

# EVALUATION OF BLENDED LEARNING

## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Background .....  | 2  |
| Next Steps for Blended Learning: Summary of the Key Emerging Reports Regarding Blended Learning In Higher Education ..... | 3  |
| Evaluation of Blended Learning Delivery at University of Aberdeen.....  | 9  |
| Summary Findings from School Focus Groups with Staff .....  | 9  |
| Summary Findings from Staff Survey of Blended Learning During Academic Year 2020-21..                                     | 10 |
| Summary Findings from Survey of Remote Learning as Part of Aberdeen Student Experience Survey .....                       | 13 |
| Summary Findings: Student Focus Group .....   | 16 |
| Annex A: Staff Focus Group Key Themes .....   | 18 |
| Annex B: Staff Survey of Blended Learning During Academic Year 2020-21.....   | 28 |
| Annex C: Survey of Remote Learning as Part of Aberdeen Student Experience Survey .....                                    | 45 |
| Annex D: BLFG /UEC Reports .....  | 65 |

## BACKGROUND

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an extraordinary impact on higher education worldwide. This has resulted in all educational institutions being faced with challenges, such as how to mitigate potential learning losses, how to deploy remote learning, how to safely reopen educational institutions, and how to ensure that underrepresented, vulnerable and disadvantaged learners are not left behind. However, it has also offered an exceptional opportunity to enhance educational provision and consider alternatives to traditional practice and has encouraged extensive engagement with enhancing and evaluating our practices.

The University of Aberdeen has been delivering a blended learning experience since the start of the first half-session 2020/21. As part of the process of implementation, we have gathered student and staff views across the academic year to enable approaches to be informed by good practice and shaped in a timely manner in response to feedback and experience. The findings of this evaluation will contribute to the evidence-base, which will inform our delivery of Education post-Covid.

The evaluation plan was approved by the Blended Learning Implementation Task & Finish Group (BLITFG) on 16 September 2020 and included:

- Focus groups with groups from each School (November 2020)
- Focus groups with students across the University (February 2021)
- Pulse survey of student experiences (November 2020)
- Staff survey of experiences (May 2021)
- Review of the sector evidence (August 2021)

## NEXT STEPS FOR BLENDED LEARNING: SUMMARY OF THE KEY EMERGING REPORTS REGARDING BLENDED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### 1 INTRODUCTION

From the wide-ranging sector reports and other evidence that have emerged over the last 18 months, six key areas are dominating the discussion regarding the future of higher education<sup>1</sup>:

- teaching and learning delivery for the future (including the role of digital)
- authentic assessment with integrity designed in
- social learning dimension of higher education
- student health and wellbeing (in particular supporting student mental wellbeing)
- accessible and inclusive education (in particular unequal effect of the pandemic on specific groups due to demographics, social circumstances)
- student mobility

Each of these are briefly discussed here, from the perspective of the external evidence, and will inform the work that we will be undertaking on the Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum, and in particular on the work that will take place in academic year 2021/22 in the Aberdeen 2040 Delivery of Education Task and Finish Group. It is vital that the learning from the sector, both nationally and internationally, as well as the learning from our blended learning evaluation and other internal data, is utilised in our discussions and future planning.

#### 1.1 Teaching and Learning Delivery for the Future

- (i) The rapid move to ‘emergency remote teaching’ due to the Covid-19 pandemic was a significant challenge for staff and students;
- (ii) Teaching staff had to adapt their teaching methods and assessment to remote delivery;
- (iii) University Support Services had to adapt the delivery of their services and support to remote delivery, e.g., Library, Student Support, Careers Service;
- (iv) Students had to access course content and assessments, manage study workload, and develop and maintain social networks in radically different circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of the sector reports / evidence include:

- Barber** Gravity assist: propelling higher education towards a brighter future (March 2021) available from <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/gravity-assist-propelling-higher-education-towards-a-brighter-future/>
- Jisc** Rethinking Assessment (May 2021) Available from <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/rethinking-assessment>
- Jisc** Learning and teaching reimagined: a new dawn for higher education? (November 2020) Available from <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/learning-and-teaching-reimagined-a-new-dawn-for-higher-education>
- QAA** A Launch Pad for Future Success: Using Outcomes-Based Approaches to Scaffold the Pandemic Year and Build for the Future (May 2021). Available from <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/using-outcomes-based-approaches-to-scaffold-the-pandemic-year-and-build-for-the-future.pdf>

The [Jisc report](#) 'Learning and Teaching Reimagined: a New Dawn for Higher Education?' (2020) produced a set of recommendations for universities, sector agencies and government to support the work that needs to take place in navigating the future of education. Their recommendations are as follows:

- Universities to use their strategic and structural planning processes to effect the digital transformation of learning and teaching, ensuring that sponsorship is provided by governing bodies and executive teams;
- Universities to review their strategic investment in digital learning and teaching;
- Universities to make investment plans to mitigate the heightened cyber security risks that arise from greater dependence on digital technologies;
- Universities to think radically about the scale and scope of their learning and teaching activities, prioritising blended learning approaches wherever possible;
- Universities to accelerate the adoption of blended learning, with close involvement of students in all aspects from design to delivery;
- Universities to ensure inclusivity and accessibility are integral considerations in curriculum redesign;
- Universities to ensure their professional development plans include digital training, peer support mechanisms and reward and recognition incentives to encourage upskilling;
- Universities and sector organisations to establish research to remain in step with the changing digital preferences and expectations of prospective higher education students;
- Universities, government and funders to provide additional funding or means to reduce digital poverty as a barrier to students accessing higher education.

## 1.2 Authentic Assessment with Integrity Designed In

In February 2020, Jisc published [The Future of Assessment](#)<sup>1</sup>. It outlined five targets for 2025 to progress assessment towards being more authentic, accessible, appropriately automated, continuous and secure. This was rapidly followed by the [Assessment Rebooted](#)<sup>2</sup> report in May 2020, which discussed how the pandemic had required all universities to adapt assessment practices rapidly to enable digital assessment. This report highlighted how much of what had been envisaged for development over the coming 5 years, had taken place at a much faster pace than could have been managed pre-pandemic. The Assessment Rebooted report sets out three goals looking forward to 2030 as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Available from <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/the-future-of-assessment>

<sup>2</sup> Available from <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/7854/1/assessment-rebooted-report.pdf>

Assessment should become more:

- **Relevant:** Enabling universities to go beyond traditional forms of assessment, dictated by practical limitations of analogue exams, and build systems that are relevant to contemporary needs and reflective of the learning process, and make use of innovative assessment methods too impractical to deliver without digital tools.
- **Adaptable:** Effective in addressing the needs of a growing and diverse student population, a range of providers and any number of geographies.
- **Trustworthy:** Based on solid foundations of academic integrity, security, privacy and fairness.

The Assessment Rebooted report highlights that transformation comes with a significant overhead. There is a need for time to be allocated to redesigning assessment structure and content alongside reconfiguring policies governing approaches to assessment, in particular exams, at a time when universities are still dealing with a crisis situation. The report also highlights the need for universities' senior management teams to declare assessment redesign to be a priority.

### 1.3 Social Learning Dimensions of Higher Education

Whilst many reports have identified areas where we have made gains through the move to increased use of digital learning approaches, one area that has been challenging in some cases is in enabling students to develop a [social presence](#) as part of their overall learning experience, particularly for first year undergraduates.

Social presence has three dimensions<sup>1</sup>:

- Developing identity as a student of a discipline
- Communicating purposefully in a trusting environment
- Building interpersonal relationships (friendships)

Evidence on social presence for learning has historically focused on the online or blended environment and there is very little published work on this in a face-to-face environment. This may be because social presence is perceived to be well established within the face-to-face setting such that it happens by default through activities such as group work, in class feedback opportunities, or in class discussions. However, as this [WonkHE article](#) (March 2019)<sup>2</sup> highlights, there is a need for more planned social learning opportunities in our classrooms. The pandemic has brought a spotlight onto the importance of social presence in an effective learning environment. [The Educause review](#) (2021)<sup>3</sup> provides an excellent starting point for considering social presence for any mode of learning with the following key take away messages:

<sup>1</sup> Kreijns, Karel & Van Acker, Frederik & Vermeulen, Marjan & Buuren, Hans. (2014). Community of Inquiry: Social Presence Revisited. *E-Learning and Digital Media*. 11. 5. 10.2304/elea.2014.11.1.5.

<sup>2</sup> Curzons, R. (2019) Thriving academic community demands social learning available from <https://wonkhe.com/wp-content/wonkhe-uploads/2021/02/Wonkhe-Pearson-expectation-gap-II-Feb-2021.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Pelletier, K., et al (2021). *2021 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report Teaching and Learning Edition*. Boulder, CO: EDU. available from <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/219489/>.

- (i) Social presence remains the key to a successful learning experience and understanding social presence, with its critical connection to learning and community building, allows us to better support faculty and students.
- (ii) Implementing change in small steps is the key to understanding which strategies work and which lead to frustration and discontent.
- (iii) The [Pearson WonkHE report](#) (Feb 2021)<sup>1</sup> identified that the majority (63%) of responders said more opportunities for interactions with other students was an area that should be improved. The report identifies that, “Interaction between students need not only take place in the classroom but can be supplemented by online discussion and forums. Curriculum content can be broken down into more manageable chunks that can be digested digitally, and the classroom used for more engaging interactive tasks and activities.”

#### 1.4 Student Health and Wellbeing

The isolation experienced by students as a result of the pandemic appears to be having a significant negative effect on mental wellbeing<sup>2</sup>. However, it is unlikely that simply a return to campus based learning and a reduction on restrictions will fully reverse this trend. The [Accenture report](#)<sup>3</sup> notes that 39% of students said that “their mental health has declined since starting university, and more than half had at least seven symptoms of poor mental health over the last year.” [Universities UK \(UUK\)](#)<sup>4</sup> outlined the need for universities to see mental health as foundational to all aspects of university life, for all students and all staff. [The 2021 Jisc report](#)<sup>5</sup> ‘Student and Staff Wellbeing’ describes the different approaches to both the short-term challenge of moving wellbeing support services online during lockdown and the wider challenge of supporting both staff and student wellbeing and the potential role that technology can play in supporting this going forward.

#### 1.5 Accessible and Inclusive Education

Across the sector there is a strong focus on the unequal effect of the pandemic on students who have experienced additional pressures, beyond their learning experience, related to issues such as demographics, social circumstances and what can be done to ensure that we provide Education that is accessible, inclusive, and does not disadvantage students no

<sup>1</sup> Pearson, WONKHE (2021) Students’ experiences of study during Covid-19 and hopes for future learning and teaching. Available from <https://wonkhe.com/wp-content/wonkhe-uploads/2021/02/Wonkhe-Pearson-expectation-gap-II-Feb-2021.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Lukács, A. (2021). Mental well-being of university students in social isolation. *European Journal of Health Psychology*, 28(1), 22–29. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1027/2512-8442/a000065>

<sup>3</sup> Harvey, B, & Karzunia D. (2021) University: The Best Time of Our Lives? A call to action to address the declining mental health of UK students Available from [https://www.accenture.com/\\_acnmedia/PDF-158/Accenture-Student-Health-Research-Report.pdf](https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-158/Accenture-Student-Health-Research-Report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> de Pury J. & Dicks, A (2019) Stepchange: mentally healthy universities Available from <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/stepchange-mentally-healthy-universities>

<sup>5</sup> Jisc (2021) Student and staff wellbeing. Available from <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8276/1/student-and-staff-wellbeing-report.pdf>

matter their circumstances. Underrepresented, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups were disproportionately affected by the impact of Covid-19, in terms of perceived learning losses, financial concerns and lower levels of mental health and wellbeing. In turn, students with lower levels of mental health and wellbeing face a greater risk of non-continuation. The effects of Covid-19 on deteriorating educational equality in pre-tertiary education are also likely to have a direct effect on lowering the level of participation of disadvantaged groups in higher education.

## 1.6 Student Mobility

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on student mobility in the short and medium term has been extensive, characterised by cancellations of physical overseas student mobility and its replacement with 'virtual mobility'. Student mobility is broadly bi-directional with international degree-seeking students studying in the UK, and UK students undertaking year-long, semester-long and school-led study abroad programmes.

A major component of student mobility is enabling students to experience other linguistic, political, social and cultural paradigms, through immersive in-country experiences. These experiences can be supplemented through approaches such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)<sup>1</sup>. The incorporation of online or blended learning opportunities for students can open up the opportunity for intercultural exchange to many more students who may not have previously considered or have the means to undertake this type of experience<sup>2</sup>.

One recommendation of the [NESET report](#) (2021)<sup>3</sup> is to "Stimulate the goal of international collaboration in higher education, including student mobility, redirecting funds originally intended for physical mobility, to creative solutions such as 'internationalisation at home' strategies, and high-quality virtual mobility." Such an approach could benefit both international students who cannot join university in person, home students who cannot travel abroad and international students who, whilst being in the UK, have had significant reduction in their ability to experience many aspects of living in the country.

The four key elements that define a [COIL](#) project are:

- It involves a cross-border collaboration or interaction with people from different backgrounds and cultures;
- Students must engage in some sort of online interaction, whether it is asynchronous or synchronous;

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<sup>1</sup> [Collaborative Online International Learning](#)

<sup>2</sup> Villar-Onrubia, Daniel, and Brinder Rajpal (2016). '[Online International Learning: Internationalising the Curriculum through Virtual Mobility at Coventry University](#)'. Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education 20, no. 2–3.

<sup>3</sup> Farnell et al (2021) The impact of COVID-19 on higher education: a review of emerging evidence. Available from <https://nesetweb.eu/en/resources/library/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-higher-education-a-review-of-emerging-evidence/>

- It must be driven by a set of internationalised learning outcomes aimed at developing global perspectives and/or fostering students' intercultural competences;
- There must be a reflective component that helps students think critically about such interactions.

## 2 **SUMMARY**

The current sector evidence represented here is not an exhaustive review but provides a summary of the key emerging themes. Taken together with the evidence generated from the evaluation of blended learning at University of Aberdeen this work will be taken forward to inform the Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum work alongside other more detailed analyses of sector-wide and international evidence.



## EVALUATION OF BLENDED LEARNING DELIVERY AT UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

### 1 INTRODUCTION

As part of exploring the readiness of the University to thrive in an HE sector in the context of Covid-19 and the longer term readiness likely to be characterised by an increased demand for enhanced blended learning from students studying on campus.

The evaluation has enabled us to think critically about the move to blended learning, consider the institutional evidence-base associated with the activities and approaches so that we can, in some cases, adjust our blended learning developments in 'real time' where we needed to. It also provides us with an evidence base, on which to forward plan.

The process by which the evaluation approach was created and agreed has been with student involvement as part of the design process and the promotion of participation and feedback.

The following sections provide summaries of the findings from the four major components of the evaluation (full reports of each stage of evaluation are presented in Annexes A, B and C). A table of all reports presented to the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG) and the University Education Committee (UEC) is included in Annex D.

#### 1.1 Summary Findings from School Focus Groups with Staff

The findings of the staff focus group evaluation of blended learning were shared with BLITFG and communicated to Schools through Directors of Education in order to inform ongoing delivery 2020/21 and preparation for 2021/22.

