leads to share best practice in support of improved outcomes.

To share understanding of the corporate parenting role, we will continue to disseminate information to all our college community. The college will continue to commit to providing professional development on corporate parenting to all new staff during induction sessions and to the wider staff body at bi-annual staff development days.

	Action	Owner	Timescale	In response to:
5.1	Expand the corporate parenting strategic steering group to include all relevant public bodies / local corporate parents	Director of Student Experience		Principles of Good Transitions 3 Principle 2: <i>Support should be coordinated across all services</i>
5.2	Work with UHI to update the mandatory training module to include an overview of the impact of adverse childhood experience on learners	Access and Transitions Co-ordinator	August 2022	Principles of Good Transitions 3 Principle 4: <i>Young people should get the support they need</i> The Care Review: ➤ Scaffolding
5.2	Establish a 3-year refresher of mandatory training for all staff to complete. Monitor and record staff engagement.	Professional Development Manager	August 2022	The Care Review: ➤ Scaffolding
5.3	As part of wider plan to improve access to vulnerable groups and adult returners: plan, develop and deliver community-based short courses in collaboration with partner agencies to address gaps in learning and to	Director of Curriculum	June 2023	Learner Journey Review Key Priority 2: Recommendation 7 <i>Raise aspirations and improve offer of support for...looked after young people</i>

Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023

	<p>prepare learners to cope with the academic, emotional and social challenges faced on transition to on campus FE and HE courses.</p> <p>Courses will also help to raise awareness and understanding of support services provided by Inverness College UHI and to explore available education pathways.</p>	<p>Director of Student Experience</p> <p>Access and Progression Manager</p>		<p>Principles of Good Transitions 3 Principle 1: <i>Planning and decision making should be carried out in a person- centred way</i></p> <p>The Care Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Voice ➤ People ➤ Scaffolding <p>SFC Ambition 1: Intake of care-experienced students <i>To increase the number of Scottish domiciled care-experienced undergraduate entrants to 1.4% by 2022-23. Improved progression rates through working with the school and key pupils to raise awareness and aspiration, build confidence and relationships, run workshops and open days, operate summer schools and continued access to professionals.</i></p>
5.4	<p>Establish an internal IC Corporate Parenting Support Group to include care experienced learner representatives and staff from key areas across the college with a clear purpose and remit to drive the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Plan forward and make and implement timely changes identified by learners.</p>	<p>Access and Progression Manager & Access and Transitions Co-ordinator</p>	October 2021	<p>Principles of Good Transitions 3 Principle 4: Young people should get the support they need</p> <p>The Care Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ People ➤ Voice ➤ Scaffolding <p>CELCIS Recommendation 17 <i>Colleges and universities should provide opportunities for care experienced students to give feedback on the support services available, what does not work well for them, or what staff or institutions have done particularly well. This information should be collected alongside other student satisfaction processes and used to inform improvement planning.</i></p>

Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023

5.5	Improve our data collection and categorisation to ensure that we have reliable and accurate data to use for multiple purposes	MIS Manager	Ongoing	
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DRAFT

Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023

Key Documents

- [The Learner Journey Review 2019](#)
- ['Being a Student with Care Experience is Very Daunting', Celcis 2019](#)
- [National Statement of Ambition for Care Experienced Learners, Scottish Funding Council 2020](#)
- [The Care Review 2020](#)
- [Principles of Good Transition 3](#)

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Subject/Title:	Research and Innovation update
Author: [Name and Job title]	Melanie Smith Director Research and Innovation
Meeting:	Learning, Teaching and Research Committee
Meeting Date:	
Date Paper prepared:	22 nd September 2020
Brief Summary of the paper:	To report on key activities in Research and Innovation in ICUHI.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change 	Research
Resource implications:	If yes, please specify:
Risk implications:	Yes/ No If yes, please specify:
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes /No If yes, please specify:
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	n/a
Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-Confidential
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]	No
*If a paper should not be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.	

Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

SUMMARY

To present an update on Research and Innovation activity since June 2020.

Table 1

KPIs		20-21 target	Actual at September 2020
1	Number of staff submitted to the Research Excellence Framework	14.2 fte (16 staff)	14.2 fte (16 staff)
2	Number of postgraduate research students	15	12
3	Number of Knowledge Transfer Partnerships	4	2
4	Research and innovation funding income	Budgeted £954,178	c.£400k*

*Budget information was being finalised from Finance at time of preparation of this report, so this figure is a reasonable estimate.

REPORT

This report presents an update on Research and Innovation activity, including current performance against key indicators (see Table 1).

1. Research Excellence Framework

31st July 2020 was the cut off for staff eligible to be submitted to the REF.

In the **2014 REF** the number of staff submitted totalled **1.8fte** (3 people) into 3 units of assessment (UoAs).

