Board of Management

Students, Staff & Equalities Committee

Date of Meeting	**Wednesday 19 May 2021**
Paper No.	**SSEC3-E**
Agenda Item	**5.1**
Subject of Paper	**Student Experience Annual Review 2020/21**
FOISA Status	**Disclosable**
Primary Contact	**Gillian Plunkett, Student Experience Director**
Date of production	**11 May 2021**
Action	**For Discussion and Decision**

1. Recommendations

3.1 The Students, Staff and Equalities Committee (SSEC) is asked to discuss the Student Experience Annual Review of AY2020/21 and comment on service priorities, aims and objectives.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of the Annual Review is to provide members of the SSEC with a high level overview of service priorities and developments in AY2020/21.

3. Key Insights

3.1 Student support services reside within the Student Experience Directorate and provide a wide range of support for learning and student life. Creating an inclusive environment that anticipates and supports student need through excellent advice, guidance and support is fundamental to the College's **Strategic Priority 2 - To enable individuals to excel and realise their full potential.**

3.2 Evaluating our performance is an important factor in meeting our Student Academic Experience Strategy objectives, our Public Sector Equality Duty and in meeting our Regional Outcome Agreement objectives in relation to widening participation.

3.3 The College Student Academic Experience Strategy puts students at the heart of all we do at City of Glasgow College. We aspire to engender a passion for learning among our students and we are committed to raising standards through a culture of continuous improvement to achieve the highest level of student performance, student engagement and student satisfaction.

3.4 The Student Experience Annual Review provides an overview of service priorities, developments and performance achievements for students and staff in 2020/21.

4. Impact and Implications

4.1 Student support services work together with learning and teaching to support College KPis in retention and success. Failure to provide support could impact on the College's performance in relation to KPIs.

Appendices

Student Experience Annual Review 2020-21

Student Experience

Annual Review
2020/21

accessible
learning Voice
experience
funding support
resilient
Loan help
inclusive
childcare
you
student
Matter
ready
admissions
careers Skills study
engagement
health
equipment
counselling

CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE

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Student Experience Directorate Chart

Student Experience
Directorate Chart

Student Experience
Director
Gillian Plunkett
(1.0)

Associate Director
Learner Journey
Scott Harrison
(1.0)

Student Recruitment
and Funding Manager
Brian Deeley

Student Support
and Well Being
Manager
Lisa Hardy

Student
Engagement
Manager
Sandra Cook

Learning Support
and Inclusion
Manager
Graeme Brewster

Admissions
Co-ordinators
(1.6)

Student Funding
Co-ordinator
(0.6)

Student Advisors
(7.4)

Student
Association
Liaison Officer
(1.0)

Student
Presidential
Team
(3.2)

Schools
Programme
Coordinator
(1.0)

Learning
Support
Lecturers
(12.2)

Student Funding
Officer
(0.86)

SSWB
Administrative
Officer
(1.0)

Student
Engagement
Officer
(5.0)
Digital Comms
Officer
(1.0)

Student
Executive x 6

Learning
Support &
Development
Advisors
(3.6)

Student
Development
Co-ordinator
(1.0)

Mental Health
and Well Being
Coordinator
(1.0)

Student
Development
Administrator
(0.8)

Student
Information &
Funding Assistants
(8.6)

Student
Information &
Funding ssistants
(5.0)

Student
Counsellor
(3.0)

Administrators
(2.0)

Sports Coaches
(0.2)
Associate Trainers
x 4

Assistive
Technologist
(1.0)

Administrative
Assistants
(2.0)

ESWs
(4.4)
Bank (6)

Introduction

This Annual Review covers the Academic Year (AY) 2020/21 however, in March 17th 2020 as the college closed its building in response to the pandemic, support services were at their busiest period preparing to support new students for entry in AY 2020/21. I have therefore included some of our experiences from spring 2020 in pivoting our services to meet student need and some of the COVID insights we learned along the way.