Each School participated in a School-based focus group (November 2020) at which a number of areas were explored. Thanks are due to colleagues for giving up time to contribute to the focus groups. The main areas explored included:

- General observations around what worked well and what might be improved going forward;
- Feedback on synchronous sessions (online and on campus) and asynchronous delivery;
- Reflection on student engagement;
- Observation on assessment, recognising at the time focus groups were held not all assessment had been completed;
- Thoughts on training, support and technology provided to help with blended delivery.

#### 1.2 Key Themes

While the scale of the challenge that blended learning posed was clear, it was heartening to hear how positively colleagues embraced this challenge and to hear about the innovative approaches adopted to provide a high-quality educational experience for our students during these challenging times. It is very clear that there is a lot of good practice across the University. In addition to highlighting good practice, the discussions also identified some

challenges, both for staff and students. It will be important that we look at how we can help address these issues whilst also exploring opportunities to share good practice.

The feedback obtained from the focus groups has been reviewed and key themes identified and are:

- General positivity about the blended learning experience whilst recognising the significant workload challenge this had required;
- Concern about students feeling overwhelmed and struggling to manage their time;
- Reflection on the limited on campus time students received and views in some areas that online delivery may work more effectively;
- Issues with student engagement (e.g., students not turning on cameras and it being difficult in the online environment to tell if students are engaged);
- A view that in some situations live synchronous lectures may be more effective in engaging students;
- Reflection on the use of alternative assessment and in some areas a view that going forward there should be less reliance on formal exams;
- Recognition of the challenge of teaching in a physically distanced on campus environment and the need for some staff support in this area;
- Some frustration in regard to problems with Collaborate and views that in some situations other tools such as MS Teams may be more effective;
- Consistent positive feedback about the support provided to staff in preparing for blended learning;
- Variable attendance levels on campus.

***For full paper see Annex A***

### **1.3 Summary Findings from staff survey of blended learning during academic year 2020-21**

The findings of the University level staff survey were shared with UEC and additional School specific reports were shared through Directors of Education in order to inform ongoing delivery 2020/21 and preparation for 2021/22.

A total of 382 staff completed the survey with all Schools having sufficient responders to enable individual School reports to be generated. Qatar campus had less than the required 10 responders to enable an individual report to be produced.

The majority of staff who delivered blended learning were positive about their experience.

Due to Scottish Government Covid-19 restrictions, the University had to switch to fully online for 2<sup>nd</sup> half-session in January 2021. This reduced the opportunity for the delivery of blended learning.

Health and safety requirements necessitated a reduction in room capacities in first half-session meaning that for some the balance of blended learning was skewed to online with minimal on campus opportunities. Therefore, the findings of this report reflect the experience of blended learning delivery with extensive restrictions.

Colleagues reported that the experience provided them with opportunities to reflect on aspects of course design and delivery and, for many, to implement changes to their pedagogic approach which will continue irrespective of pandemic. The possible changes that were identified include:

- Building in activities and time to enable colleagues and students to facilitate the development of social presence;
- Use of a flipped classroom approach, enabling more interactive, problem-based learning to occur in the classroom;
- Incorporation of student-led question and answer sessions throughout the course delivery;
- Incorporation of authentic assessments that are not so reliant on testing recall;
- Enabling of wider use of digital submission of assessments.

The survey also highlighted areas where additional improvements were required for the short term (i.e., as we continue to deliver teaching with Covid-19 restrictions) and include:

- Support for delivering in-class sessions with physical distancing;
- Support to encourage more students to return to campus to enable more meaningful on campus sessions to occur;
- Additional work on enhancing assessment integrity for non-invigilated assessments;
- Technological solutions to reduce aspects of workload required to assess student engagement and retention.

The final area that the survey identified were areas that we could enhance going forward post Covid-19. These include:

- Opportunities to enable blended learning to continue for courses where this would be beneficial;
- Room set up to enable remote guest lecturing and remote student interaction where required.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

|    | Recommendation  | Status                                       |
|----|---|--|
| 1  | Ensure that all examples of good practice are captured and disseminated through existing processes including the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award (PTEA).  | Ongoing                                      |
| 2  | Messaging to students needs to emphasise the benefits of returning to campus.   | Ongoing                                      |
| 3  | The timetabling team will work closely with Schools to enable as many longer sessions on campus as possible within the constraints of room availability and health and safety requirements.   | Completed                                    |
| 4  | Investigate possible technological solution to enhance audio pick up in class and improve room set up for next academic year with 1 metre physical distancing.  | Waiting for equipment delivery               |
| 5  | Raise awareness of the functionality of electronic participant response systems, and how these can support interaction whilst teaching with physical distancing.  | <a href="#">MyAberdeen Users teams space</a> |
| 6  | Explore the acceptability and value of non-moderated discussion boards and peer review through review of the pedagogical literature and disseminate the findings through the learning and teaching networks and the principles and guidance for blended learning web pages. | Ongoing                                      |
| 7  | Explore the acceptability and value of different online course activities from the pedagogical literature and disseminate the findings through the learning and teaching networks and the principles and guidance for blended learning web pages.                           | Ongoing                                      |
| 8  | Additional training resources and sharing of good practice on mechanisms to support student engagement in the online environment to be disseminated.  | <a href="#">MyAberdeen Users teams space</a> |
| 9  | Develop and share guidance on how to set up the student retention dashboard and incorporate this into the course design and preparation checklist.  | Ongoing                                      |
| 10 | Create additional guidance for staff on how to support students to become more interactive in the online classroom.   | <a href="#">MyAberdeen Users teams space</a> |
| 11 | Create additional guidance for students on why interaction in the online classroom is beneficial for their learning.  | Ongoing                                      |
| 12 | Explore what technological solutions are available to allow the audience to indicate emotions or responses to live lectures.  | Ongoing                                      |
| 13 | Explore the evidence for alternative approaches to online lecture delivery from the pedagogical literature and disseminate the findings through the learning and teaching networks and the principles and guidance for blended learning web pages                           | <a href="#">MyAberdeen Users teams space</a> |
| 14 | Review processes and technological solutions to enable staff to identify which students are not attending and/or engaging with a course.  | Ongoing                                      |

|    | Recommendation   | Status   |
|----|--|--|
| 15 | Review current room set up to identify which rooms could be enabled to support dual delivery.  | <a href="#">Tools for Blended learning</a>                                       |
| 16 | Develop training and support for staff considering changing teaching approach to accommodate dual mode.  | <a href="#">Tools for Blended learning</a><br><a href="#">Dual Mode teaching</a> |
| 17 | Findings from this survey should be discussed with CAD as part of the annual training planning process alongside working closely with schools to identify gaps in training.  | Completed  |
| 18 | As part of the annual teaching room evaluation carried out by AV this should include additional consideration of technology specifically required to support blended learning and teaching with physical distancing. | Completed  |

***For the full report see annex B***

#### 1.4 Summary findings from two surveys of students

The University made a rapid transition to delivering learning, teaching and assessment remotely from March 2020. Student views of these changes were assessed to inform planning for the subsequent academic year. The findings of the students' views on the transition to remote learning, teaching and assessment were shared with BLITFG.

The survey was sent to campus-based undergraduate and postgraduate students (12481) who experienced a change in their teaching delivery. Qatar-based and online students were excluded. The survey was launched on Thursday June 4th and was live for 2 weeks, until 19th June 2020. In total, 1157 responses (not including 504 partial responses) were collected, representing an overall response rate of 9.2%. The findings include:

- The majority of students (49.4%) felt that the change in delivery of teaching method had allowed them to achieve all their learning. 32.6% of students disagreed, with 16.4% remaining neutral;
- Just under half of students felt the change of teaching method had been positive (46.3%) with 31.7% responding negatively;
- Just over half of students (52.8%) felt that the change in assessment method had allowed them to achieve all their learning. 22.6% of students disagreed, with 21.2% remaining neutral;
- Over half of students (53.9%) felt the change of assessment method had been positive;
- Regards the overall learning experience since March, 47% of students agreed that it had been positive, 33.1% responded negatively, and 18.6% remaining neutral.

#### **Recommendations:**

From this survey there are some lessons we can take forward for blended learning delivery:

- 1 Ensure that staff have adequate time, resources, training and opportunities to practice with technology which may be new to them;

- 2 Course design should incorporate opportunities for students to engage in real time with both peers and the teaching team;
- 3 Courses must provide clear information to students about mechanisms for asking questions (email, discussion boards) and provide an indication of expected time for response;
- 4 Clear signposting within course and programmes about who to contact for different situations should be provided i.e., clear information on different staff roles;
- 5 Ensure that all key reading material can be accessed by all students irrespective of location or ability to access the physical library;
- 6 Provide encouragement and support for students as they learn “how to learn” whilst being at home;
- 7 When online timed exams are being implemented consideration of the suitability of the student home environment should be made so as to enable students to perform to the best of their ability;
- 8 Students may benefit from additional advice or training on how to complete new assessment methods, particularly for courses which may previously not have experienced specific formats e.g., extended writing, video presentations.

The annual Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) was launched 5 months later than the survey reported here in November 2020. ASES gathers student feedback on a range of University services, facilities and activities. In order to assess if the changes in practice that had been recommended from blended learning evaluation had been effective, additional questions on blended learning were added to the ASES survey.

Responses were sourced from all undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) registered University of Aberdeen students, excluding online, which at the time of sending the survey invitation, was 14,805 students (12360 UG / 2444 PGT).

The ASES was launched on 1 November and was live until 30 November 2020. Students were invited to complete the survey via email invitation.

The findings are illustrated below:

Students were generally positive about their teaching and learning experience:

- 58% were satisfied with the quality of their on campus teaching experience
- 77% were satisfied with the quality of their online learning experience
- 47% agreed that the learning experience had allowed them to interact with peers
- 94% were able to access learning resources online
- 81% were overall satisfied with their learning experience at the University of Aberdeen

Students were generally positive about the support and resources available to them:

- 85% were satisfied with the induction and orientation to the University and to blended learning
- 75% were satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus
- 89% knew who to contact for advice and support in relation to their course
- 88% knew how to contact the University’s support services for advice and support
- 65% had been supported by the University to maintain their wellbeing

The outcomes from the ASES showed a general positive increase in satisfaction when compared to the initial June survey which had taken place through the evaluation.

The following key themes were identified from the qualitative feedback:

- Strengths and limitations of removing on campus lectures: loss of the opportunity to ask questions and interact, but the gain of the ability to review material at students' own pace and re-watch videos to make good study notes, and the ability to manage their own time.
- Students identified the need for additional opportunities and activities to allow socialisation so as to reduce the sense of isolation and impact positively on mental wellbeing.
- Online resources such as the library and the material available through the virtual learning environment were identified as being good.
- Communication was identified as an area that was working well, including communication at a course level with teaching staff and communication from the wider university and support services.

An area of communication that could have been improved was that students were not clear on what blended learning was prior to arrival, and how much online teaching there would be and how much in person (on campus) teaching there would be.

***For full paper see Annex B***



## 1.5 Summary Findings: Student Focus Group

All focus groups were arranged, conducted and initially analysed by a student intern. The focus groups were conducted during the early stages of second half-session and discussed following first half-session experiences.

Participants were self-selecting, responding to a multi-arm approach to recruitment including a recruitment slide shared within course lectures, social media recruitment through university sites, and direct approaches to specific special interest groups (Disabled Students Forum, Mature Students Society, International Student Forum and Women in Science and Engineering Society).

Five focus groups were conducted with 30 participants in total including both UG and PGT students (year 1 n=6, year 2 n=3, year 3 n=8, year 4 n= 6, PGT n= 7). All Schools were represented in the focus groups.

### 1.5.1 Overall Views

Generally, students were positive about their experiences of blended learning and particularly around the effort staff put into supporting them. However, they reported a strong sense of isolation and loneliness and a feeling of lack of social interaction particularly with other students.

### 1.5.2 Learning Material

- Generally, the flexibility offered by blended learning was seen as major strength.
- There was a great deal of support for having material pre-recorded and captioned and many students identified that this is something they would like to see retained when returning to on campus experiences.
- Students who identified as having learning challenges reported that the ability to revisit and review and interact at own pace was a major benefit.
- An additional need was identified for more support and training on how to manage and plan workload as well as on how to build structure and motivation in when working at a distance.
- With regard to discussion boards, there were mixed views, but an overall sense that when these were supported and set up well, they were useful. Some students reported that they preferred synchronous discussion through live sessions rather than asynchronous boards.
- Concern was expressed by students who felt that they had not had practical, placement or fieldwork experience and were missing the opportunity to gain the specific skills these deliver.

### 1.5.3 Assessment

- The shift to alternative assessments was seen as positive.
- Students reported that many of the “new” assessments better reflected their skills compared to more memory-based assessment.
- Some students reported that the removal of traditional exams had reduced the level of “panic” felt around these assessments, however, this was balanced by other students finding the longer assessment focus added to background level of anxiety.



- For those students who had previously experienced high weighted exams i.e., 70% and above, the switch to multiple lower weighted pieces spread through the course was seen as a positive.
- There was concern raised about workload management as this required a different approach to studying and possibly reflected a need for more sustained effort rather than short intense effort required to prepare for exams.
- There was strong preference for the move to online submission of all assessment compared to submitting hard copy assessment.

#### 1.5.4 **Support services**

- Overall, there were a lot of positives with regard to support available from a range of services.
- However, some students requested clarification on whether there was a need to provide medical evidence to access support services or to be granted extensions.
- With regard to career progression and employability, many students felt that the experience they had had during Covid would help them moving into their future careers with some indicating that they were able to engage with many more additional opportunities such as career service awards due to additional time being available to them.