The number being submitted to the **2021 REF** is **13.2fte** (16 people) into 4 UoAs. The UoAs are as follows:

UoA 3 Health and Allied Sciences	IC staff submission = 1.0 fte
UoA 7 Environmental Sciences	IC staff submission = 5.6 fte
UoA 25 Area Studies	IC staff submission = 5.8 fte
UoA 23 Education	IC staff submission = 0.8 fte

The KPI target for staff submitted has been exceeded by 3.2fte; and there are 11.4fte more staff being submitted to the 2021 REF compared to REF 2014.

Due to Covid-19, the 2021 REF submission deadline has been extended from 27th November 2020, to 31st March 2021. The outcomes of the 2021 REF review will be announced in April 2022, with the scores being used by the funding bodies to inform research funding from the academic year 2022–23. This presents a potentially challenging funding gap for IC for academic years 2020–21 and 2021–22.

2. Number of postgraduate research students (PGRs)

The total number of PGR students at September 2020 is 12, with 2 new fully funded MRes students due to start in October 2020. This is as expected for this point in the year according to the target. It was decided to increase the target for PGR numbers by only 3 due to being at capacity of research supervisors in the team. 3 PGR completions are expected in the next 4-5 months.

As reported in June, the PGRs have been adversely affected by the pandemic. The majority of PGRs have some delay in their projects and this can be mitigated by application to the Covid uplift funding which came to UHI from SG.

3. Number of Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

The following from the KTP UK website <http://ktp.innovateuk.org/>, briefly describes what a KTP is:

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) are a UK-wide programme that has been helping businesses for the past 40 years to improve their competitiveness and productivity through the better use of knowledge, technology and skills that reside within the UK Knowledge Base.

A Knowledge Transfer Partnership serves to meet a core strategic need and to identify innovative solutions to help that business grow. KTP often delivers significant increased profitability for business partners as a direct result of the partnership through improved quality and operations, increased sales and access to new markets. Social enterprises see improved results, too.

As research capacity has grown at ICUHI we have been able to look at delivering KTPs. In 19/20 we have been successful in securing 2 KTPs. The first of these started in early 2020 with National Trust for Scotland, and despite an uncertain period due to Covid-19, during which time the KTP associate was furloughed, it was recently announced that this KTP will continue. The second KTP started in August with Tilhill Forestry.

KTP funding is an anticipated growth area, and the target for 20-21 is to manage 4 (including the 2 already secured).

4. Research and Innovation Funding

Budgeted income for 2020-21 is £954,178. At the time of preparation of this paper Finance are working through budgets to finalise statements, a reasonable assessment of actual income to date is c.£400k.

Research Centres update

Rivers and Lochs Institute

As restrictions were eased in July to allow research laboratories to operate, this meant that the RLI genomics laboratory was able to resume analysis of samples and work on projects (especially important for PGRs) could begin again. Fieldwork has also been ongoing and despite considerable logistical issues, staff and PGRs have been exceptional in managing the ongoing situation and requirement to be adaptable and flexible. Project development work is also resuming, and a number of external partners and collaborators are keen to engage with consideration of new projects and extension of existing arrangements.

Centre for Remote and Sustainable Communities

In August 2020 UHI Research and Knowledge Exchange committee approved the changes and renewed focus for the Centre for Remote and Sustainable Communities, led by Dr Vicky Johnson who started 1st March 2020. Appendix 1 presents a summary strategy and focus for the CRSC for the coming 5 years.

Wooded Landscapes Research Group

Led by Dr Euan Bowditch, the WLRG is working closely with the other research centres and UHI APs as the main focus for forestry based research in the UHI partnership. A recent NERC programme has been announced on Treescapes, and Euan is leading a consortium of participants from a number of UK HEIs and research institutions in development of a proposal to be submitted to this call.

APPENDIX 1

Centre for Remote and Sustainable Communities

Director: Dr Vicky Johnson

The Centre for Remote and Sustainable Communities aims to surface the voices of marginalized and remote communities and people across the Highlands and Islands and Internationally. The CRSC takes an interdisciplinary and creative approach to research and entrepreneurship to understand complexity, change and uncertainty. Now and in the future, the sustainability of communities is important in navigating social, environmental and economic challenges and contributing to transformational change.

Through creative and innovative research, we seek to contribute new ideas for inclusive sustainable development that challenges inequalities embedded in hierarchies of knowledge and social norms in communities. This may include understanding processes of intersecting aspects of inequality, including gender and sexuality, age, race and ethnicity, religion, disability, but also include issues of access to education, employment and justice. It also requires understanding many layers of changing contexts, including historical and recent/ current conflict, transitions in politics and governance, environmental and climate change, cultural and social norms, mobility and migration, and personal and power relationships.

The CRSC considers different temporal scales of complexity, change and uncertainty that necessitates understanding perspectives on cultural and natural heritage as well as visions for future generations. Research about intergenerational differences in everyday lives and aspirations is inclusive of children and youth, who are recognized as having the energy and creativity to motivate others. By building partnerships and creative spaces for dialogue, we link people in communities, civil society, enterprises and policy makers together as agents of change.

