

School: Moray House School of Education and Sport
Academic year: 2020/1
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Status: Published (20 Aug 2021)



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Areas for reflection

1. Progress with (see Aide Memoir from Academic Services): 1. Actions planned in last year's report 2. Any recommendations from last year's Senate Quality Assurance Committee sub group meeting

Review of the system of staffing in relation to learning and teaching and the timelines of workload allocation, recruitment and course review and publication. This has workload implications and the current situation is influenced by the impact of staff with unachievably high workloads.

We strengthened the link between line managers (Head of Institute teams) and the Learning and Teaching Directorate through the new governance structure, focused meetings between teams, e.g. DQAE attendance at some HOIT meetings. Analysis of student voice (SV) and other Quality Assurance (QA) data was shared regularly at all levels to get consistency and a shared understanding across the school of the impact of staffing on QA and the student experience. Although staffing was a priority within the school, the pandemic, related absences, the freeze on hiring and the voluntary severance scheme, inhibited our plans and created additional challenges. Please see Section 4 below.

Continue to prioritise actions and build on work started by Coordinator of Accessible Learning to make learning and teaching inclusive and accessible for all students, particularly within the current digital context.

In collaboration with colleagues within and beyond the School the co-ordinator has sought to increase inclusion and the School's capacity to be inclusive through a range of actions.

Accessible learning: In terms of working with other services within the University, we have been in discussions with the Student Disability Service (SDS), to clarify its role in supporting disabled students during Welcome week, an important part of a student's learning and university experience, after this was raised in the EDI accessibility sub-group. We have also worked this year with ResLife around their provision for disabled students in university-managed accommodation. The MH subtitling service has been well used to support accurate subtitling for students with schedules of adjustment and the move to online teaching has helped to make lecturers aware of automated captioning to the benefit of those students who may not have declared or be aware of hearing impairment more widely. In addition to the subtitling service a couple of members of staff

in professional services have been trained in converting documents to accessible formats for visually impaired students, which has been very helpful to staff with students with a schedule of adjustment, however this provision is on an ad hoc basis, funded by the School. A digital sticker for students with a schedule of adjustment who are using a proof reader has been developed to include on their assignments to alert lecturers to account for this in their anonymous marking. Areas for development and consideration as we start the next academic year include the monitoring and evaluation of provisions for Welcome Week and the start of the mentoring trial for PTs interested in supporting visually impaired students.

Staff capacity/confidence building: A trial for a workloaded mentor scheme for personal tutors interested in building capacity in support for partially sighted students has been agreed. If successful this may be rolled out to other disabilities and Widening Participation students. In relation to learning and teaching the issue of workload allocation for named contacts of disabled students has been highlighted. In July the role of Student Disability Contact was appointed and this student facing role will work closely with the co-ordinator role to support staff and students. Specialists such as Elizabeth McCann led PWS sessions to support staff learning in this area and key guidance has been produced advising staff how to make learning accessible for a range of disabilities

Continue to build staff confidence and skills in using digital platforms for teaching; maintain and increase digital support levels; work closely with Digital Services in School and College to ensure that we are using the most appropriate, UoE approved software for each different pedagogical approach or teaching context.

As preparation for moving to hybrid teaching, our Learning and Teaching Directorate worked closely with Digital Services to gauge the level of confidence and tailor support required by members of staff. Digital Services provided workshops for programme teams to identify appropriate digital platforms. Regular guidance and updates on policy were provided by Digital Services. With clear implications for staff workload, QA data from academics and students suggests that colleagues quickly acquired confidence and competence in digital platforms, able to choose those most suitable for their

teaching pedagogies and student access needs- including need for BSL interpreters, written and audio transcripts for hearing/visually impaired students and platforms that work in China. There was excellent support from the Digital Services team and Digital support workstreams. Good use was made of the PWS sessions to share effective approaches, solve problems etc. There is a desire to retain many of the online features of teaching that worked well and for some programmes in the long term move towards approaches that incorporate hybrid/ blended modes.

2. Summary of what has worked well.

1) Student community building and wellbeing-see Section 3 for more detail

2) Teaching online The digital context has made many elements of learning and teaching much more efficient and effective. For example, on our professional programmes, meetings with partners and students on placement have been much easier to hold. Issues could be discussed before they caused problems. Virtual meetings will continue in future years as a more accessible and better quality experience for all involved. Across the School, there is a clear desire to reduce the number of on campus meetings with digital alternatives or options. There is consensus across programmes that generally student achievement was in line with previous years and that they made good progress against learning outcomes even within the digital context. The ability to attend digitally increased attendance at staff professional learning events (like PWS) that were likely to have positive impact on student learning/experience.