## Annex A: Staff Focus Group Key Themes

| Theme                   | Topic   | Action Required              | Responsibility | Timeline |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|----------------|----------|
| <b>General Feedback</b> | Across all Schools, while it was clear the move to blended delivery has been a significant challenge, there was positivity about how much has been achieved and the quality of the learning experience being provided.  |                              |                |          |
|                         | All areas commented on the significant workload burden the move to blended delivery had posed and the ongoing issues associated with delivery of online and on campus sessions. Concern was also noted in regard to the additional burden of supporting students whose needs were felt to be greater. |                              |                |          |
|                         | While not all staff have had the time to spend reviewing and restructuring teaching for blended delivery, many staff have embraced the opportunity to use innovative approaches to enhance their teaching.  |                              |                |          |
|                         | Significant concern was expressed in all areas about the challenge staff will face in preparing teaching materials for the second half-session (HS2) due to conflicting pressures of ongoing teaching, assessment and marking in the run up to the start of HS2.                                      |                              |                |          |
|                         | The value of the structures put in place to support the move to blended delivery, particularly the School Task & Finish Groups was seen as a positive step to ensuring a managed and coordinated approach.  | Identified as good practice. |                |          |

| Theme                       | Topic   | Action Required   | Responsibility   | Timeline     |
|-----------------------------|---|---|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Synchronous Delivery</b> | <p>Some staff have tried simultaneous delivery of online and on campus sessions and have found this to be effective though it can be more complex to do. It is clear others may have interest in doing this and as such consideration may need to be given to ensuring teaching spaces being used are appropriately equipped.</p>                         | <p>Consideration should be given to whether additional spaces can be set up with appropriate technology to support simultaneous delivery.</p> <p>Guidance around the issues to be considered in simultaneous delivery can be accessed <a href="#">here</a>.</p>   | DDIS             | TBC          |
|                             | <p>A number of staff reported either having tried or wishing to try delivery of live synchronous online lectures as this might enhance student engagement and provide opportunity for students to ask questions live. In some areas staff are delivering recorded lectures but provide a live Q &amp; A follow up session which has also worked well.</p> | <p>There needs to be careful consideration given by Schools to any live lecture delivery due to the reduced resilience of this approach (e.g., staff sickness / connectivity difficulties) and also the issue this may pose to students in different time zones. As such, the Blended Learning Principles recommendation for online asynchronous lecture delivery remains in place, however School TFGs may exceptionally permit live lecture delivery where there is felt to be good cause to do so.</p> | School TFG Leads | January 2021 |

| Theme                        | Topic  | Action Required   | Responsibility   | Timeline     |
|------------------------------|--|---|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Asynchronous Delivery</b> | The burden of lecture recording was raised in a number of groups with some staff commenting on the length of time taken to finalise a recording with a number of retakes being needed to correct mistakes.   | While recognizing the understandable desire for producing a high-quality recording, it is acceptable that a recording may not be perfect in relation to the delivery. Where there is a mistake around the content, students can be informed.  |                  |              |
|                              | A number of staff commented that fragmenting lectures into shorter videos has been well received by students who have found it easier to engage with as compared to an hour-long lecture recording.  | This aligns with guidance in the Blended Learning Principles – see <a href="#">here</a> .   |                  |              |
| <b>On-campus Delivery</b>    | Some areas (e.g., languages) reported that the need to wear masks on campus can inhibit delivery of teaching due to the nature of the subject. In these situations, online delivery is more effective.<br><br>Some areas reported that computer lab classes, due to physical distancing work, can work more effectively online than on campus as it is not possible to assist individual students with problems in person. | This point is noted. The requirement of offering an on campus experience to students is also recognised. Schools should consider the most suitable elements of the curriculum for on campus delivery and ensure that all students have the opportunity for a form of on campus delivery in line with the Principles for Blended Learning. | School TFG Leads | January 2021 |
|                              | Feedback from students in regard to on campus lab classes has been very positive. Students have really welcomed the opportunity to get a hands-on experience.  | Identified as good practice.  |                  |              |
|                              | Some groups reported concerns around the workload implications of the need for multiple delivery of on campus sessions due to the capacity restrictions due to physical distancing.  | Schools are working to manage the workloads of their staff.   |                  |              |
|                              | Some areas noted concern that due to some staff being unable to deliver teaching on campus that the burden of on campus delivery is falling disproportionately on a sub-set of staff.  | Schools are working to manage the workloads of their staff.   |                  |              |

| Theme                   | Topic  | Action Required  | Responsibility                | Timeline  |
|-------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|---|
|                         | <p>It was clear that some staff have found delivery on campus with physically distanced restrictions to be challenging. It is recognized that the focus for the first half-session was very much on supporting the development of the online elements of blended delivery and that more could be done to support staff in preparing for the on-campus delivery elements.</p>   | <p>A range of lunchtime sessions are being arranged by CAD to support staff in preparing for the second half-session. This will include a session on “<i>Teaching on Campus – Sharing Good Practice from the First Half-session.</i>”</p>    | CAD                           | December / January 2021   |
|                         | <p>Feedback on level of attendance on campus was varied. In some areas, predominantly the sciences, it was clear that students who are attending on campus sessions are finding this a positive experience and attendance levels are holding up well. In some other areas, attendance can be more variable with some areas reporting some drift from on campus attendance to online.</p>   |  |                               |   |
|                         | <p>Concern was noted in some areas that the reduction in lab experiences, field work and clinical skills activities will cause issues in the future as students will have had less practical experience and this may have impact on their next steps (e.g., PhD).</p>  | <p>The BLITFG ‘Practical Learning’ workstream is addressing the issues and will engage with Schools.</p>   | Practical Learning Workstream | Ongoing   |
| <b>Student Workload</b> | <p>A number of areas, though not all, reported that students are feeling overwhelmed by the volume of work. It was noted by some that staff have gone above and beyond in making their courses engaging and that in doing so may have increased the workload. It was also noted that some students are spending longer than would normally be expected in undertaking some activities (e.g., watching recorded lectures three times over).</p> | <p>Guidance should be provided to students by Schools on expectations in terms of pace of progress through the course and how much time should be spent on each activity. Examples of how to do this are available <a href="#">here</a>.</p> | CAD                           | December 2021 [Guidance Note included in BLITFG papers for 3/12/20] |
|                         | <p>Staff also commented that some students are finding it difficult to manage their time in the absence of the structure that a normal on campus timetable provides.</p>   | <p>A guidance note is being prepared to provide staff with pointers around topics including student engagement, time management and workload.</p>  |                               |   |

| Theme                     | Topic  | Action Required  | Responsibility                  | Timeline       |
|---------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Student Engagement</b> | Many areas reported that students in online sessions frequently do not turn on their camera and can be unwilling to speak up. It was noted this may be due to a number of reasons including being uncomfortable seeing themselves on screen or displaying their working environment, poor connectivity, a preference for text chat over speaking up. This approach leads to staff feeling they are teaching into a void which can be disconcerting as it is not possible to gauge understanding. | This issue will be followed up in the student-focused evaluation.  | Dean for Educational Innovation | Jan / Feb 2021 |
|                           | Staff reported that many students prefer to engage in online discussions by commenting in the chat function rather than actively speaking up. It was noted this may be due to them being used to 'chat' as a method of communication. Linked to this point, some staff commented that students can be more likely to speak up through 'chat' than they would be in person in the classroom.  |  |                                 |                |
|                           | Some staff commented on the value of activities such as discussion boards and online quizzes to help encourage engagement.   | Identified as good practice.   |                                 |                |
|                           | The use of dedicated drop in / open online sessions to allow students opportunity to ask questions was reported to be working well in the areas where it has been used.  | Identified as good practice.   |                                 |                |
|                           | Some reported feeling that students in higher years (e.g., 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> year students) may be disproportionately impacted by the move to blended learning as they have prior experience of normal on campus delivery. New entrants have less concerns as they haven't as strong experience of on campus delivery.   |  |                                 |                |
|                           | In some areas, concern was expressed in regard to student loneliness and lack of social integration particularly for new entrants. This was felt to be because of the limited on campus engagement and the difficulty in fostering a sense of community in an online environment particularly where students do not already know one another.  | Some suggestions around ways to enhance a sense of community and belonging in an online environment can be accessed <a href="#">here</a> . |                                 |                |

| Theme             | Topic  | Action Required  | Responsibility  | Timeline       |
|-------------------|--|--|---|----------------|
|                   | <p>In some areas, colleagues commented that some students are coming to synchronous sessions better prepared than previously experienced in a pre-Covid environment. They also commented that students are less distracted by their peers in an online environment.</p>  |  |   |                |
|                   | <p>There was consistent feedback from staff around some challenges with the operation of Collaborate for some types of activities with some noting other tools such as MS Teams and Zoom to be more suitable. It was noted by some that the single person view used on Collaborate may discourage individuals from speaking up as they become very prominent on the screen when they do so as compared to how those speaking are managed in other systems.</p> | <p>Guidance on use of Collaborate can be accessed <a href="#">here</a> and on MS Teams <a href="#">here</a>.</p>   |   |                |
|                   | <p>Some staff fed back on the value of using tools such as Padlet to support group activities, others commented on use of embedded MCQs throughout course to keep up motivation.</p>   |  |   |                |
|                   | <p>A few staff commented that despite the challenges of blended delivery they feel that they have been able to establish a stronger relationship with students through the online environment than pre-Covid noting that they have been able to have more frequent conversations with students online.</p>   |  |   |                |
|                   | <p>In the context of student engagement, colleagues spoke positively of the value of student led groups e.g., WhatsApp in helping promote a sense of community and peer support.</p>   | <p>Identified as good practice.</p>  |   |                |
| <b>Assessment</b> | <p>Some areas commented about assessment integrity concerns in the context of the use of alternative assessments in place of formal exams.</p>   | <p>CAD held a session on 'Assessment Integrity' for School leads this week with further events available at a school-level if felt useful. Guidance around alternative assessments is available <a href="#">here</a>. This will continue to be developed to provide support to</p> | <p>CAD / Deans for Educational Innovation and Quality Assurance &amp; Enhancement</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |

| Theme                         | Topic  | Action Required   | Responsibility | Timeline     |
|-------------------------------|--|---|----------------|--------------|
|                               |  | colleagues in regard to enhancing assessment integrity.   |                |              |
|                               | Some colleagues commented positively about the flexibility that the move away from formal exams had provided in terms of approaches to assessment.   | Identified as good practice.  |                |              |
| <b>Training &amp; Support</b> | <p>All Schools commented most positively about the support they had received from the Centre for Academic Development. This covered the support from individual colleagues on School TFGs, provision of training opportunities and willingness to help in finding solutions to specific challenges.</p> <p>Schools reported that the <a href="#">Blended Learning Principles, Guidance &amp; Tools</a> had been a valuable resource but some did note that pressures on staff time may have limited the use of these resources. Some also commented that more discipline-specific guidance may also be valuable.</p> | <p>The support will continue for the rest of the academic year.</p> <p>A collated set of information / guidance has been sent out to Schools for dissemination amongst staff.</p> <p>Schools can produce discipline-specific guidance, based on the wider University Principles and guidance, where that is felt to be appropriate.</p> | CAD            | Ongoing      |
|                               | Staff commented positively about the various pieces of IT Kit provided to support delivery of teaching (e.g., belt mics, visualisers). It was clear that moving forward some others may welcome access to such equipment or additional tools (e.g., Go-pro for fieldwork). There was also positive comment about the support provided to ensure the robustness of the IT infrastructure which is so vital to successful delivery of blended learning.  | The need for continued provision of IT kit to support blended learning is noted. School TFGs should raise any requests for IT kit through Project Managers.   | DDIS           | January 2021 |



| Theme                     | Topic  | Action Required   | Responsibility | Timeline      |
|---------------------------|--|---|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Operational Issues</b> | Some Schools reported challenges in being able to effectively monitor attendance across the online and on campus environment. Some areas are making use of QR codes which are helping reduce the burden, others have adopted alternative approaches. There was consistent feedback that better integration of MyTimetable, MyAberdeen and Absence Reporting would be helpful | Consideration will be given to whether any enhanced integration between MyTimetable, MyAberdeen and Absence Reporting can be provided.  | DDIS           | TBC           |
|                           | Colleagues in some areas reported that there was an added burden managing the need to switch students from on campus to online where they are self-isolating. Some areas reported having adopted approaches which were less burdensome (e.g., adding the student to an online session without removing them from on campus session).   | Good practice will be shared between Schools through the BLITFG School Leads.   |                |               |
|                           | It was noted that there had been some technical issues with Collaborate at a sector level during the first half-session which had been challenging for staff.  | The specific feedback in regard to concerns noted with Collaborate will be fed back to CAD for onward dissemination to Blackboard. In this regard, it is noted that a recent update on sector-wide Collaborate issues was recently issued to BLITFG School leads. | CAD            | December 2020 |
|                           | Some frustration was expressed by colleagues in regard to the late provision of reading list materials.  | Feedback provided to Simon Baines, and information has been provided to Schools about timelines and expectations for January.   |                |               |
|                           | A few commented about the difficulty, compared to normal, in being able to see a holistic picture of student behaviour (e.g., C6, C7) at a programme level and therefore the ability to effectively identify those at risk.  | Provision does exist within the Student Record to run reports on student monitoring at a programme level. Information will be provided to Schools.  | Registry       | December 2020 |
|                           | There was consistent feedback in regard to the burden associated with captioning and the variable accuracy of auto-captioning depending on the subject area.   | Enhanced support for captioning is currently being explored.  |                |               |

| Theme | Topic  | Action Required   | Responsibility | Timeline      |
|-------|--|---|----------------|---------------|
|       | One area commented that the more open timetable due to blended delivery and reduced synchronous activity may have opened up unexpected course combinations through MyCurriculum despite appropriate pre-requisites being in place.   |   |                |               |
|       | Some colleagues reported the significant time required for upload of Panopto videos (i.e., overnight). It was noted this may be due to poor broadband connectivity from home.  | To be followed up to see if any guidance can be provided to help colleagues.  | DDIS / CAD     | December 2020 |
|       | There was acknowledgement of the significant work undertaken by the Central Timetabling Team in delivering a timetable for the first half-session within the constraints of physical distancing. It was however also noted that there had been some frustration around the suitability of certain rooms allocated. | The Central Timetabling Team are working closely with each School in preparing the timetable for HS2. Schools should raise any issues in regard to specific requirements with the Central Timetabling Team who will try to accommodate these, where feasible. |                |               |
|       | One area commented on difficulty with AV bridging when delivering teaching across more than one room.  | The specific point raised will be drawn to the attention of DDIS.   | DDIS           | TBC           |
|       | A few colleagues commented on issues with digital inequity amongst students (e.g., some students relying on phones / tablets to study and some tools working less effectively on these).   | A number of laptops are available for students with hardship. Information will be provided on how students can apply for these will be made available to School TFGs.   | DDIS           | December 2020 |
|       | A number of areas commented about the difficulties arising from poor broadband connectivity both for staff and students.   | This point will be drawn to the attention of DDIS in case any support can be provided.  | DDIS           | TBC           |
|       | It was noted that some students are not easily able to study from home due to the nature of the home environment (e.g., inadequate study space or household distractions).   |   |                |               |

| Theme                           | Topic  | Action Required  | Responsibility                        | Timeline     |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Communications</b>           | A number of Schools commented on the significant increase in volume of student emails and the workload implications of this with staff reporting feeling overwhelmed. In other areas, Schools commented that the level of emails was reduced with students using other means (e.g., discussion boards, Q & A sessions) to raise questions. | There would be value in sharing good practice amongst Schools to help inform practices in the second half-session. | CAD / Dean for Educational Innovation | January 2021 |
|                                 | There was feedback that there may be a risk of too much communication which may lead to students not picking up important messages.  |  |                                       |              |
|                                 | The value of alternative means of communication (e.g., discussion boards, announcements, FAQs) in place of more traditional emails was noted as being beneficial.  |  |                                       |              |
| <b>Good Practice for Future</b> | A number of Schools commented on the positive benefits that the move to blended delivery has brought in terms of enabling a fresh look at our teaching. It was noted that it will be important that we reflect on this period and draw upon good practice to inform our future education approaches.                                       | These points should all be considered in reflecting on our experience with blended learning.                       |                                       |              |
|                                 | Looking to the future, there were comments about whether there will continue to be such a reliance on lectures.  |  |                                       |              |
|                                 | The move to a more flexible approach to assessment was also reflected on positively. Some commenting that they would be keen to continue with use of alternative assessment approaches in place of formal exams.   |  |                                       |              |
| <b>Health &amp; Safety</b>      | Staff generally commented positively about the measures put in place on campus to provide a Covid secure environment and stated that they felt safe delivering teaching.   |  |                                       |              |
|                                 | Colleagues commented about the impact of the additional cleaning requirements between lab classes on the workload of technical staff.  |  |                                       |              |
| <b>Field Trips</b>              | The importance of real life experience in the field was stressed and that there is a critical need to restart fieldwork as soon as possible.   |  |                                       |              |

## Annex B: Staff Survey of Blended Learning During Academic Year 2020-21

### 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University has delivered a combination of blended and online learning experience across the full academic year 2020/21 due to Covid-19 restrictions. As part of this we have undertaken extensive evaluation of the implementation and delivery of blended learning. This report focuses on the results of a staff survey of experiences and contributes to of a wider evaluation of our delivery of blended learning over the academic year.