With a long tradition of entrepreneurship in local and educational contexts, the Creating Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CREATE) team focuses on community-enterprise-university partnerships, supporting entrepreneurial thinking across researchers and educators in UHI and across the Highlands and Islands, and the development and delivery of bespoke commercial training, courses, and workshops for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Themes for the CRSC:

- Sustainability – with a specific focus on cultural, social and natural resource ownership and management, leadership, regional and international development, third sector activities, entrepreneurial thinking and public service delivery to remote and marginalised communities.
- Access and inclusion – with an emphasis on identifying inequalities with remote and marginalised communities in and on the move between rural and urban areas, and working with academic policymakers and other stakeholders to address such inequalities;
- Intergenerational perspectives – intergenerational community driven research and a focus on child and youth rights provides a re-energised and rejuvenated vision for future generations. Listening to children and youth rather than making assumptions about their perspectives is important in order to face rapidly changing contexts whilst supporting them in their aspirations.
- Enterprising innovation – connecting research, education and (local) businesses facilitates innovations in knowledge exchange and entrepreneurial thinking.
- Navigating change and complexity – particularly in relation to political, cultural, social and environmental change including climate change, local-global linkages, demographics, migration and technological advances. We apply a change-scape approach that means treating people in communities as agents of change within landscapes of change within different Scottish and global contexts.

Research will be living and responsive to landscapes and waterscapes of change. We work to build collaboration and partnerships across the Scottish Highlands and Islands and in global contexts, both looking to the global North and South.

We carry out research that provides evidence that can change thinking but also influence policy and practice. It draws on affiliation across academic disciplines seeking to draw on wide ranging interdisciplinary research expertise and ensuring more research informed teaching.

We focus on three main areas:

- Research
- Knowledge exchange and impact
- Research informed teaching

The Centre for Remote and Sustainable Communities builds the capacity of Early Career Researchers through supporting links between postdoctoral students across social sciences, arts and humanities and in promoting exciting pathways of professional and academic progression. Also, through support of

researchers from global South in postgraduate training, partnership in co-constructing research proposals and implementation and co-authorship on publication.

The Centre for Remote and Sustainable Communities contributes to the UHI Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy.

It builds on the legacy of our previous Centre of Remote and Rural Studies, led by Professor Philomena de Lima.

Overall objectives for 5 years:

Research Excellence:

- Fund Director, senior researchers, researchers, post docs through UKRI and high-level international and national research funding
- For research staff to author academic outputs in relevant books and peer reviewed journal articles that demonstrate national and international significance and are open access to gain high profile/ citations
- Contribute to two impact case studies

Partnership:

- Build partnership across UHI in collaborative research bids and Knowledge Exchange programmes and groups
- Develop and support meaningful international partnerships with researchers in the global South and North
- Support entrepreneurial research and knowledge exchange partnerships across the Highlands and Islands

Knowledge Exchange and Impact:

- Promote entrepreneurial thinking through partnership with HIE and SIE and similar support for entrepreneurship across research and UHI
- Build the Centre website and social media strategy to gain recognition internationally
- Become a leader in entrepreneurial thinking and in intergenerational community driven research

Early Career Researchers:

- Include ECRs on bids with appropriate mentoring in place
- Support publication in a considered way that supports a career progression and advancement in academic writing
- Affiliate academic staff across IC UHI and support them in their career paths, with affiliates from across Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences

Research Informed Teaching:

- To liaise with curriculum planning to ensure that academic staff can draw on case study material from the Centre's research
- To build a post graduate MRES/ Masters with taught programme connected to the Centre's research and reputation
- To build on initiatives that work across UHI to promote enterprising researchers and educators

Board of Management

Subject/Title:	LT&R Committee Evaluation Feedback and Implementation Plan
Author: [Name and Job title]	Lisa Ross, Board Secretary
Meeting:	LT&R Committee
Meeting Date:	22 September 2020
Date Paper prepared:	15 September 2020
Brief Summary of the paper:	Feedback on the LT&R Committee Evaluation along with an implementation plan which has been developed following this evaluation.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	It is recommended that the committee discuss the suggested actions and timescales set out in the implementation plan.
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change 	Compliance with Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges. Providing assurance to the Board on the effectiveness of the audit committee's key responsibilities and thus mitigating risk.
Resource implications:	Cost of Internal Audit services
Risk implications:	Yes/No Operational: to ensure that the internal audit function is appropriate and effective
Equality and Diversity implications:	N/A
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	

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Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-Confidential		
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]	Yes		
*If a paper should not be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.			
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

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<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

Background

The LT&R Committee Evaluations for both Chair and the Committee were carried out offline during June-August 2020. Of the 9 Board of Management Members who were requested to complete these evaluations 6 members completed them and from their responses an aggregated evaluation form was completed by the Board Secretary.

Chair Feedback

The completed evaluation documentation for the LT&R Chair has been passed to the Chair of the Board of Management. However there were no issues raised and nothing from this feedback requires to be included within the implementation plan.

Committee Feedback

A copy of the aggregated feedback from the Committee is attached as Appendix 1.

Within the feedback received a small number of queries were highlighted (noted in table below). These were not required to be included within the implementation plan however the Board Secretary has sought clarification on each of these.