I would also like to pay tribute to our people.

The student support services moved quickly to working from home. They fielded thousands of emails and calls from anxious students, applicants and parents. They learned how to meet and work on line, they learned how to take calls from home via their laptops routed through the college telephony system, they listened with empathy to student worries when they themselves were worried, they developed What's App groups to stay in touch and support each other, they pulled on every creative fibre to develop their services to be delivered online, they built websites, created content, made films and videos and are now online ready.

I am immensely proud of my team.

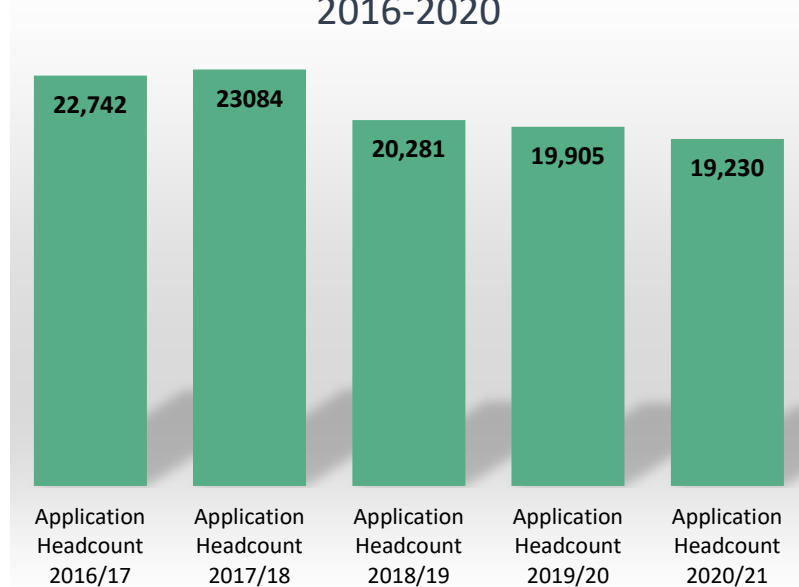# Student Recruitment and Admissions

Admissions for entry in Academic Year (AY) 2020/21 commenced in January 2020 and applicant interviews were well under way by the time the college closed its buildings on 17th March.

Table 1 shows an applications trend from 2016-2020 and while numbers have dropped slightly (and this has been experienced by the Sector), City of Glasgow College remains the 1st choice destination for School Leavers across Scotland.

Despite the pandemic and the change in the usual services offered, the Admissions Team pressed ahead with the annual admissions satisfaction survey in July 2020.

All applicants were surveyed with a response rate of 20.6% (4,254), and the Team were delighted that the overall experience of our applicants remained high at 89% (1% decrease from 2019/20), an exceptional result given the challenging circumstances in which service delivery took place.