A total of 382 staff completed the survey with all schools having sufficient responders to enable individual school report to be generated. Qatar campus had less than the required 10 responders to enable an individual report to be produced.

The majority of staff who delivered blended learning were positive about their experience.

Due to Scottish Government Covid restriction, the University had to switch to fully online for second semester. This reduced the opportunity for staff to deliver blended learning.

Health and safety requirements necessitated a reduction in room capacities meaning that for many the balance of blended learning was skewed to online with minimal on campus opportunities. Therefore, the findings of this report reflect the experience of blended learning delivery with extensive restrictions.

Many staff reported that the experience provided them with opportunities to reflect on aspects of course design and delivery and, for many, to implement changes to their pedagogic approach which will continue irrespective of pandemic.

These include:

- Building in activities and time to enable staff and students to facilitate development of social presence.
- Use of a flipped classroom approach, enabling more interactive, problem-based learning to occur in the classroom.
- Incorporation of student-led question and answer sessions throughout the semester.
- Incorporation of authentic assessments that are not so reliant on testing recall • Enabling of wider use of digital submission of assessments.

The survey also highlighted areas where additional improvements are required for the short term (i.e., as we continue to deliver teaching with Covid-19 restrictions).

These include

- Support for delivering in-class sessions with physical distancing
- Support to encourage more students to return to campus to enable more meaningful on-campus sessions to occur
- Additional work on enhancing assessment integrity for non-invigilated assessments
- Technological solutions to reduce aspects of workload required to assess student engagement and retention

The final area that the survey identified were areas that we could enhance going forward post covid19. These include

- Opportunities to enable blended learning to continue for courses where this would be beneficial.
- Room set up to enable remote guest lecturing and remote student interaction where required.

## 2 BACKGROUND

This report focuses on the results of a staff survey of experiences and contributes to of a wider evaluation of our delivery of blended learning over the academic year and will enabled us to think critically about the move to blended learning and to consider the institutional evidence-base associated with the activities and approaches. This has enabled us, in some cases, to adjust our blended learning developments in 'real time'. This evaluation will contribute to the planning of teaching, learning and assessment for academic year 2021/22 and will provide us with an evidence base, which will allow us to identify good practice which may help inform future education practices post-Covid

The delivery of blended learning during the pandemic, particularly the on campus delivery, was dependent on the guidance and restrictions from Scottish Government. Therefore, many aspects of the delivery of on campus teaching were beyond the control of the university. What we hope to achieve from this evaluation is a better understanding of what elements of blended learning we may wish to retain and build on going forward as well as what aspects we think should be viewed only as a solution to the pandemic and not something we would wish to continue with.

The survey focussed on four key areas relating to blended learning:

- the experience of engaging with students
- the experience of teaching delivery
- the experience of assessment and feedback
- staff development and training needs

### 2.1 Overview of Method of Analysis and Rates of Response

For the purpose of this report, all data is presented as the full cohort; separate reports will be created for each school detailing how the staff from their school responded in comparison with responses from the whole university.

A total of 382 staff completed the survey (see table 1), 350 completing all questions and 32 with incomplete responses. Descriptive analysis of quantitative data has been completed and data is presented as absolute numbers. When presented as a percentage, these have been generated based on the number of responders to that question excluding all missing responses and responders selecting N/A. Staff were able to provide free text responses to a number of questions. The results from these have been broadly grouped to identify recurring themes, however, no formal qualitative analysis has been carried out. Free text data is presented in the report within quotation marks, italicised and indented to indicate this is a direct quote and is provided to give additional clarification and explanation to the quantitative data.

It should be noted that 121 of the 382 (32%) responders stated that they had no on campus teaching during the year. This was mainly because they only delivered teaching in the January semester at which point government regulation required all universities move to fully online delivery. Other reasons were due to personal circumstances preventing being able to attend campus in the September semester and therefore other staff delivered the on-campus components for them, or decision within some programmes to move to a fully online delivery across the year due to the demographics of the student population or the discipline needs.

The survey was open from the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and closed on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Academic staff were informed about the survey through Directors of Education in each school. The mean time taken to complete the survey was 20 minutes.

**Table1: Number of Responses by School**

| School / Campus  | Number responders | % responders |
|--|-------------------|--------------|
| Business School  | 19                | 5.0          |
| School of Biological Sciences                            | 24                | 6.3          |
| School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History  | 27                | 7.1          |
| School of Education                                      | 31                | 8.1          |
| School of Engineering                                    | 16                | 4.2          |
| School of Geosciences                                    | 15                | 3.9          |
| School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture | 31                | 8.1          |
| School of Law  | 20                | 5.2          |
| School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition       | 116               | 30.4         |
| School of Natural and Computing Sciences                 | 34                | 8.9          |
| School of Psychology                                     | 23                | 6.0          |
| School of Social Science                                 | 24                | 6.3          |
| Qatar Campus   | 2                 | 0.5          |
| Total  | 382               | 100.0        |

## 2.2 Experience and Reflections on Blended Learning

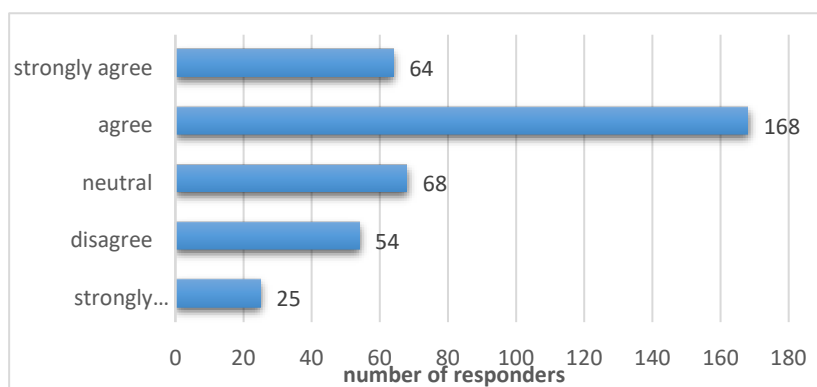
Of the 382 staff who responded to the survey, 69% (n=232) agreed that their overall experience for delivering blended learning in 2020/21 had been positive (see figure 1).

One reason given by staff for the positive experience emerges from the qualitative data. This is around the sense of community and opportunities for staff to work collaboratively and support each other and seeing this reflected in positive student experiences.

What has been the most positive aspect for you of blended learning delivery?

*“being part of a very well run teaching team within my discipline, sharing best practices (weekly), listening and responding to students as we went along, and seeing the hard work we put in reflected in student feedback.”*

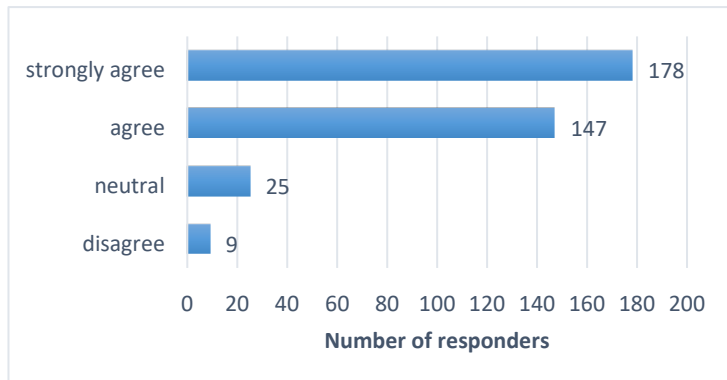
*“the opportunity for the community to come together and share best practice has been wonderful”*



**Figure 1:** Overall my experience of blended learning delivery has been positive (n=379)  
The majority, 87% (n= 331) of responders reported that they plan to take forward some of the good practice that was implemented this year, for use post pandemic.

- ➔ **Recommendation 1:** Ensure that all examples of good practice are captured and disseminated through exiting processes including the Principal’s Teaching Excellence Award (PTEA).

In addition, 93% (n=325) of responders agreed that some of the online material that was produced might be useful to support future teaching. Only nine responders reported that there was no online material that they had produced which would be useful going forward (see figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Some of the online material that I have produced may be useful to support future teaching (n=359)

### 2.3 Course Structure, Timing and Content

Staff were asked if generating the online material had made them reconsider aspects of the course structure, timing or content of their course(s) / teaching. Seventy-one percent (n=254) of responders agreed that they had reconsidered the content of their course, with 67% (n=240) reconsidering the structure and 57% (n=201) reconsidering the timing.

*“It [blended learning] has allowed me to focus on the content and to add value to all of the modules taught.”*

*“Getting out of the comfort zone has been beneficial in terms of thinking about new ways of delivering teaching and assessment, which will provide for a greater mix of teaching and learning activities in the future.”*

*“It has been an opportunity to reconsider how courses are taught. Specifically, this has meant identifying alternative teaching methods which have been more effective than what was done before, but also examples where ‘traditional’ methods would remain the more effective approach. Hopefully we will maintain a level of blended learning.”*

Sixty-three percent (n=242) of the responders stated that they used all of the on-campus sessions that they had timetabled. Of the 126 staff who did not, the two main reasons given were staff circumstance (n=33) or number of student attending on campus (n=27).

- ➔ **Recommendation 2:** Messaging to students needs to emphasise the benefits of returning to campus

Other reasons given for not using all of the on-campus sessions that were timetabled included the ability to have longer sessions online compared to on campus, due to limited room availability and through trial and error realising that the session planned worked better online than on campus.

From the free text responses for this question, the theme of staff autonomy emerged. This encompassed the sense that staff had lost autonomy over the decisions about how teaching should be delivered and that the decisions that were being made did not consider the

experience of academic staff to know what would work best within their teaching. Predominately, this focussed around (i) the pre-recording of lecture material rather than synchronous lecture with recording and (ii) the decisions about on campus teaching pattern and length of time to allow more flexibility to accommodate the content rather than a single approach.

*“Trust in the professionalism and expertise of academics to adapt and deliver their own teaching, according to the needs of their students and specific subject area”*

More positively, the introduction of online components for the teaching delivery enabled more flexibility of timing, as there were no room requirements.

*“Being able to work without room booking constraints.”*

- **Recommendation 3:** The timetabling team will work closely with schools to enable as many longer sessions on campus as required within the constraints of room availability and health and safety requirements.

## 2.4 Activities Included in Course Design

The survey asked staff to report on six activities that could be delivered either online or on-campus. As was expected the majority of staff reported that seminars and lectures were included in the online design (83% (n=315)) of the course with many fewer including these in the on-campus component (30% (n=117)).

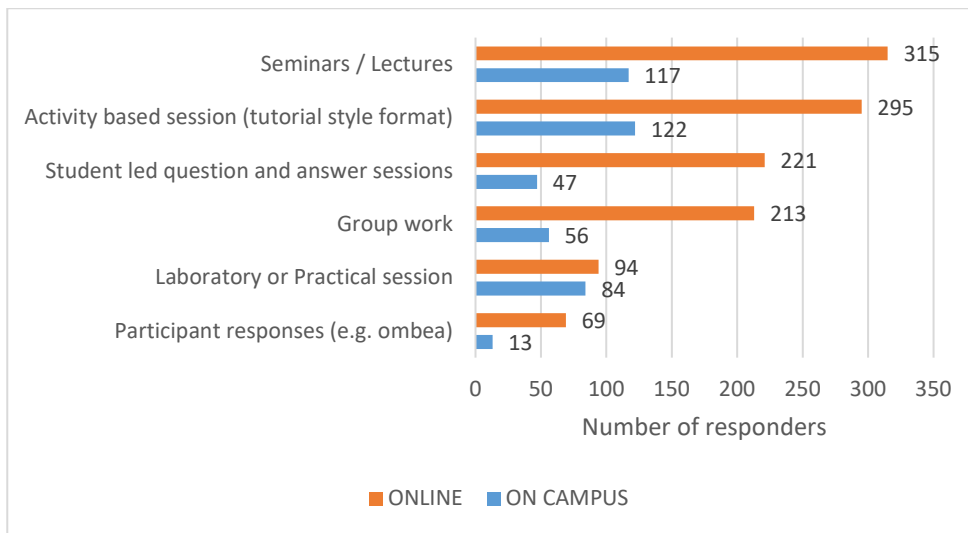
*“Recorded lectures gave the time to discuss topics in a freeform with students. This was the most enjoyable aspect of teaching as usually the on-campus lecture format have mainly one way communication. Where if students have seen the lecture online and then we can use the 2hour session as a freeform discussion style communication to through ideas, explore topics and expand on the material taught in the recorded lecture.”*

It also appears that staff also included more activity-based sessions and group work into the online environment compared with on-campus (see figure 4). This may be due to the difficulties in teaching with physical distancing and additional safety measure (i.e., face masks, physical distancing) making interaction in class between student difficult.

*“running group-work exercises on campus this was not easily possible because of room layout and capacity restrictions.”*

*“I planned to conduct small group tutorials on-campus (although these were cancelled). However, this was more for the social connections it would have enabled for students. With physical distancing and mask-wearing, the normal, dynamic group work of tutorials would have likely been inhibited.”*





**Figure 4:** Types of activities undertaken– comparison between on campus online activities (n=382)

Some staff felt that possible solutions to the communication issue which arose because of physical distancing could be addressed through provision of additional room technology including microphones and speakers.

*“It would be good to have more powerful loudspeaker for campus teaching considering the inconveniences brought by social distancing and face masks.”*

➔ **Recommendation 4:** Investigate possible technological solution to enhance audio pick up in class and improve room set up for next academic year with 1 metre<sup>+</sup>.

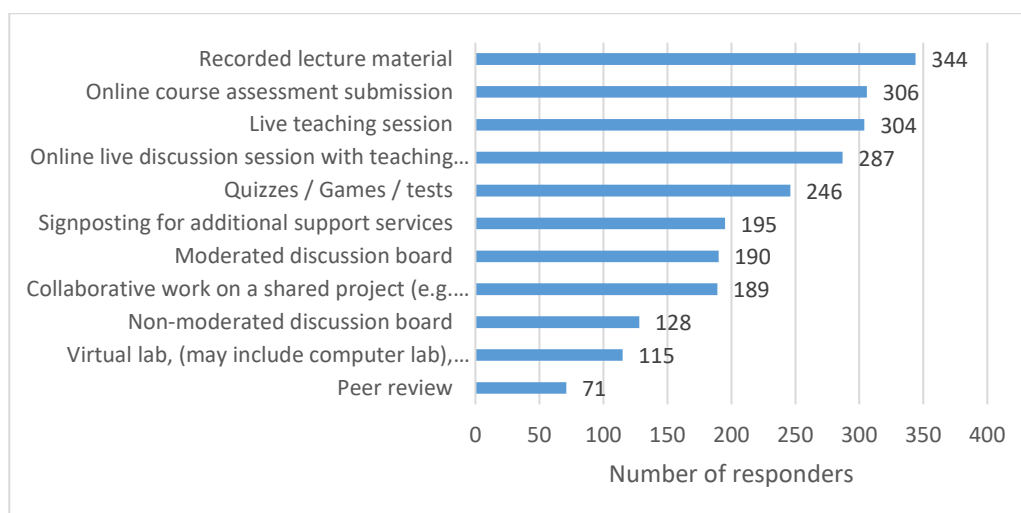
Another possible mechanism for allowing interaction for students in the on-campus setting whilst still managing the health and safety requirements would be the use of electronic participant response systems however the uptake of these was very low in the on-campus setting (n=13).

➔ **Recommendation 5:** Raise awareness of the functionality of electronic participant response systems, and how these can support interaction whilst teaching with physical distancing.