Question	Query	Response
Does the Committee have enough members?	One respondent was unclear whether the Committee had enough members – especially given the current circumstances.	The Board Secretary has checked the LT&R Committee Terms of Reference and can confirm that they advise that the LT&R Committee should have not less than five members of the Board including the Principal <i>ex officio</i> , the teaching staff representative and the student representatives. We therefore meet the minimum number of members.
Does the Committee have an independent secretary?	One respondent was unsure of this.	The Board Secretary can confirm that she is the independent secretary and that she is employed by the Board of Management.

Implementation Plan

Following the feedback received from Committee members an implementation plan has been drawn up – see Appendix 2.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee discuss the suggested actions and timescales set out in the implantation plan:

- Discussion to take place with regards whether all members of the LT&R Committee have received the necessary training.
- Discussion to take place by Chair of Board of Management with existing members of the Committee with a view to appointing a new Chair of the LT&R Committee.

Appendix 1

Learning, Teaching and Research Committee Evaluation (to be completed by the LT&R committee collectively).

Date: August 2020

Good Practice	Yes	No	N/A	Comments/Action
<i>Composition, Establishment and Duties of the Committee</i>				
Does the Committee meet regularly in accordance with the Board Standing Orders?	Y			
Does the Committee consistently have a quorum?	Y			
Do all Committee members attend meetings regularly?	Y (5)	N (1)		It was highlighted that IT issues may have had an impact on member's ability to attend meetings.
Does the Committee have enough members?	Y (5)	N (1)		It was highlighted that this may not be the case due to complex circumstances.
Does at least one of the Committee members have a background relevant to the remit of the Committee?	Y			
Have new Committee members received all necessary training?	Y (5)			One member of the Committee was unsure of whether this was the case.
Does the Committee report regularly to the Board?	Y			

Good Practice	Yes	No	N/A	Comments/Action
<i>Terms of reference</i>				
Does the Committee have written terms of reference?	Y			

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Do the terms of reference include all aspects of the Committee's role?	Y			
Does the membership of the Committee need to be changed?	Y (2)	N (4)		It was noted that a new Chair for the Committee is required.
Are the terms of reference adopted by the full Board and reviewed annually?	Y			

Good Practice	Yes	No	N/A	Comments/Action
<i>Compliance with the Law and Regulations</i>				
Does the Committee have a mechanism to keep it aware of topical legal and regulatory issues?	Y			It was noted that advice from senior leadership team feeds through to the Committee.

Good Practice	Yes	No	N/A	Comments/Action
<i>Internal Control</i>				
Does the Committee monitor to ensure that risk is controlled?	Y			
Does the Committee regularly review relevant strategic plans?	Y			
Does the Committee consider the level of detail and information it receives appropriate?	Y			
Are appropriate internal performance measures monitored by the Committee?	Y			
Is the Committee addressing all matters delegated to it by the Board and under its terms of reference?	Y			

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Good Practice	Yes	No	N/A	Comments/Action
<i>Administrative arrangements</i>				
Does the Committee have an independent secretary?	Y (5)	1 (1)		One member highlighted that they were unsure of this.
Are Committee papers distributed in sufficient time for members to give them due consideration?	Y			The Committee noted that there has been issues with not having the papers circulated on time with the change of secretaries, but that it is under control now.
Are Committee meetings scheduled prior to important decisions on specific matters being made?	Y			
Is the timing of Committee meetings discussed with all involved?	Y			

APPENDIX 2



LT&R COMMITTEE SELF- EVALUATION – ACTION PLAN

	Issue	Action required	Responsible person	Timescale/ Comments
1	Have new Committee members received all necessary training?	Discussion on whether all members have received the necessary training that is required. If it is felt that training is required then this will be sourced for the Committee members who require it.	Board Secretary	September 2020 Meeting – then progress further if training required.
2.	Does the membership of the Committee need to be changed? <i>It was identified that a new Chair was required.</i>	Chair of the Board of Management to discuss with members of the LT&R Committee the role of Chair and identify a suitable candidate.	Chair of BoM	In place for November 2020 Meeting.
3.	Are Committee papers distributed in sufficient time for members to give them due consideration? <i>Whilst this was not felt to be an issue the Board Secretary has provided an update with regards the move to AdminControl for all Committee papers.</i>	All papers will be circulated one week prior to the meeting. The Board Secretary is currently getting AdminControl set up for all Committee Meetings and papers will appear within AdminControl as they are received. This way members will be able to read the papers as they are received and there will be no delay in receiving the papers.	Board Secretary	Admin Control to be in place by November 2020 LT&R Committee Meeting.

Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Complaints Annual Report 2019-20
Author: [Name and Job title]	Liz Cook, Quality Manager
Meeting:	LT&R Committee
Meeting Date:	22 September 2020
Date Paper prepared:	04 September 2020
Brief Summary of the paper:	The report provides an analysis of the complaints received during the academic year 2019 – 20.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Noting
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change 	The report assists with a number of strategies' including Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Learning and Teaching, and Student Engagement
Resource implications:	Yes / No If yes, please specify:
Risk implications:	Yes / No If yes, please specify: Operational: Organisational:
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes / No If yes, please specify:
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	None

Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-confidential		
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]	Yes		
*If a paper should not be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.			
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For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

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Annual Report: Complaints 2019 – 20

Introduction

Complaints are received year-round, from a number of different sources although the primary source tends to be from students. Complaints are received via a variety of mechanisms including direct emails, complaints forms, Red Button. IC UHI uses the SPSO categories and sub-categories to classify complaints. The outcomes from complaint resolution are reported to UHI (HE) and published on the IC UHI website (FE).

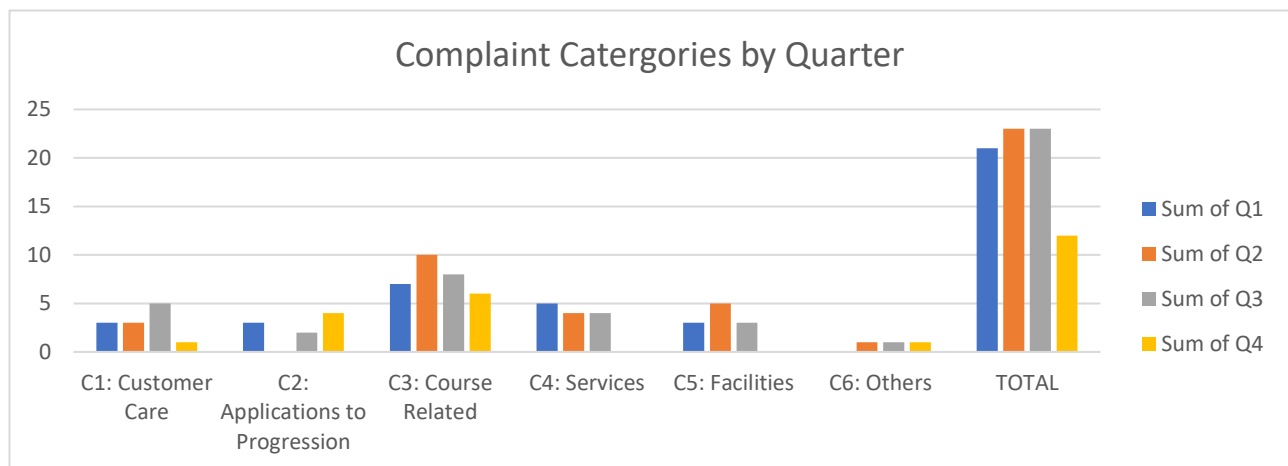
Complaints are grouped into quarters depending on the time of year in which they are received. The quarter dates are detailed below:

- Quarter 1 (Q1): August – end of October,
- Quarter 2 (Q2): November – end of January,
- Quarter 3 (Q3): February – end of April,
- Quarter 4 (Q4): May – end of July.

This report provides an overview of the complaint categories and outcomes across academic year 2019-20 (Q1-Q4) including Q4 statistics and outcomes.

Complaints by Category

The graph below displays the sum of quarterly complaints each category received.



Customer Category: Current Year (Quarter) 2019/20	YTD CY	Q1,CY	Q2,CY	Q3,CY	Q4,CY
C1: Customer Care	12	3	3	5	1
C2: Applications to Progression	9	3	0	2	4
C3: Course Related	31	7	10	8	6
C4: Services	13	5	4	4	0
C5: Facilities	11	3	5	3	0
C6: Others	3	0	1	1	1
TOTAL	79	21	23	23	12

Customer Category: Previous Year (Quarter) 2018/19	YTD PY	Q1, PY	Q2,PY	Q3, PY	Q4, PY
C1: Customer Care	53	10	11	18	14
C2: Applications to Progression	11	4	0	1	6
C3: Course Related	21	3	7	9	2
C4: Services	4	1	2	0	1
C5: Facilities	17	6	2	7	2
C6: Others	3	0	0	2	1
TOTAL	109	24	22	37	26

A total of 12 complaints were received in Q4 of 2019-20. Overall, there was a 35% reduction in complaints from 109 in 2018/19 to 79 in 2019/20. There were significant decreases of 37% in Q3 and 53% in Q4, both periods affected by the Covid 19 pandemic. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest this reduction in complaints has been replicated across the college sector. (CHAG 03.09.2020).

The category of *Course Related* received the most complaints for each quarter of 2019/20, accounting for 39% of the total complaints received this year. This represented an increase of 20% (10) from the previous year. 17 of these complaints related to HE provision, 7 to FE, 7 were received from externals. In 2018/19 there were 17 HE and 4 FE complaints. The sub-category of Learning & Teaching received 9 complaints, primarily relating to issues of poor communication by lecturing staff but not focussed in any curriculum area. Two other subcategories: Course Management, and Assessment, Exams & Certification received 5 and 4 complaints respectively but there were no trends identified within such small numbers.