Table 1 - Application Trends 2016-2020

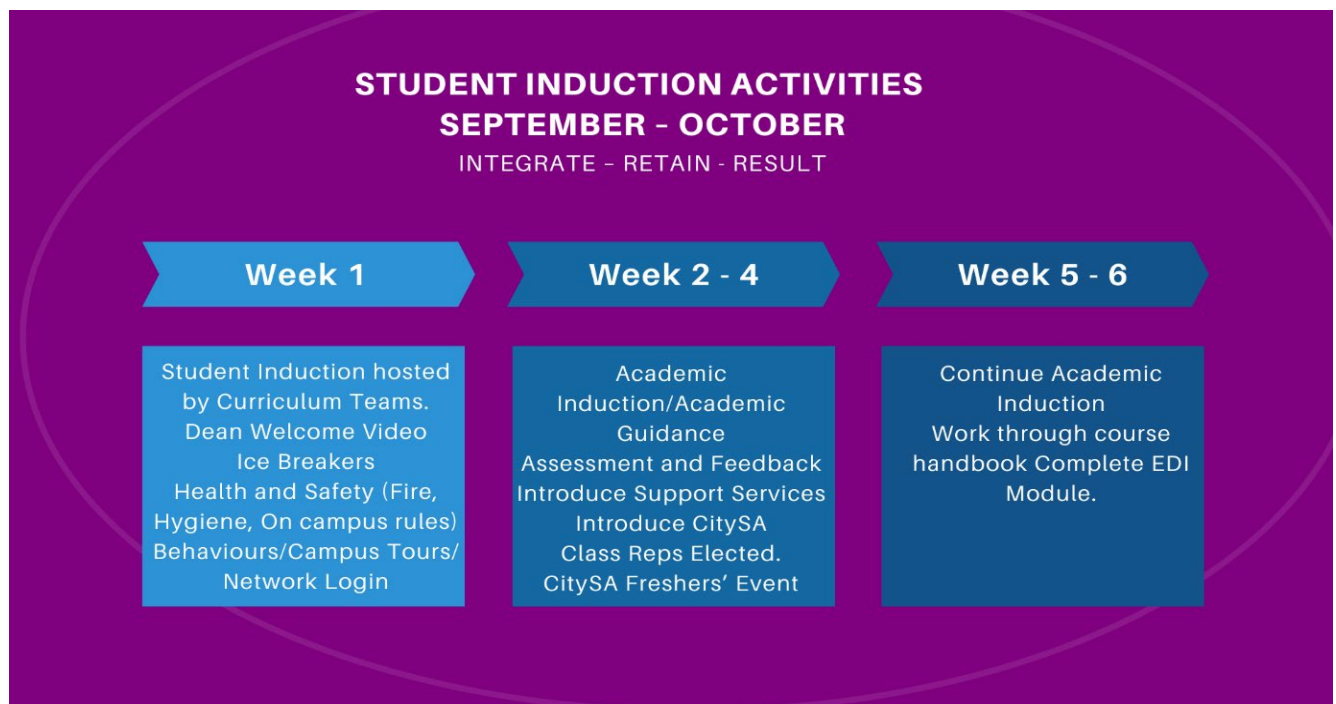| Application Headcount 2016/17	Application Headcount 2017/18	Application Headcount 2018/19	Application Headcount 2019/20	Application Headcount 2020/21
22,742	23084	20,281	19,905	19,230

COVID Challenge
Realising that our usual 'keeping warm' and induction events could not take place on campus we moved our Get Ready for College activities online. See Figure 1 – Pre Entry and Ongoing Student Induction 2020/21.

COVID Insight
Despite reports in 2020 that only 1 in 5 students with offers were likely to take up their University/College place in the Autumn of 2020, conversion rates from application to enrolment at City were higher than in previous years.

Figure 1 - Pre Entry and On-Going Student Induction

GET READY FOR COLLEGE ACTIVITIES
May - August
PIVOT – PREPARE - PLAN

GET ORGANISED	GET CONNECTED	GET STUDYING	GET MOTIVATED	GET INVOLVED
Funding E-zine. Online Funding Workshops. Learning Support PLSP Appointments. Referral for priority groups. Accommodation Guide. Meet the Support Services Webinar. Medical Care. Online Parents Meetings.	Guide to IT. Learning Support Online Intro to Assistive Technology Laptop Loan Scheme Digital Skills Module	Right place right time to study. Welcome from the teaching teams. Campus video tours. What is expected from you. Timetables Introduction to the library. Study skills. Virtual Open Day.	Congratulations Postcard Well Being at City Sports at City Get to know Glasgow City Cycling Scheme Success Stories at City Virtual Scavenger Hunt Principals Welcome Video	Introduction to City SA Presidential Team Profiles. Presidential Podcast Introduction to CitySA website. Introduction to Class Representation Celebrating Success CitySA Virtual Scavenger Hunt

STUDENT INDUCTION ACTIVITIES
SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER
INTEGRATE – RETAIN - RESULT

Week 1	Week 2 - 4	Week 5 - 6
Student Induction hosted by Curriculum Teams. Dean Welcome Video Ice Breakers Health and Safety (Fire, Hygiene, On campus rules) Behaviours/Campus Tours/ Network Login	Academic Induction/Academic Guidance Assessment and Feedback Introduce Support Services Introduce CitySA Class Reps Elected. CitySA Freshers' Event	Continue Academic Induction Work through course handbook Complete EDI Module.