## 2.5 Online Course Content and Activities

When looking only at what activities were included to support the online delivery of courses, the majority of responders (>80%) highlighted using recorded lecture material, online assessment submissions and live teaching sessions. The next most common group of activities (50-79%) included quizzes/games/tests, signposting to support services, moderated discussion boards and collaborative work on shared projects. The final group with the lowest numbers of responders including these (15-50%) were non-moderated discussion boards and virtual labs, practical or fieldwork and peer review. Both non-moderated discussion boards and peer review can, in some cases, reduce the workload for staff as well as supporting more student-student interactions.

➔ **Recommendation 6:** Explore the acceptability and value of non-moderated discussion boards and peer review through review of the pedagogical literature and disseminate the findings through the learning and teaching networks and the principles and guidance for blended learning web pages.

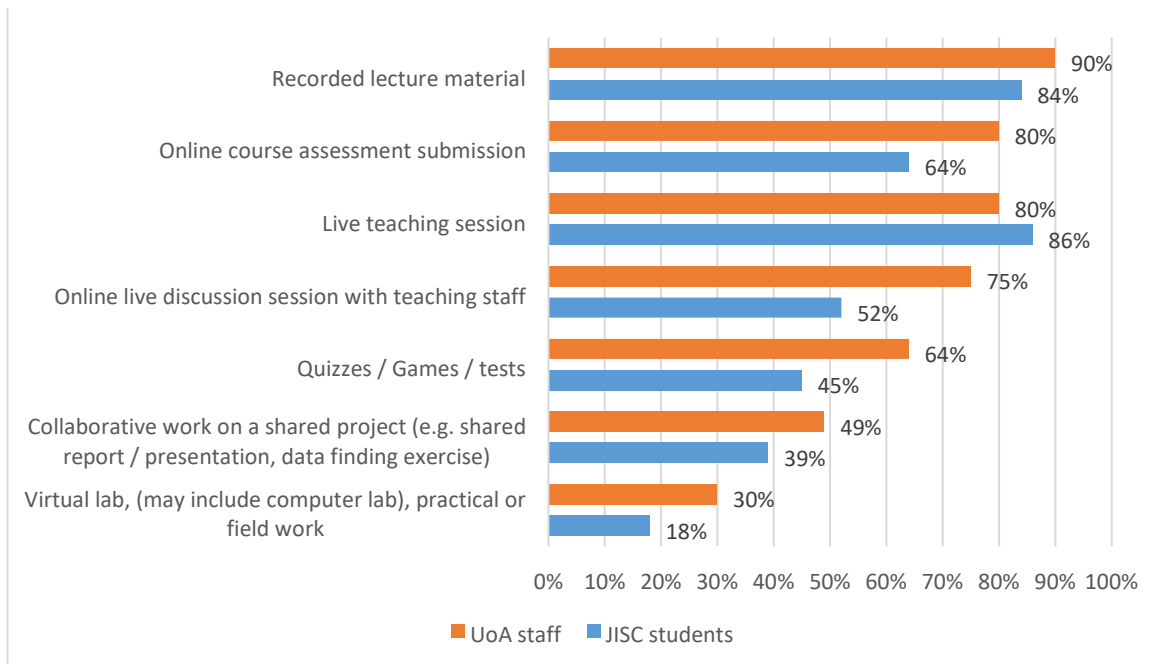


**Figure 5:** Types of digital activities included in course design (n=382).

Of the 11 digital activities included in the survey, seven were matched to a similar question asked in a recent JISC Survey of Students' Experience with Digital Learning<sup>15</sup>. This survey focused on student experiences of learning between September and December 2020. The question asked was "In the last two weeks, which of these learning activities have you carried out online? (tick all that apply)". As such, it is not a direct comparison, as our survey asked about a wider time frame of the inclusion of any of these activities into the course design compared with the JISC survey of students accessing the activities in a 2 week window. Overall, we see that for six of the seven activities Aberdeen staff reported a higher use of these activities, when compared to JISC responses. The only category where Aberdeen reported slightly lower use was the live teaching sessions. However, we see a large difference in the inclusion of online live discussion sessions with teaching staff. It may be that some of the reduction in the live teaching session is due to the labelling of the session. Interestingly one area that we see a difference is in the inclusion of quizzes, games and test, possibly suggesting that staff in Aberdeen have been proactive in including innovative teaching aspects to encourage self-monitoring and engagement.

➔ **Recommendation 7:** Explore the acceptability and value of different online course activities from the pedagogical literature and disseminate the findings through the learning and teaching networks and the principles and guidance for blended learning web pages.

<sup>15</sup> <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8338/1/DEI%20P1%202021%20student%20data%20for%20HE-FINAL.pdf>



**Figure 6:** comparison of University of Aberdeen inclusion of teaching activities and JISC survey of student interaction with teaching activities (n=382).

## 2.6 Student Engagement

### 2.6.1 Staff perception of student engagement and interaction with synchronous session in the on-campus and online environment

Thirty-six percent (n=137) of staff responding to the questions of student engagement did not deliver any on-campus teaching across the academic year. Ninety-seven percent (n=369) of staff reported delivering some synchronous online learning opportunities and of these, 53% (n=194) agreed that student engagement had been positive.

It appears that there is a difference between staff perception of student engagement with online synchronous sessions compared to on campus synchronous delivery with 63% (n=153) of responders reporting positive engagement with on campus sessions and 48% (n=117) reporting positive engagement with online synchronous sessions (see figure 7).

The area that staff perceived to have highest level of student engagement was the asynchronous online material (i.e., discussion boards, activities, lecture recordings), with 80% (n=286) agreeing that students engaged with the online material and completed the activities provided.

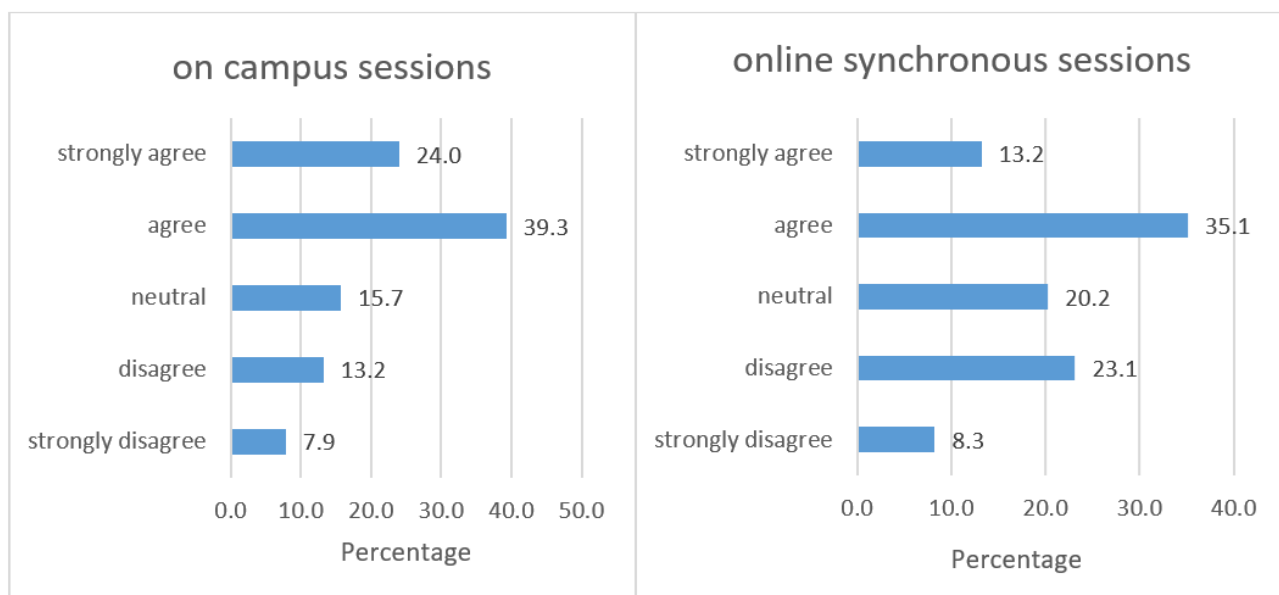


Figure 7: Comparison of responders (n= 242) agreement that student engagement and interaction during synchronous sessions has been positive.

The area that staff perceived to have highest level of student engagement was the asynchronous online material (i.e., discussion boards, activities, lecture recordings), with 80% (n=286) agreeing that students engaged with the online material and completed the activities provided.

## 2.7 Enhancing Live Class Experiences

A number of staff raised concerns about the live class experiences for students and staff. This was often associated with a desire to increase student use of cameras and microphone whilst in online live sessions. Three major themes emerged from these i) assessing engagement, ii) increasing interaction, and iii) delivery to an unresponsive screen

### 2.7.1 Assessing Engagement

For many staff, the difficulty of determining if students were engaging whilst in the online environment was a significant concern.

*“The ability to evaluate engagement by students (which can be done by body language/looking into space for some time) in an equivalent way online. How do you identify and engage those that are in a virtual environment?”*

Switching on cameras is unlikely to truly provide any additional information about engagement with a live session, as it does not indicate what the student is viewing on the screen during the session. Therefore, a potentially better mechanism is incorporating additional response requirements which will enable staff to evaluate who is responding and use this as a proxy of engagement. There are different approaches to elicit responses, which can include questions, polls, quizzes as well as providing space for verbal or text based chat that is more informal and discussion between students and teaching team.

➔ **Recommendation 8:** Additional training resources and sharing of good practice on mechanism to support student engagement in online environment to be disseminated.

For the asynchronous components, the use of analytics (e.g., tracking access to the VLE, monitoring completing of specific task etc.) was seen as something which, whilst viewed as essential for early identification of those at risk, requires a more automated /technological solution. Staff described doing this manually and this is not sustainable with current workloads. This monitoring should ideally combine monitoring two types of student online learning behaviours: (i) observational learning behaviours (e.g., reading e-mails, reading discussion

posts, viewing content lectures and documents) and (ii) application learning behaviours (e.g., posting to forums, taking quizzes, completing activities).

→ **Recommendation 9:** Develop and share guidance on how to set up student retention dashboard and incorporate this into the course design and preparation checklist.

## 2.7.2 Increasing Interaction

Student-to-student interaction is a vital part of any course experience. In an in-person setting, this interaction happens naturally, as students listen to each other's comments, ask each other questions, and build rapport through frequent contact. However, this dynamic is changed when we move to either a fully online or a blended setting. We need to explore appropriate ways to support interaction between students and with the tutor. This theme is somewhat different from assessing levels of engagement and rather focuses on how we would like our students to be active participants and co-creators in their learning as opposed to simply being consumers of learning.

What one thing would improve your experience with blended...

*"Increasing interaction during synchronous teaching sessions to ensure the students are understanding and following the content."*

Some staff felt that the reluctance of students to use cameras and microphones led to a reduction in the level of interaction. There was sense that text-based interaction was not optimal and was a poor substitute for visual and oral interaction.

*"I feel there was almost no interaction with the students. Most of the time, by which I mean 99% of it, students would have cameras off, microphones off, and would just type questions in online sessions"*

*"Student engagement, i.e., turning on screens/mics. The chat function was ok but once one or two used it, the tendency was for the others to follow suit"*

*"To be able to use presentation via camera to achieve a style of delivery that is not as effective in person. Students can participate in chat boxes while I'm presenting and I can engage with those discussions while presenting seamlessly."*

Oral interaction can be much quicker and more synchronous than text-based interaction however, it is important that we allow student the opportunity to interact in whatever medium they feel most comfortable with. The online classroom is new to most and as such we need to enable students to gain confidence in communicating online.

→ **Recommendation 10:** Create additional guidance for staff how to support students to become more interactive in the online classroom.

→ **Recommendation 11:** Create additional guidance for students on why interaction in the online classroom is beneficial for their learning.

Many staff also reported increased interactivity in the online environment particularly where the material had been pre-delivered as recorded lectures

*"Live lectures on-line - far more interactive than live lectures in lecture theatres. However, you can't 'read the room'."*

*"In future honours courses, I will retain a recorded lecture format, and use the live 'lecture' hour for a more student-focused, or student-centred session."*

*“being able to integrate different modes of simultaneous and silent communication during seminars e.g., using chat, online participation exercises, as a form of engaging with material that isn’t just asking questions in a traditional discussion format”*

### 2.7.3 Supporting Staff to Deliver to a Screen

The change from teaching live session in-person on campus to online has been difficult for many staff due to the need to adjust to a new way of interacting and delivery of teaching.

*“Sometimes felt like I was howling into the abyss.”*

*“If the students would turn on the camera or microphone sometimes. Just to get the feeling that I am not talking to the walls while having online sessions.”*

*“Getting them to be involved online with video cameras and microphones. Often it was like talking out into a void...”*

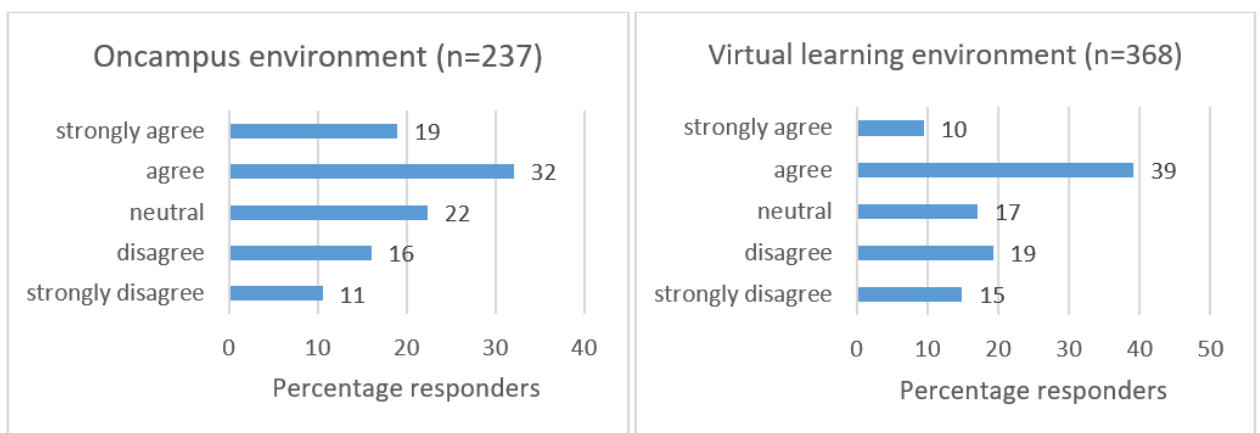
Many activities that work well in the on campus-teaching environment will not translate well to the online environment and instead require change in approach. Whilst some technology can be utilised to help the transition what is often required is a new approach to the delivery.

→ **Recommendation 12:** Explore what technological solution are available to allow the audience to indicate emotions or responses to live lectures.

→ **Recommendation 13:** Explore the evidence for alternative approaches to online lecture delivery from the pedagogical literature and disseminate the findings through the learning and teaching networks and the principles and guidance for blended learning web pages.

## 2.8 Social Learning Opportunities

The pedagogical approach underpinning the [Principles of Blended Learning](#) is the Community of Inquiry model which has three domains (Social Presence, Cognitive Presence and Teaching Presence). When considering if staff felt that the on-campus teaching environment supported the delivery of a social learning opportunity 51% (n=121) agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to deliver appropriate interactive social learning opportunities. This was broadly similar to the staff perception of social learning opportunities online with 49% (n=179) of staff reporting that the virtual learning environment enabled them to deliver an appropriate interactive social learning opportunity.