There has been a significant drop in *Customer Care* complaints with only 1 received in Q4 this year compared to 14 received in Q4 2018-19. The data shows a 77% reduction from 53 received in 2018-19 to 12 received in 2019-20. The decline in complaints in this category was evident before the outbreak of COVID 19. In 2018/19 the subcategory Staff Conduct accounted for 28 complaints, this has reduced to 11 in the current year and these were recorded in both teaching and support departments.

Applications to Progression category received 4 complaints in Q4, a reduction of 2 compared to Q4 in 2018-19, there was an overall decline from 11 in 2018/19 to 9 this year, 5 were from FE students and 4 from externals.

There were no *Service complaints* in Q4 of 2019-20. The data for the year shows the complaints in this area have increased from 4 last academic year to 13 in 2019/20. The

complaints received are spread across five different departments with no significant trend observed.

There were no *Facilities complaints* in Q4 of 2019/20. Overall, there is a reduction in complaints from 17 YTD 2018-19 to 11 YTD 2019-20. This trend was evident before the Covid 19 pandemic. Catering and Estates departments received 8 of these complaints between them, however there were no repeat complaints.

The remaining category of *Other* received 1 complaint in Q4, the same as Q4 of 2018-19. 3 complaints were received this year, the same as last year.

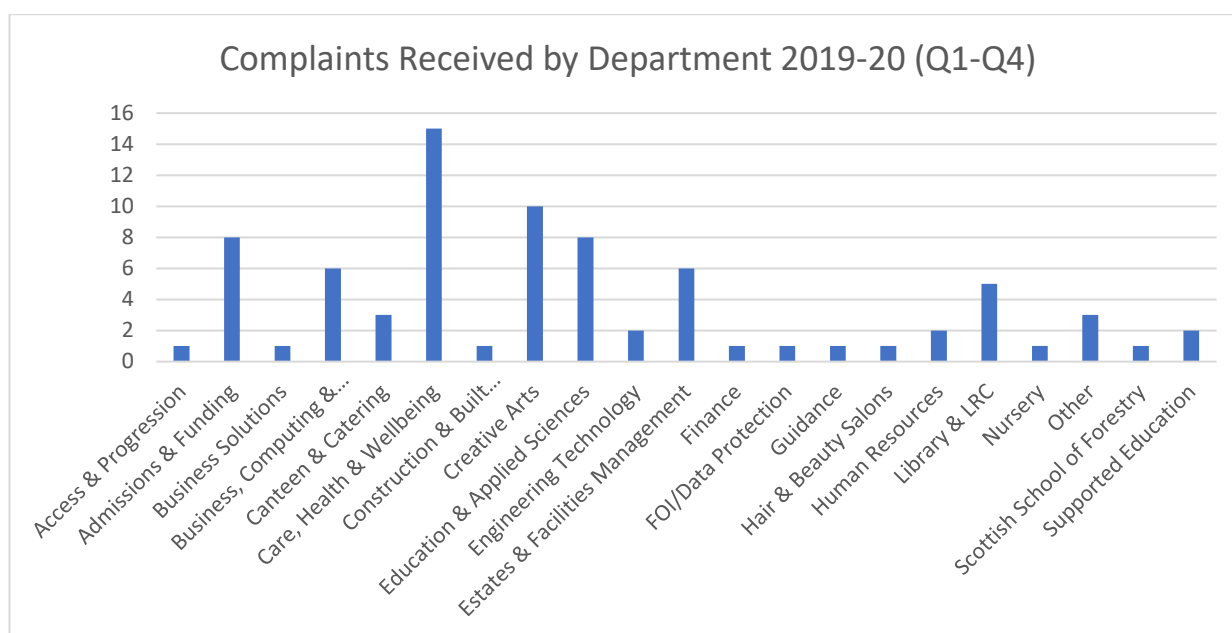
The table below shows the full breakdown of complaint categories and sub categories, including the year to year shift.

Category	2018-19	2019-20	Change
C1: Customer Care	2018-19	2019-20	Change
C1S01: Health & Safety	1	2	1
C1S02: Security	0	0	0
C1S03: Diversity & Equality	0	0	0
C1S04: Data Protection	1	0	-1
C1S05: Environmental	0	0	0
C1S06: Staff Conduct	28	7	-21
C1S07: Student Conduct	12	1	-11
C1S99: Other	12	0	-12
C4S02: Funding/Bursary	0	2	2
C2: Applications to Progression	2018-19	2019-20	Change
C2S01: Marketing	2	0	-2
C2S02: Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment, Induction	4	8	4
C2S03: Progression, Articulation, Withdrawal	3	1	-2
C2S99: Other	1	0	-1
C3S05: Assessment	1	0	-1
C3: Course Related	2018-19	2019-20	Change
C3S01: Learning & Teaching	9	9	0
C3S02: Environment/Resources	2	1	-1
C3S03: Course Management	2	7	5
C3S04: Facilitated Learning & Support	1	1	0
C3S05: Assessment, Exams & Certification	7	6	-1
C1S06: Staff Conduct	0	4	4
C1S07: Student Conduct	0	1	1
C3S99: Other	1	1	0