3) Our diversity of approaches to assessment within a course, such as a combination of written assignment, presentations and posters have proved to be effective and inclusive.

4) Adopting an agreed template for providing feedback- See Section 3 for more detail

3. Good practice for sharing across the College and University

1) Student community building and wellbeing The School made a substantive commitment to Student engagement, experience and support in 2020/21 through the creation of a number of key roles in the School. We developed a programme of social, wellness and academic community opportunities with a focus on student collaboration and input. These are anchored by overarching themes (for example Mental Health and Wellbeing Week) that offer in-person and online sessions that have created a template for a sustainable future programme of student led events. This will build on the existing community of interested student interaction. This approach to student community building was commended in the recent PG Internal Periodic Review (4/21). A key part of this positive development has been strong and consistent communications, through the implementation of a fortnightly Student Roundup newsletter as well as the creation and maintenance of the Student Information Sharepoint. The structure of the Sharepoint has been noted as an example of best practice for student communications, with other Schools planning similar projects for future academic years. Student Experience and Support Officers adapted quickly to online delivery of student support, with the implementation of an online drop in service, online booking system integrating with the Enhanced Support System

2) Personal Tutoring, firstly, an Enhanced Support System (ESS) and Escalation Procedures protocol was developed, in consultation with student reps. This protocol was commended in the PG Internal Periodic Review (4/21) as an area of good practice for sharing more widely across the university. Secondly, steps have been taken to continue to build support for personal tutors in developing and sharing their practice. This included: 'Practice Worth Sharing' sessions on a range of topics; a new school system to log personal tutor training; initiatives such as 'Euclid Power Half Hour' to support personal tutors in updating student notes; and a Teams site for personal tutors to share practice and support each other. Thirdly, in response to concerns about the proliferation of policy, information and guidance for personal tutors across the university website, a MHSES personal tutor Sharepoint site was launched, as a central hub which systematically links to this information. Finally, conscious of the impact that supporting students can have on staff wellbeing, we have introduced a process of 'debriefs' (led by Senior Tutors, Student Experiences Co-ordinator and our Place2Be practitioner) for academic and professional services staff who have had conversations in which a student has shared information that is emotionally difficult. We have also highlighted other support for staff (e.g. staff counselling, the Listening Service) more prominently this year.

3) Adopting an agreed template for providing feedback

The *Keep, Stop, Start* system of giving students feedback on formative and summative assessments has worked very well on the UG programmes where it is used.

Keep (What is good about this response?)

Stop (What is limiting?)

Start (What could enhance this answer and future submissions?)

Using this template has helped markers, in the *Keep* section provide comments which indicate how the marks/grade have

been awarded. In the *Stop* section markers provide feedback so that students have a clear indication of what aspects are limiting their ability to express their ideas or their ability to meet the assessment criteria. In the *Start* section, students are then given an indication of what steps they should take for future assessments. In this section, markers are often able to provide the sort of motivational comments to encourage the student and help them to direct their efforts.

This *Keep, Stop, Start* approach ensures that all markers have a clear and consistent approach to follow, and therefore across a range of courses students receive feedback in a way that helps them to develop an appreciation of what actions they need to take. Furthermore, as a personal tutor it is possible to ask students to look across the feedback they have received from coursework and ask the students to collate the comments, so that in a meeting, issues can be discussed and an action plan co-created based on the feedback students receive.

4) Our award winning Practice Worth Sharing programme- a professional learning community in which what works well or problems are shared and discussed in a non judgemental setting.

4. Summary of what could have worked better/requires further development.

1) Adaptability to increases in student numbers. The increase in student numbers on PGT programmes which were significantly over target from earlier forecasts, resulted in the School having insufficient staffing for teaching and for personal tutors. The broader point about staffing will be addressed in point 2, however, for PGT students there is a significant impact on their first impressions of their programmes as they cannot be allocated a PT until additional work has been undertaken to secure staffing which has mainly been via GH contracts. Allocating PTs to students and tutors to courses after the semester damages relationships between students and PTs/programmes which leads to student dissatisfaction. All aspects of QA and student experience are negatively impacted because of the challenges presented by insufficient staffing for personal tutoring and teaching. Students' dissatisfaction has come through very strongly in student voice. Students lost confidence and trust in the School, and although, as a School, the reasons for over recruitment were beyond our control, students had very reasonable expectations that they could access their courses and meet with personal tutors, which we were not able to provide until week 3 of semester 1. It took quite some time and effort to address students' needs at the point of transition to PGT study and repair the type of relationships required for effective personal tutoring and teaching.