**Figure 8:** Comparison of the on-campus teaching session and the virtual learning environment in enabling appropriate interactive social learning opportunities

When asked about the virtual learning environment, 75% (n=265) of responders reported that releasing the course materials was easy, and 69% (n=248) reported that the VLE enabled effective communication of information to all students regarding course learning outcomes, progress expectations, and assessment requirements. For many, the VLE has been required to play a much wider role than in previous years where much of the communication was done through direct contact with students in class. It has also for many become a significant route (alongside emails) by which asynchronous communication between students and staff occurs.

*“It has forced me to think of better ways to structure and release information about the course in a very clear way.”*

Sixty-six percent (n=234) of responders reported that students used agreed processes for communicating with staff on issues or to raise questions. However, only 55% of staff felt that it was possible to identify which students were not attending and /or engaging with the course.

➔ **Recommendation 14:** Review process and technological solutions to enable staff to identify which students are not attending and /or engaging with the course.

## 2.9 Dual Mode Teaching

Dual mode is a teaching delivery method where online and on campus students attend the same timetabled session.

Twenty-four percent (n=90) of responders reported that they had used dual mode (for a small number of responders this had been in place prior to the pandemic rather than a new initiative in response to the current teaching requirements).

Of the 90 who did run dual mode, 52% (n=47) said they would not recommend this approach to colleagues. The key reasons for this were concerns over how to support interaction between the two cohorts, difficulties for staff in managing two separate cohort simultaneously, and inadequate equipment or room set up.

There was a great deal of concern from staff to ensure that students who studied fully online were able to interact and develop relationships with those students who were on campus. This meant that, for many, a great deal of effort was put into ensuring the two groups merged to facilitate a smoother transition for those students moving to the campus mid-way through the academic year. This possibly created additional pressure on the dual mode delivery.

*“IT was challenging and getting both cohorts to engage (with each other) was almost impossible”*

As this was the first time, the university has tried to deliver this mode of deliver on this scale, there were inadequate number of rooms set up with the required equipment to enable this type of delivery.

*“The additional tech wasn't working properly, and the online students were disadvantaged.”*

*“Key issue was microphone pick up. Only the person at the front above the mic could be heard.”*

There was also the challenge of managing two cohorts who may be using two different methods of communications (with those in class speaking, and those online using text communication).

*“Difficult to concentrate on the live class when also dealing with students online.”*

However, for those staff who would recommend it, the key reasons cited were the flexibility it offered for students, the resource benefit and the opportunities to team-teach.

*“Students unable to join an on-campus session could easily join via Teams or Blackboard”*

*“reduced need to run same session twice”*

*“enjoyed working with a colleague and discussing how the session went, allowed for more reflective teaching practice”*

*“It can be done by one person, but is enhanced by having two.”*

Of those who did deliver dual mode 43% (n=39) said they did so with an additional member of staff present and 51% (n=46) said they required additional technology. The additional technology that was described was the addition of a second screen on the teaching lectern, the addition of webcam to enable remote students to see the lecturer and better audio pick up in class to enable remote student to hear what on campus student were saying. Additional training opportunities to practice this prior to delivery were also highlighted as desirable.

→ **Recommendation 15:** Reviewing current room set up to identify which rooms could be enabled to support dual delivery.

→ **Recommendation 16:** Develop training and support for staff considering changing teaching approach to accommodate dual mode.

## 2.10 Teaching Delivery, Equipment and Training Needs

### 2.10.1 Training

When asked about the additional training offered last year, 67% (n=242) reported that they benefited from this. Of those who did not benefit from the training, the most common reason was that they did not feel the need for any additional training (n=45). Thirty responders, who attended training, felt it did not address their need and 26 responders required training in areas that were not offered and 23 responders were not able to access training due to timing. In addition, staff raised the issue of increased workload making it difficult to attend training.

Additional comments showed that many staff accessed support (informal training) from other colleagues as and when specific issues arose and that this was perceived as more beneficial or useful as it provided a discipline specific focus.

→ **Recommendation 17:** Findings from this survey should be discussed with CAD as part of the annual training planning process alongside working closely with schools to identify gaps in training.

### 2.10.2 Additional Equipment

Staff were able to request additional equipment to support their delivery of blended learning. The following were issued:

- Visualisers – 100 purchased all allocated
- Graphics/Pen tablets – 50 purchased approximately 35 allocated)
- Mics (sound amplification) – 40 purchased and all allocated
- 84 “items” of software requested by schools - vast majority were able to be delivered via VDI or some other solution e.g., students downloading software via the Software Centre
- Additional peripherals (e.g., wired headsets + web cams) were supplied through a “normal” service desk request. In addition, some staff also were supplied with laptops through “normal” process

Thirty seven percent of the responders (n= 134) reported that the University provided them with additional equipment to enable teaching delivery. This was a mixture of equipment and software to support delivery from home as well as additional equipment in specific teaching rooms. Generally, the feedback on the equipment was positive around items such as the visualisers, cameras, laptops and tablets. However, some negative experiences were reported with the personal microphone /speaker systems, which some staff felt did not provide any additional benefits over the in-class microphone and speakers systems. Additionally, staff



felt that in some cases they had to take specific equipment to teaching rooms and remove after a session, there would be a preference for the rooms to have some of the equipment permanently available to reduce the need for set up time (and technical challenges of this) at each session.

➔ **Recommendation 18:** As part of the annual teaching room evaluation carried out by AV this should include additional consideration of technology specifically required to support blended learning and teaching with physical distancing.

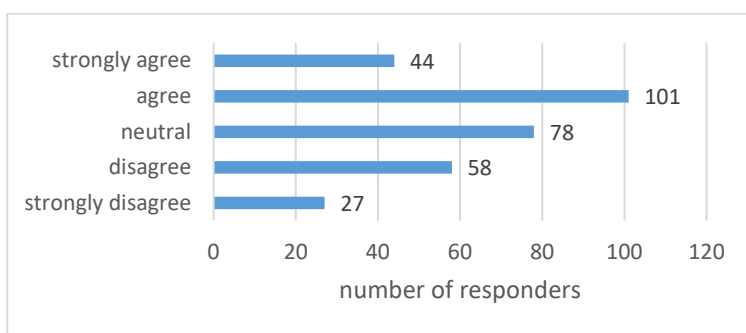
For those staff where no additional equipment was provided, 43% (n=98) did not request any additional equipment. Only nine staff reported requesting equipment and this being rejected, with 12 staff reporting that the delivery time required for the requested equipment did not fit with the time scale required (much of this was due to a large increase in demand in the market coupled with a decrease in available equipment to purchase). Sixty-two percent (n=140) of the responders reported that they used personal equipment to support their teaching delivery

Additional information emerged from the free text response with many staff reporting a significant challenge whilst delivering teaching from home due to poor internet connectivity. In addition, staff reported that students with poor internet connectivity led to them being unable to join online synchronous sessions. Whilst some elements of this may be addressed by the ability for some to return to campus, this will not resolve the issue for those who are unable to return to campus in the short term.

In addition, staff working from home identified that teaching with a single monitor was challenging conducting live sessions as it requires presenting of the session whilst monitoring student interactivity

## 2.11 Assessment and Feedback

The change to blended learning has necessitated the move to alternative forms of assessment. This enabled all students to undertake assessments irrespective of where they were located. This required a great deal of work for staff to rethink and develop assessment plans in a relative short space of time. The majority of responders 74% (n=258) reported that they were confident in designing robust assessments that are appropriate for blended learning, however only 47% (n=145) agreed the development of alternative assessment gave them an opportunity to improve assessments from those previously used (see figure 9)



**Figure 9:** Responses to “the development of alternative assessment for my course has given me an opportunity to improve my assessments from those previously used”

In the sample of staff who responded, 36% (n=108) reported that the inclusion of in person, invigilated exams will be required to enable appropriate assessment of some learning outcomes once we return to full on campus delivery. There was mixed response in the free text comments regarding assessment with a lot of staff reporting that the new assessment approach was one of the main positives from last years’ experience

What has been the most positive aspect for you of blended...

*“Open book exams. They take much longer to design, but are more representative of real world scenarios where students may have to apply their knowledge.”*

*“better assessments (further develop professional skills for the students' futures) - time to explore different assessment types”*

*“The opportunity to think about the assessments included in each course and whether alternatives may be better (in terms of assessing learning outcomes, encouraging student engagement”*

*“The chance to reorganize assessment so that there is no exam and regular small-scale assessments instead, to spread the pressure for students.”*

*“I thought the move away from exam halls and memory based exams was a good thing. I would like to see this kept.”*

Whilst for others there was a major challenge of ensuring assessment integrity with the alternative assessment approach:

*“Being able to have at least one classroom in-class test, without access to digital tools.”*

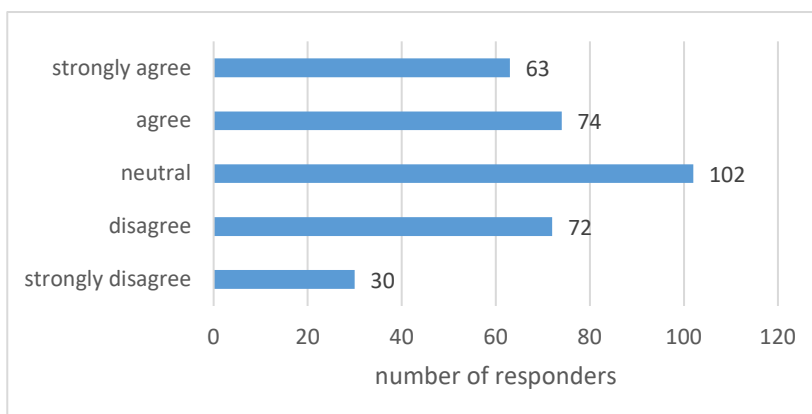
*“The online exams are far from ideal. For the lab reports one student hand draws a mechanism, takes a picture with a phone, then circulates it. The rest copy the .pdf file into their electronic report! They still learn but online assessment is not ideal!”*

*“The requirements of having timed assessments available for at least 48hours is not appropriate for many engineering courses and it encourages collusion which leads to grade and degree inflation”*

Staff however also reported that student feedback on assessment had been positive (80% (n=256)). There was a more mixed response in regard to the amount of feedback provided this year with less than half the responders reporting providing more feedback than in previous years (40% (n=137) (see figure 10). Approximate half of the responders (52% (n=181)) believed that the students had engaged with the feedback that was provided.

From the free text responses staff described how the alternative assessment method whilst being an improvement in terms of assessing student learning did come with additional workload for staff

*“Moving to video assessments was fantastic and worked better than my wildest dreams - while it made for a fearsome amount of work for me, it allowed for extensive feedback to be given”*



**Figure 10:** Responses to “I have provided more feedback on course assessments this year compared to previous years” (n=341)

The survey did not ask a specific question about how assessments were altered to accommodate blended learning. However, from the qualitative data it appears that the change from large end of term exams to a more continuous form of assessment has, in some cases, resulted in an increase in the number of assessment and therefore in increased workload burden for both staff and students.

*“Reduce amount of assessment. Anxiety about engagement meant that we simply did too much”*

## 2.12 Students Contribution

This report concludes with some quotes from staff on the role our students have played in making this last year as effective as it could be with all the difficulties we faced

What has been the most positive aspect for you of blended learning...

*“An engaging and diverse student population who were focussed primarily on the course content. Online learning has led to minimum distraction and also helped introverts to participate in the learning effectively.”*

*“Synchronous sessions with a great atmosphere and interactions with and between students”*

*“Seeing the high level of engagement of students during online tutorials, especially when using the whiteboard tool in Blackboard Collaborate.”*

*“Creating a bond with students in the live, optional weekly Chats - the banter that resulted I have never had in an on-campus class.”*

*“Students worked with us in a way I have not experienced before to ensure the success of the delivery.”*

*“Student engagement and students' positive attitude and willingness to adapt quickly”*

*“on the whole the students' attitudes have been exceptional”*

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

|           | <b>Recommendation</b>   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>1</b>  | Ensure that's all examples of good practice are captured and disseminated through exiting processes including the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award (PTEA).   |
| <b>2</b>  | Messaging to students needs to emphasise the benefits of returning to campus.   |
| <b>3</b>  | The timetabling team will work closely with schools to enable as many longer sessions on campus as required within the constraints of room availability and health and safety requirements.   |
| <b>4</b>  | Investigate possible technological solution to enhance audio pick up in class and improve room set up for next academic year with 1 metre+.   |
| <b>5</b>  | Raise awareness of the functionality of electronic participant response systems, and how these can support interaction whilst teaching with physical distancing.  |
| <b>6</b>  | Explore the acceptability and value of non-moderated discussion boards and peer review through review of the pedagogical literature and disseminate the findings through the learning and teaching networks and the principles and guidance for blended learning web pages. |
| <b>7</b>  | Explore the acceptability and value of different online course activities from the pedagogical literature and disseminate the findings through the learning and teaching networks and the principles and guidance for blended learning web pages.                           |
| <b>8</b>  | Additional training resources and sharing of good practice on mechanism to support student engagement in online environment to be disseminated.   |
| <b>9</b>  | Develop and share guidance on how to set up student retention dashboard and incorporate this into the course design and preparation checklist.  |
| <b>10</b> | Create additional guidance for staff how to support students to become more interactive in the online classroom.  |
| <b>11</b> | Create additional guidance for students on why interaction in the online classroom is beneficial for their learning.  |
| <b>12</b> | Explore what technological solution are available to allow the audience to indicate emotions or responses to live lectures.   |
| <b>13</b> | Explore the evidence for alternative approaches to online lecture delivery from the pedagogical literature and disseminate the findings through the learning and teaching networks and the principles and guidance for blended learning web pages.                          |
| <b>14</b> | Review process and technological solutions to enable staff to identify which students are not attending and /or engaging with the course.   |
| <b>15</b> | Reviewing current room set up to identify which rooms could be enabled to support dual delivery.  |
| <b>16</b> | Develop training and support for staff considering changing teaching approach to accommodate dual mode.   |
| <b>17</b> | Findings from this survey should be discussed with CAD as part of the annual training planning process alongside working closely with schools to identify gaps in training.   |
| <b>18</b> | As part of the annual teaching room evaluation carried out by AV this should include additional consideration of technology specifically required to support blended learning and teaching with physical distancing.  |

## Annex C: Survey of remote learning as part of Aberdeen Student Experience Survey

### 1 REMOTE LEARNING AND TEACHING

#### 1.1 Background

Since March 2020 when the University made the transition to delivering learning and teaching remotely from March 2020. Since then, there has been initial feedback collected, and several recommendations for improvement identified.

The University launched the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) in November which gathers student feedback on a range of University services, facilities and activities. Additional questions were added to this year's survey on remote teaching and learning.

The following document details out early results collected through the ASES, along with the qualitative key themes of those students who responded negatively.