C4: Services	2018-19	2019-20	Change
C4S01: Finance	1	3	2
C4S02: Funding / Bursary	1	3	1
C4S03: Student Records	0	0	0
C4S04: Providing Learning Support	1	0	-1
C4S05: Library / Learning Technology	1	4	3
C4S06: Quality etc.	0	0	0
C4S99: Other	0	2	2
C5: Facilities	2018-19	2019-20	Change
C5S01: Catering	2	3	1
C5S02: Student Accommodation	0	1	1
C5S03: Maintenance, Lifts, Car Parking	4	2	-2
C1S05: Environmental	0	1	1
C5S99: Other	11	4	-7
C6: Others	2018-19	2019-20	Change
C6S01: Others	3	0	-3
C1S04: Data Protection	0	1	1
C1S07: Student Conduct	0	1	1
C1S99: Other	0	1	1
C6S99:	0	0	0
TOTAL	109	79	-40

Complaints by Department

The graph below displays the number of complaints received by department throughout academic year 2019-20. Care, Health and Wellbeing received the highest number of complaints overall (15 complaints). Creative Arts had the next highest number of complaints with 10. Admissions and Funding had the highest number of complaints within the support departments with 8 complaints. Estates received the most complaints in 2018-19 with 14, which has reduced to 6 this year.



Complaints by Mode of Delivery

In relation to mode of delivery in Q4 only, 30% of complaints received relate to HE programmes, 30% relate to FE programmes and 40% complaints came from Members of Public. The four complaints from Members of Public were from parents, two were application to progression related and the other two were course related.

In 2019-20 (Q1-Q4), 30.5% of complaints received related to FE programmes, 38% related to HE programmes and 31.5% were received from Members of Public, Stakeholders and Others.

The table below provides a breakdown for 2019-20 and 2018-19.

FE / HE	No. Received 19/20	No. Received 18/19
FE	25	36
HE	30	49
Other	24	24
Total	79	109

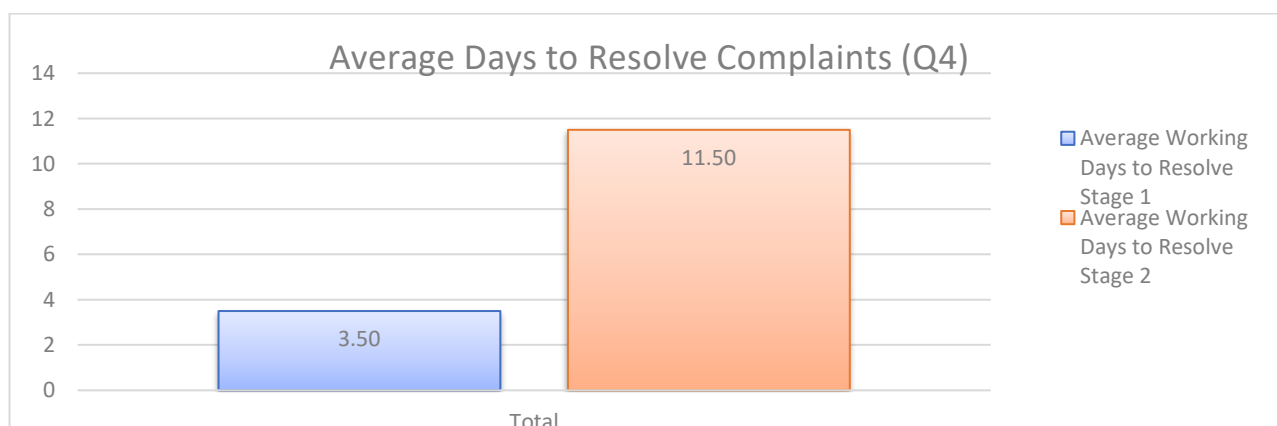
Complaint Outcomes

The table below shows the breakdown in stage 1 and stage 2 complaints and whether they have been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

- Not upheld – 43%
- Partially upheld – 29%
- Upheld – 28%

Outcome	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Not upheld	26 <i>FE: 8, HE: 9, Other: 9.</i>	8 <i>FE: 1, HE: 4, Other: 3.</i>	34 <i>FE: 9, HE: 13, Other: 12.</i>
Partially upheld	13 <i>FE: 4, HE: 5, Other: 4.</i>	10 <i>FE: 3, HE: 4, Other: 3.</i>	23 <i>FE: 7, HE: 9, Other: 7.</i>
Upheld	15 <i>FE: 8, HE: 5, Other: 2.</i>	7 <i>FE: 1, HE: 3, Other: 3.</i>	22 <i>FE: 9, HE: 8, Other: 5.</i>
Still under investigation	0 <i>FE: 0, HE: 0, Other: 0.</i>	0 <i>FE: 0, HE: 0, Other: 0.</i>	0 <i>FE: 0, HE: 0, Other: 0.</i>
Total	54	25	79

Complaint Timescales



The chart above displays the average number of days taken to resolve complaints in Q4.