Student Support Funding

Student Funding is a key element in widening access and providing opportunity for all, and never more so than in AY2020/21 with many students (and their parents) facing additional financial hardship through job losses and other challenging personal circumstances.

Very early in the first lockdown the Funding Team undertook a review of their processes and systems to ensure that students were supported in the new online environment identifying and removing potential barriers. For example the usual attendance checks were suspended, being mindful that students (similar to staff) had many distractions at home and/or may have contracted COVID-19, be isolating, recovering, or caring for family members.

Table 2 shows that currently our projected spend for AY2020/21 is £12.4 which is a £2.1m increase on actual spend from the previous year.

Additional monies have been received from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) to cover this added spend.

Table 2 - Actual (2019/20) and Projected (2020/21) Expenditure

As a result of the closure of nurseries and after school services during restrictions, childcare funds were underspent while expenditure on hardship funds increased to meet the specific new and additional needs of students. For example, payments were made to students to ensure they had data for phones or to install broadband to help them to stay connected with the college.

Throughout all of this the Student Funding Team have maintained very high standards of customer service and in the last Student Engagement and Satisfaction Survey (May 2020) attained the highest increase in satisfaction across the survey in relation to the availability of funding information prior to application. This question had a satisfaction rate of 84%, an increase of 8pp from AY 2018/19.
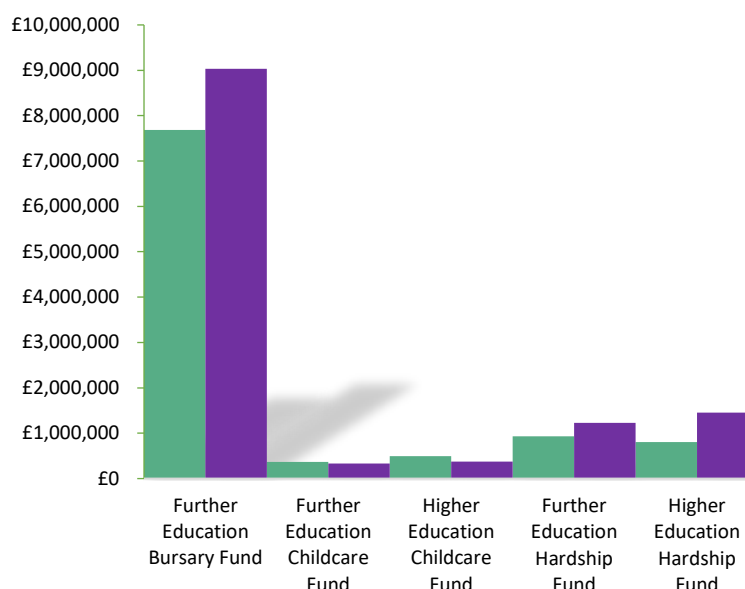
The Team were also over the moon when Paul Norwood our Student Funding Officer won Support Staff Member of the Year as voted by students in June 2020.

COVID Challenge

It was a challenge to continually try to think ahead about what financial support students might need. The Team have distributed an additional £2m to students this year so far, an increase of 20% on last year's expenditure.

COVID Insight

Student financial needs changed during lockdown. As people were fully at home and had lost jobs or parents were furloughed, help was required for rent, debt payments, utilities and data or broadband costs.

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Student Support and Well-Being

Student mental health and well-being continues to be a significant issue for educational institutions globally and at City COVID-19 brought into sharp focus the need to step up monitoring and evaluation of service delivery and usage, working closely with CitySA to ensure that the needs of our students are met.