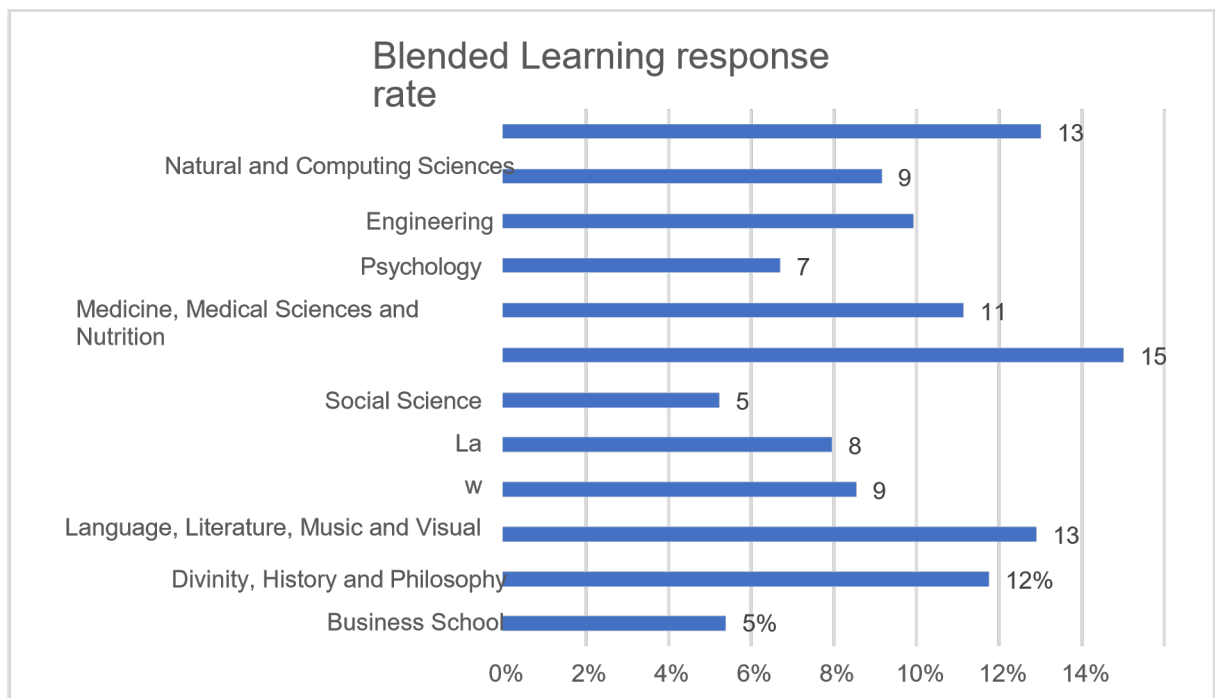
Responses are being sourced from all UG and PGT registered University of Aberdeen students, excluding Online, which at the time of sending the survey invitation, was 14,805 students (12360 UG / 2444 PGT).

The ASES was launched on 1 November and is live until 30 November 2020. Students are being invited to complete the survey via email invitation. For security purposes, students are asked to log in using their student ID number.

The below results show a total of **1140**

responses collected, representing an overall response rate of **8%**

#### 1.2 Blended Learning Response Rate by School



### 1.3 Teaching and Learning

Shown below are the results for all students surveyed.

|   | Strongly Agree | Tend to Agree | Tend to Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Applicable |
|---|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on- campus teaching experience              | 25%            | 33%           | 7%               | 5%                | 29%            |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                  | 27%            | 50%           | 16%              | 7%                | 0%             |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)  | 13%            | 34%           | 31%              | 21%               | 1%             |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                           | 57%            | 37%           | 5%               | 1%                | 0%             |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen | 31%            | 50%           | 13%              | 6%                | 1%             |

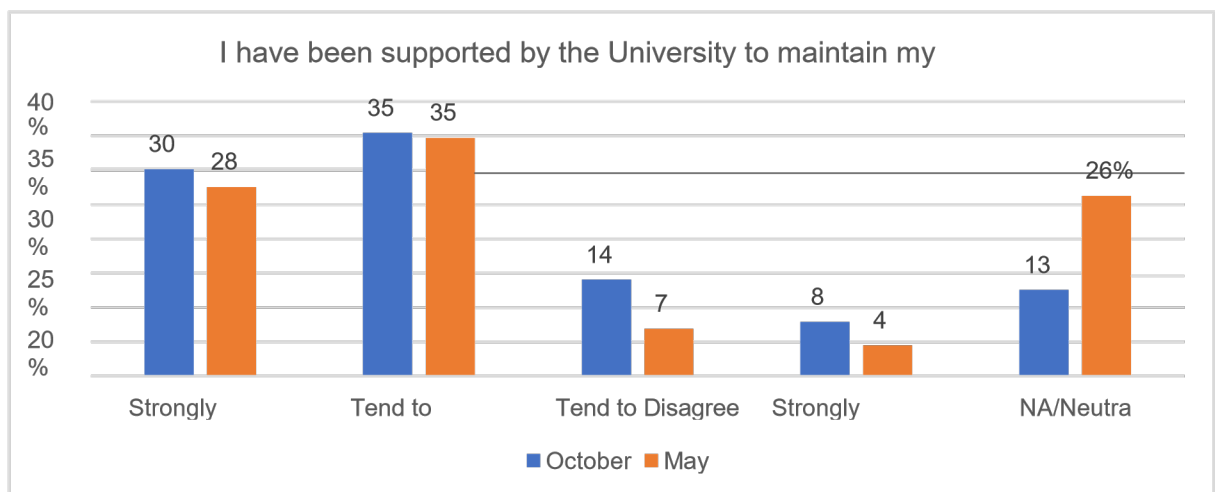
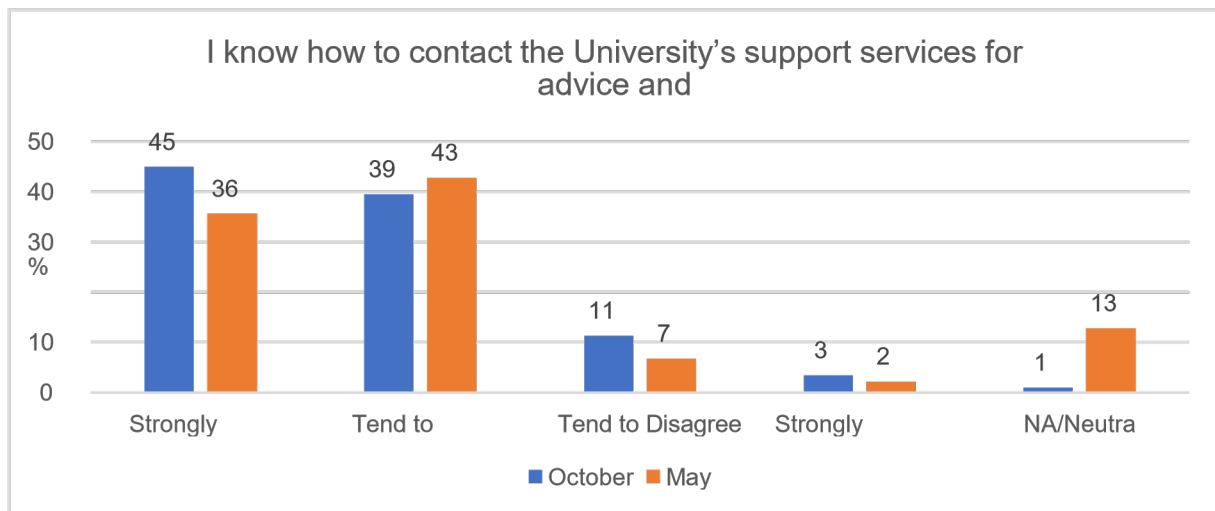
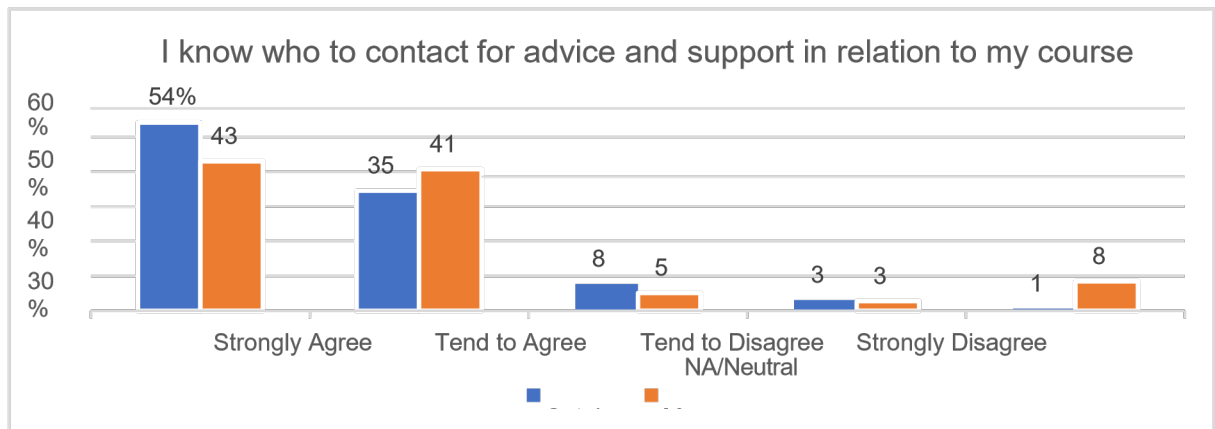
### 1.4 Support and Resources

Shown below are the overall results for all students surveyed.

|   | Strongly Agree | Tend to Agree | Tend to Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Applicable |
|---|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 30%            | 45%           | 13%              | 7%                | 5%             |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 47%            | 28%           | 5%               | 2%                | 19%            |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 54%            | 35%           | 8%               | 3%                | 1%             |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 44%            | 40%           | 12%              | 4%                | 1%             |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 29%            | 36%           | 14%              | 8%                | 13%            |

## 1.5 Comparison Between May Survey and October

There were some questions which were asked in May that could be directly compared. These are shown below.



## 1.6 Qualitative Results

### What Needs to be Improved

Students were then asked to think about their overall learning experience and comment what could be improved upon.

Key themes are shown below, along with some direct student quotes.

#### Blended Learning – Reality vs Expectations

- Students not clear on what blended learning was prior to arrival, and how much online teaching there would be against how many in-person lectures.

*“Informing students more, if we knew everything is gonna be online, most of us would never come back to pay thousands of £ for sitting in our room and having online classes.”*

*“I think that the choices of courses that have been made available on campus and the list of courses that haven't been made available on campus is really unfair and exclusive. I feel like my subjects (more creative and less numerical, i.e., sociology and English) are a lot less valued the subjects that are on campus which tend to be more numerical, i.e., chemistry. I understand that there is a lot of physical things that need to be done in these courses, but I can't help but feel not as important. I was also incredibly frustrated and disappointed after finding out my courses were online (except in once a week every 2 weeks for English) after receiving hundreds of emails throughout summer reassuring that our studies would be “blending learning”, I really would not call my learning experience blended.”*

*“Clarity. If I was told I was not going to have any face-to-face classes sooner than three days prior to the start of lectures, I wouldn't have had to move several hours away from home and waste money on rent and living costs.”*

*“Communications about ongoing situation in terms of learning e.g. I didn't know i would have no classes on campus until I was in Aberdeen”*

*“It should have been all online and halls shouldn't have opened as i only have one f2f class every fortnight and i feel it was not right keeping the accommodation open when we could have stayed at home.”*

*“I think the most important thing the university need to do is be honest with the student population. We were promised blended learning however everything is online. I know a number of people that travelled back to Aberdeen under the assumption that there would be on campus classes, instead they had to isolate for 2 weeks only to find out they need not bother returning. They did this because the university made promises they did not keep.”*

- **Expectations around delivery of learning**

*“Lectures often run longer than their supposed hour and it can take up to three hours for some students to go through a single 50 min lecture at home so adding time to it is not helpful. On top of that some assignments and assessments seems to have been added to some courses to check to make sure that the students are understanding what's going on while not on campus.”*

*“Quality of learning. It would appear that for some courses no effort has been made in the transition to online learning”*

*“More on campus sessions and provide more information to professors on how to handle online tools efficiently”*



*“Stop lecturers from using recording from previous years as their lectures. Force them to record fresh ones for us, as the use of live recordings from previous years is NOT adequate.”*

*“Learning online is obviously hard - and for us students it is probably not the best thing to follow up with. Obviously, there are pros and cons. However, something that could be improved is maybe appealing professors to get a better microphone, as some, in particular, are very hard to hear out, as static is most of the time present”*

*“Actually have lectures. Having last year’s put up and then just having one session a week for almost every course is atrocious.”*

*“The blended learning, so far it has not been a blended experience. It has been an online full experience. I think at least once a week meetings should be scheduled.”*

### **Accommodation Fees**

- Generally, students are disappointed in having to pay for accommodation when they could have stayed at home. *“I found a flat and paid months of rent, only to find out this was really pointless and I could've just stayed at home and saved money. “I feel that the online lectures we had were far less effective at communicating the material to students and was a significantly poorer method of teaching”*

*“When students initially asked whether there would be on campus learning don't lie and mislead students into believing you were actually going to do blended learning then actually tell us a few weeks later that all classes are actually online and there was no need to spend hundreds on a flat and travelling 6 hours to move back to Aberdeen when we could have stayed at home.”*

*“Communication about if we are required to be on campus. I know situations change all the time, but in reality I could have stayed at home and not wasted £450 pm on a room here. I wouldn't class the learning as 'blender'. I would say that it is online. I am fine with this but I wish the university would've been more transparent about this.”*

### **Interaction with peers**

- Additional resources and activities to allow for socialisation

*“I think a lack of student-student communication is the biggest problem. I feel the lecturers/staff have been good at keeping us informed, but it is hard to complete group- work, and many students feel isolated from peers.”*

*“My whole course has been online so far, with little opportunity to converse with other students, and I really miss the interaction, having company, being able to ask questions in lectures (i.e., not pre-recorded lectures), and discuss topics with peers.”*

*“I have really enjoyed my first month at UoA but I would have enjoyed more of blended learning but due circumstances it is fine. I just feel like I haven't been able to make much friends since I've been here which is making me feel alone.”*

*“Helping new students engage with other students socially, particularly outside their own courses. We can't meet random people in coffee shops or walking around campus anymore.”*

## **Online Lectures and the Consistency with How they are Delivered**

*“Captioning on the lectures varies from very accurate to absolutely incomprehensible and this makes lecture material very hard to follow at times “*

*“The clarity in expectations with online learning. Not to change every week or set tasks that are unclear.”*

*“More consistency in teaching material delivery.”*

*“Online learning. To upload learning material per day instead of uploading everything for the week every Monday”*

*“Responsiveness of professors to emails should be faster, especially if there is a pending assignment worth 30% of a grade, and the majority of the students have the same questions and have emailed.”*

*“More knowledge on final essays at end of semester. Myself and peers agree that we’re unsure of how much help we can ask for and what questions are deemed ‘stupid’ or something we should ‘know already.’ I don’t know if asking questions is encouraged.”*

*“Difficult to name only one, but sometimes it seems that lecturers have not prepared the material for the distance-learning well enough”*

*“Enforcing more structure to posting material online. Preferably courses would post assigned lecture for that week on Monday or on specific days at 8am, so students know exactly when to expect material and have structure and be aware the amount of lectures needing completed for that week as it would have been before covid.”*

*“Not recycling old lecture recordings from previous years for some course areas, when the lecturer points to things or demonstrates something you can’t see it. We’re paying the same amount as normal for a MUCH lower quality of material and I am not satisfied at all. Also live discussion events are awkward and disjointed.”*

## **Student Support / Mental Health**

*“To compensate for not being able to speak to the support services in person I would have expected that groups such as AUSA would be answering the phone and emails. Instead, it takes them a minimum two weeks to respond. That is just unacceptable. Everyone understands that things would have to be different, but the support services must respond to the needs of the student body. The counselling service needs better funding. The only way to get an appointment is if you have thought about suicide.”*

*“More on campus things when the restrictions allow it. I’ve also noticed a trend in a LOT of students and friends being very stressed out and their mental health suffering from it because of additional workload as a result of blended learning.”*

## **School communication**

*“I am a student of the MA3 programme. Our placement allocation requires improvement. I have only been given my allocated school with 6 days’ notice before going on placement. We have informed the university that this is not acceptable. The University’s communication regarding placement has been very little. We only received feedback when requested by us and have been left in the dark on progress regarding placement allocations or contingency plans. I have voiced that i do not feel supported and am feeling frustrated but have not been responded to.”*

## What is working well

Students were then asked to think about what is working well. Key themes are shown below, along with some direct student quotes.