The range of days taken to resolve Stage 1 complaints in Q4 is between 1 – 6 days.

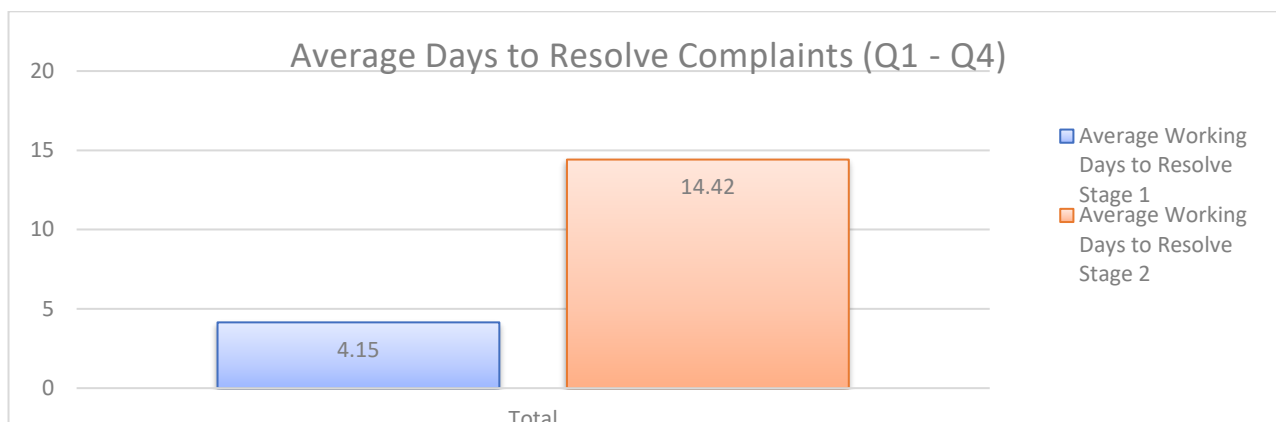
The range of days taken to resolve Stage 2 complaints in Q4 is between 3 – 20 days.

Across academic year 2019-20 the timescales to resolve complaints are detailed below:

Stage 1 complaints 2019-20 (Q1-Q4): 1 – 16 days.

Stage 2 complaints 2019-20 (Q1-Q4): 1 – 32 days.

The chart below shows the average number of days taken to resolve complaints across academic year 2019-20.



SPSO guidelines state pre-defined timescales of a 5 day turnaround for Stage 1, and 20 days for Stage 2. As part of the Stage 2 process, updates are provided to complainants where the complaint is complex and may take longer than 20 working days. 79% of complaints were dealt with within the SPSO timescales, 14 Stage 1 complaints exceeded the 5 day limit, 3 Stage 2 complaints exceeded the 20 day limit. Stage 1 complaints related to timing issues or delays in the receipt of requested information, the Stage 2 complaints due to the complexity of the complaints involved.

Within the academic year 2019-20, no complaints were escalated to SPSO.

Learning from Complaints

Complaints often result in reviews of processes and procedures and they also allow us to identify opportunities for staff development. The Quality team continues to identify any learning points from each complaint in order to identify themes emerging. Curriculum and support teams use complaints as part of their evidence bank to inform their evaluative activities aimed at improving the student experience.

Below is an example of improvements made as a result of complaints received during Q4 2019 - 20:

- Debt collection should be triggered earlier to prevent the accrual of debt. This is an ongoing discussion to identify procedural improvements.

Below are example of improvements made as a result of complaints received during 2019 - 20:

- Induction and pre-course information has been reviewed for currency and accuracy, corrections made and reissued to appropriate cohort.
- Communication etiquette is to be included in course induction and introduce holding emails where the student's queries are complex.
- Funding criteria has been reissued to all PDAs, with a focus on new staff.

- The payment plan process has been reviewed and students cannot now receive a payment plan until they have enrolled on their course.
- Instructions have been added to Celcat not to use the VC suite adjacent to the Library (243a) for 'noisy' i.e. music classes, as the sound proofing is inadequate.
- Out of office messages for part time staff has been amended to direct student enquiries to another nominated staff member in their absence.
- To clarify the process for providing feedback to job applicants, a new recruitment portal is to be rolled out
- Additional tables have been ordered to increase LRC study space.
- New soap dispensers are being trialled in the college.

Themes of emerging from complaints through the academic year 2019-20:

It is difficult to draw themes from the small number of complaints received, spread across the range of complaint categories.

There has been a significant decline in customer care complaints year on year, which was evident before the Covid 19 pandemic and the resulting college closure. In particular the areas of staff and student conduct have reduced significantly. The scope of the complaints procedure was refined for 2019/20, and this reduction may be, in part, as a result of this further clarity.

One common issue appearing through several complaints this year are instances of incomplete, inaccurate or inconsistent communication. This has been both verbal and written. Teams are aware of the need for clear communication and strive to ensure all communications meet the needs of all users.