2) Staffing- Staff absence, lack of flexibility to act quickly to cover absences and staff wellbeing. Related to above, and exacerbated by the Covid situation. Several teaching staff, including GH staff, have become points of failure. The recruitment freeze and now the extensive timeline between advert to contract, and apparent failure of People and Money, is prohibitive to being adaptable to staffing needs/changes. As a result, colleagues are required to teach, and take on CO and PD roles last minute and out with their expertise or current skill set. Students have recognised this and their dissatisfaction has come through clearly in various SV mechanisms. Further, there is limited capacity across staff to provide appropriate induction or mentoring. This has a very negative impact on student experience, and indeed staff experience and wellbeing. Across the school. Workload has been excessive, and staffing shortages on some programmes has prevented smaller teaching group sizes which would have been beneficial to allow tutors to deal with the extra demands of teaching last year. Externals expressed their hope that the School is aware that careful consideration of staff wellbeing and the need for a period of rest and recovery is of paramount importance.

3) Over-reliance on GH staff. Again related to above, the school currently retains an over-reliance on GH staff, which challenges our ability to provide sustainable high quality research informed teaching and practice. GH staff also require training and mentoring which contributes to staff overload.

4) Programmes and strands that required more practical activities (such as science teaching or school placements) did not work so well in the digital context. Whilst some students have coped surprising well this year, others have not managed to develop fully the experience and skills they will need. However, this should not be such a problem next year.

Actions

1. Actions identified for the School/Deanery

1) Continue to prioritise staffing. Develop further strategies in place for greater alignment between Learning and Teaching and Line Management. Find ways to develop a sustainable long to medium term strategy for staffing that offers a high quality experience for students, high quality teaching staff and quality time for strong research profiles. This involves recruitment of lecturers rather than GH staff and the flexibility to deal effectively with any unexpected increase in student numbers. A strategy is needed that ensures that courses are taught by the most suitable member of staff without Institute barriers or other challenges preventing this.

2) Continue to improve initiatives from the Co-ordinator of Accessible Learning with members of staff, and to improve the number of students with disabilities receiving support or information from the new Disability Contact role in the school. Enhance the School strategy to ensure there are no barriers to including all students. In addition there are further

improvements that could be made to existing good practices – for example the highlighting of and provision for the importance of correcting automated captioning; creating a more formal process for support converting document to accessible formats from the current ad hoc arrangement. Finally it will be important to monitor the impact of two significant changes this academic year: 1. The move in SDS for deaf students to organising their own support with named suppliers, which is anticipated will add to administrative work for students and staff; and 2. The introduction of the new SIMITIVE system and whether this will allow for staff training, PT time etc. specifically related to accessibility and inclusion.

3) Continue our focus on student wellbeing and community building. Developments for 2021/22 will be: rolling out training for personal tutors on the school escalation procedures; developing procedures for support of students on a repeat year or returning for authorised interruption of study; developing methods of gathering student feedback on personal tutoring; and we also hope to run ASIST suicide intervention training for staff; beginning to prepare for the move to the new university-wide student support system. We will build on the work of the community intern and the student rep/champions intern to work further towards enhancing students sense of belonging to the School and develop further the reach and impact of initiatives introduced in 2020/21 to support students.

4) Student Voice. Continue to enhance our SV processes, including roll out of new School SV policy. We need to build on the work of the student voice intern and focus on developing students' awareness and understanding of SV. This includes reviewing our approaches to student communication and student voice. To build on momentum in terms of student communication, and work with students to ensure that the Sharepoint and Roundup are used and valued by the student body.

Actions requested

1. Actions requested of the College

1) We would like to have discussion with colleagues at College to get a greater understanding of their rationale for staffing processes to try to find a way to solve the challenges we face and ensure we can develop a sustainable staffing strategy. To explore how we might have more flexibility to appoint in good time when staff leave or have a long term absence and when student numbers suddenly increase so that students are taught by a member of staff who is qualified and experienced in their area.

2. Actions requested of the University

1) Accessibility- We request that the University recognises the need to support students holistically, so that barriers to learning are removed. There is a human rights issue, this year specifically, regarding food and exercise. For example, for the visually impaired, taking responsibility for provision of support in going shopping, getting to the gym for exercise, mobility training etc. Support helping make sure Welcome Week and Open days are inclusive.

2) Perhaps use preparation for the SSPT launch in 2023/24 as an opportunity to review where on the University website/Sharepoint information about student support/personal tutoring is held, and seek to consolidate this.