### Communication

#### Updates for the University

*“the communication from university staff”*

*“The university communicates well; I always feel kept in the loop”*

*“Professors are willing to provide further help if asked for.”*

*“Updating us of any sudden changes”*

*“Timely responses from the InfoHub with regards to a wide variety of questions”*

*“Year reps are helpful with any questions”*

*“The overall communication of the University is outstanding.”*

*“A lot of relevant information is online. Although there are many emails, they are necessary and reduce my nerves in case I am missing out on something going on in the university. All teachers are so supportive, and I feel taken care of.”*

*“Communication with students on mental health and wellbeing”*

#### Communication and support from academic staff

*“I like the online teaching better because it reduces the time waste getting to the lecture halls, etc. I also think communication with the professors is excellent, the University has done a good job switching to blended learning.”*

*“Communication with my supervisor. Responsiveness of teachers.”*

*“I am happy to say that the lecturers and tutors are being very supportive and everybody are giving us useful learning tips and it is going pretty well. I believe all students adapt quickly. We just wish everything be back to normal.”*

*“My Lecturers, especially Aloyise Mulligan, have been amazingly supportive. Always helpful when dealing with the stress of isolation and distance learning”*

*“The welcoming staff in on campus teaching”*

*“My professors are amazing and very supportive.”*

*“The staff in my course are wonderful and working tirelessly to try and salvage what they can of the traditional experience we would be having in a non - pandemic year. It is the wider University that has proven to be underwhelming.”*

*"Most teachers are very helpful and understanding in this weird time. I had to travel from Denmark to Aberdeen in the middle of the semester and self-isolate. Doing all of my classes online ensured that I didn't miss anything - that was great!"*

### **Online Resources**

*"Having electronic access to so many resources through the library has been essential and is a great service."*

*"The arrangements and timetable management plus quick response from each and every department with responsibility is the one thing I appreciate most of all. The Blackboard and MyAberdeen are really well organized and helps to sort things out easily."*

*"The online platform system i think is doing well. I think resources could be easily found. I think that although online learning is not what most of us came to Aberdeen looking for, Blackboard is working right to fulfil present needs"*

*"MyAberdeen is easy to navigate and lectures and tutors are easy to contact as well"*

*"Blackboard collaborate works really well for seminars and tutorials."*

### **Online Lectures**

*"I think the online teaching from the Computing Science department is extremely good, I am completely satisfied with the level of communication on rules and classes. The heads of the department are doing an amazing job! Thank you!!"*

*"Being able to go through the lectures at my own pace and pause if the lecturer is going too fast."*

*"I can do all my learning from home"*

*"I think the lectures work fine, I feel like they're slightly more difficult to concentrate on just because there are so many distractions at home compared to last year's lecture halls, but obviously this cannot be helped. Honestly, I don't think anything else is working that well, tutorials and breakout rooms are the most awkward things I've ever done, but I know there isn't much choice about doing this. One thing that has been good is how easily accessible everything is, the lectures and readings are all very clear and this makes things a lot easier."*

*"The course work and the lectures are Brilliant loving my course"*

*"I like the fact that the seminars online are scheduled, and lectures aren't, because that gives some flexibility so that we can study when we want but we still have some structure. The seminars have mostly been pretty good."*

*"Some classes are more interactive than others which I enjoy"*

*"The way classes are structured works quite well (even better than i expected) with some face to face sessions and online sessions."*

*"I prefer online learning as it saves time travelling to Uni. I also like the fact that the presentation slides are available to print before the lecture so I can take notes. Recorded lectures are great for later reference. I struggle to understand and hear some lecturers lectures due to poor wifi connection at their end which is quite often."*

*"The online sessions are working very well, particularly like how the sessions are recorded so we can re-watch if needed."*

**SCHOOL SPECIFIC INFORMATION**
**Biological Sciences**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 31%                   | 30%                  | 8%                      | 8%                       | 23%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 12%                   | 62%                  | 20%                     | 5%                       | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 12%                   | 39%                  | 23%                     | 23%                      | 3%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 46%                   | 50%                  | 3%                      | 1%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 22%                   | 54%                  | 16%                     | 7%                       | 1%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 22%                   | 50%                  | 8%                      | 16%                      | 4%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 43%                   | 36%                  | 4%                      | 5%                       | 11%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 50%                   | 41%                  | 7%                      | 3%                       | 0%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 32%                   | 49%                  | 15%                     | 4%                       | 0%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 26%                   | 31%                  | 19%                     | 14%                      | 11%                   |

**Business: Support & Resources**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 20%                   | 34%                  | 7%                      | 6%                       | 34%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 24%                   | 54%                  | 15%                     | 7%                       | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 17%                   | 36%                  | 25%                     | 21%                      | 1%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 61%                   | 28%                  | 9%                      | 2%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 30%                   | 51%                  | 15%                     | 3%                       | 0%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 27%                   | 47%                  | 16%                     | 6%                       | 4%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 38%                   | 35%                  | 6%                      | 3%                       | 18%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 48%                   | 37%                  | 13%                     | 2%                       | 0%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 41%                   | 43%                  | 12%                     | 1%                       | 3%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 28%                   | 37%                  | 14%                     | 7%                       | 14%                   |

**Divinity, History and Philosophy**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 30%                   | 29%                  | 4%                      | 7%                       | 29%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 34%                   | 45%                  | 15%                     | 7%                       | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 16%                   | 31%                  | 35%                     | 18%                      | 0%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 57%                   | 37%                  | 6%                      | 0%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 34%                   | 47%                  | 9%                      | 9%                       | 1%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 33%                   | 43%                  | 15%                     | 8%                       | 2%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 48%                   | 38%                  | 3%                      | 1%                       | 9%                    |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 53%                   | 38%                  | 7%                      | 1%                       | 1%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 43%                   | 45%                  | 10%                     | 1%                       | 1%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 26%                   | 46%                  | 15%                     | 8%                       | 6%                    |

**Education**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 20%                   | 20%                  | 4%                      | 5%                       | 51%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 32%                   | 52%                  | 11%                     | 5%                       | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 15%                   | 54%                  | 26%                     | 5%                       | 0%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 61%                   | 35%                  | 4%                      | 1%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 35%                   | 54%                  | 7%                      | 5%                       | 0%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 37%                   | 51%                  | 7%                      | 4%                       | 1%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 31%                   | 20%                  | 2%                      | 1%                       | 45%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 68%                   | 25%                  | 4%                      | 4%                       | 0%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 42%                   | 51%                  | 2%                      | 5%                       | 0%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 25%                   | 37%                  | 15%                     | 6%                       | 17%                   |



**Engineering**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 30%                   | 30%                  | 9%                      | 10%                      | 20%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 28%                   | 37%                  | 19%                     | 15%                      | 1%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 13%                   | 27%                  | 33%                     | 28%                      | 0%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 60%                   | 37%                  | 2%                      | 0%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 26%                   | 43%                  | 20%                     | 10%                      | 1%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 23%                   | 42%                  | 23%                     | 8%                       | 3%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 52%                   | 24%                  | 5%                      | 2%                       | 16%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 55%                   | 27%                  | 9%                      | 7%                       | 2%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 50%                   | 29%                  | 13%                     | 6%                       | 2%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 28%                   | 28%                  | 15%                     | 12%                      | 17%                   |

**Geosciences**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 16%                   | 38%                  | 11%                     | 5%                       | 30%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 27%                   | 41%                  | 16%                     | 16%                      | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 11%                   | 35%                  | 30%                     | 24%                      | 0%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 57%                   | 41%                  | 3%                      | 0%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 27%                   | 57%                  | 3%                      | 14%                      | 0%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 24%                   | 43%                  | 16%                     | 14%                      | 3%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 54%                   | 22%                  | 5%                      | 3%                       | 16%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 51%                   | 46%                  | 3%                      | 0%                       | 0%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 38%                   | 54%                  | 8%                      | 0%                       | 0%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 19%                   | 46%                  | 16%                     | 8%                       | 11%                   |

**Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 25%                   | 34%                  | 11%                     | 3%                       | 27%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 21%                   | 55%                  | 20%                     | 4%                       | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 11%                   | 35%                  | 35%                     | 20%                      | 0%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 54%                   | 38%                  | 7%                      | 1%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 26%                   | 54%                  | 15%                     | 5%                       | 0%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 23%                   | 50%                  | 16%                     | 6%                       | 6%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 42%                   | 34%                  | 9%                      | 2%                       | 13%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 49%                   | 44%                  | 7%                      | 1%                       | 0%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 35%                   | 46%                  | 15%                     | 5%                       | 0%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 27%                   | 32%                  | 18%                     | 8%                       | 15%                   |

**Law**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 27%                   | 39%                  | 6%                      | 5%                       | 24%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 25%                   | 45%                  | 24%                     | 5%                       | 1%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 8%                    | 30%                  | 29%                     | 33%                      | 0%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 54%                   | 39%                  | 5%                      | 2%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 33%                   | 49%                  | 10%                     | 8%                       | 0%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 28%                   | 49%                  | 12%                     | 7%                       | 4%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 51%                   | 27%                  | 4%                      | 1%                       | 18%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 47%                   | 35%                  | 11%                     | 7%                       | 0%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 40%                   | 35%                  | 22%                     | 4%                       | 0%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 29%                   | 31%                  | 20%                     | 7%                       | 12%                   |

**Natural and Computing Sciences**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 22%                   | 38%                  | 3%                      | 4%                       | 33%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 33%                   | 38%                  | 17%                     | 12%                      | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 17%                   | 28%                  | 29%                     | 21%                      | 5%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 67%                   | 28%                  | 5%                      | 0%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 29%                   | 49%                  | 13%                     | 8%                       | 1%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 29%                   | 45%                  | 12%                     | 4%                       | 11%                   |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 45%                   | 28%                  | 7%                      | 0%                       | 21%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 45%                   | 36%                  | 13%                     | 5%                       | 1%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 39%                   | 36%                  | 17%                     | 7%                       | 1%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 26%                   | 28%                  | 14%                     | 9%                       | 22%                   |

**Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 28%                   | 40%                  | 9%                      | 4%                       | 18%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 28%                   | 51%                  | 14%                     | 7%                       | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 12%                   | 31%                  | 38%                     | 19%                      | 1%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 60%                   | 36%                  | 3%                      | 1%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 38%                   | 49%                  | 10%                     | 3%                       | 0%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 38%                   | 41%                  | 12%                     | 5%                       | 5%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 58%                   | 23%                  | 5%                      | 1%                       | 14%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 63%                   | 30%                  | 4%                      | 2%                       | 1%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 55%                   | 34%                  | 6%                      | 3%                       | 1%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 38%                   | 36%                  | 10%                     | 6%                       | 9%                    |

**Psychology**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 19%                   | 34%                  | 3%                      | 7%                       | 37%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 34%                   | 53%                  | 8%                      | 5%                       | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 17%                   | 25%                  | 32%                     | 22%                      | 3%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 51%                   | 44%                  | 3%                      | 2%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 39%                   | 46%                  | 14%                     | 2%                       | 0%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 34%                   | 44%                  | 12%                     | 3%                       | 7%                    |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 46%                   | 22%                  | 0%                      | 5%                       | 27%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 49%                   | 37%                  | 12%                     | 2%                       | 0%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 44%                   | 41%                  | 14%                     | 2%                       | 0%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 27%                   | 44%                  | 14%                     | 8%                       | 7%                    |

**Social Science**

| <b>Teaching &amp; Learning</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of my on-campus teaching experience                         | 15%                   | 17%                  | 12%                     | 5%                       | 52%                   |
| I am satisfied with the quality of my online learning experience                            | 17%                   | 62%                  | 12%                     | 10%                      | 0%                    |
| My learning experience has allowed me to interact with my peers (other students)            | 10%                   | 35%                  | 32%                     | 22%                      | 2%                    |
| I have been able to access my learning resources online                                     | 50%                   | 42%                  | 7%                      | 2%                       | 0%                    |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience at the University of Aberdeen           | 23%                   | 45%                  | 25%                     | 7%                       | 0%                    |
| <b>Support &amp; Resources</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Agree</b> | <b>Tend to Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Not Applicable</b> |
| I am satisfied with the induction and orientation to the university and to blended learning | 17%                   | 43%                  | 10%                     | 18%                      | 12%                   |
| I am satisfied with the health and safety arrangements on campus                            | 35%                   | 32%                  | 2%                      | 3%                       | 28%                   |
| I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course                       | 45%                   | 47%                  | 2%                      | 5%                       | 2%                    |
| I know how to contact the University's support services for advice and support              | 38%                   | 40%                  | 13%                     | 7%                       | 2%                    |
| I have been supported by the University to maintain my wellbeing                            | 23%                   | 38%                  | 10%                     | 10%                      | 18%                   |



**Annex D: BLITFG /UEC Reports**

| DATE           | TITLE   | FOCUS                | AUTHOR   | REPORT ID                 |
|----------------|---|----------------------|--|---------------------------|
| July 2020      | STUDENTS' VIEWS ON THE TRANSITION TO REMOTE LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT | Student survey       | Ruth Taylor<br>Kirsty Kiezebrink<br>Morag Beedie | <b>BLITFG/300720/014</b>  |
| September 2020 | EVALUATION OF BLENDED LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19                     | Evaluation plan      | Ruth Taylor<br>Kirsty Kiezebrink                 | <b>BLITFG/160920/004</b>  |
| December 2020  | INTERIM EVALUATION OF BLENDED LEARNING – REPORT ON STAFF FOCUS GROUPS         | Staff focus group    | Kirsty Kiezebrink<br>Gillian Mackintosh          | <b>BLITFG/031220/004a</b> |
| December 2020  | STUDENT SURVEY - NOVEMBER 2020  | Student pulse survey | Morag Beedie<br>Kirsty Kiezebrink                | <b>BLITFG/031220/004b</b> |
| December 2020  | EVALUATION TIMELINE   | Timeline             | Kirsty Kiezebrink<br>Gillian Mackintosh          | <b>BLITFG/031220/004c</b> |
| January 2021   | UPDATED EVALUATION TIMELINE   | Timeline             | Kirsty Kiezebrink<br>Gillian Mackintosh          | <b>BLITFG/210121/009</b>  |
| May 2021       | INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT ON BLENDED LEARNING                                 | Student focus group  | Kirsty Kiezebrink<br>Gillian Mackintosh          | <b>UEC/250521/006</b>     |
| June 2021      | EVALUATION REPORT ON STAFF SURVEY OF BLENDED LEARNING                         | Staff survey         | Kirsty Kiezebrink<br>Gillian Mackintosh          | <b>UEC/230621/014</b>     |