Over the last year SMT have received quarterly reports on student mental health and well-being, and at an operational level reports on service usage are analysed fortnightly to ensure adequate support is in place.

At 31st March 2021, 421 students were referred for counselling which is a decrease of 85 referrals compared to the same point last year.

Table 3 – Counselling Referrals

Table 3 compares the number of counselling referrals over the last two years and shows a slow start in the first few months of this year rising in November 2020 to similar levels with 2019, but then
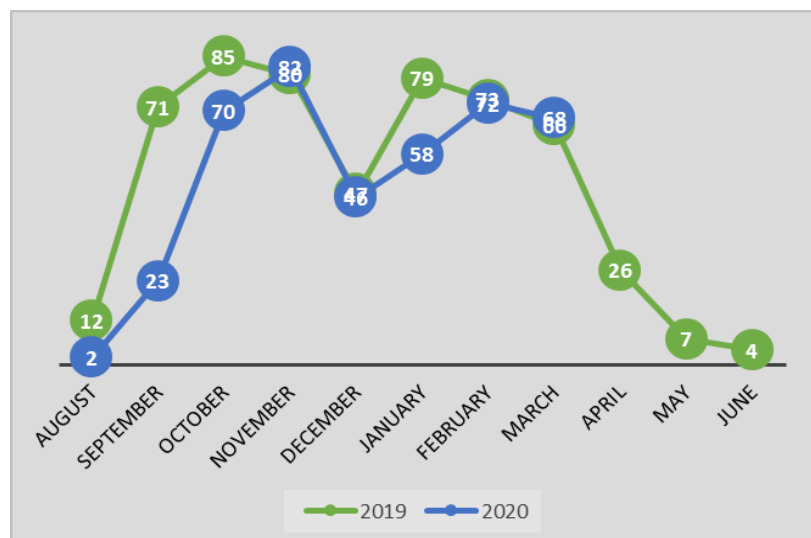
dipping once again in January 2021 after the second lockdown announcement.

While the slower start resulted from the two week delay in the start of term for AY2020/21, it is more difficult to understand the drop in activity in January 2021, which is traditionally a difficult month for students in relation to their mental health and well-being.

A similar decline in referrals was experienced immediately after the first lockdown in March 2020 with the conclusion that students either did not wish to engage in telephone or online counselling or that student anxieties around college were supplanted by their concerns relating to COVID-19. Further work will be undertaken to better understand these results.

In AY 2020/21, our mental health services have also diversified to include class based Stress Management and Coping in COVID workshops. At 31 March 2021, 71 workshops have been delivered with 1,453 students engaging. These workshops have been highly praised by teaching staff as offering students a space to discuss mental health and well-being as a group, share experiences and develop peer support facilitated by a professional student counsellor.

A further addition to service provision this year is an Anxiety Therapy Group, introduced in October 2020, and now running for four weeks twice per Block. Students are referred to this group following a wellbeing assessment. Evaluations from this new service have also been overwhelmingly positive, and the colleges mental health and well-being service is considered to be one of the most diversified and holistic services in the sector.

We have also procured additional resource from two new partner organisations.

The Talking Rooms for cognitive behavioural therapy and psychotherapy and CrossReach to offer an appropriate service to students in need of longer-term counselling.

COVID Insights

There was an expectation that the mental health and well-being services would see a much higher number of students referred for counselling following the easing of lockdown restrictions in July 2020; however, there was no surge of students looking for therapy.

In reality, referrals were slow in the first 8-weeks of term and only rose to normal levels in November.

Referrals by staff are also lower than they have been in recent years possibly resulting from the change in the teaching dynamic when teaching in an online environment. For example, people are less open when talking online and it is more difficult to pick up on body language or changes in behaviour which may have been more evident in a face-to-face class setting.

Careers Service

The Careers Advisors have also been busy this year and are currently contacting students who have stopped engaging with learning and teaching and/or withdrawn from their course. It is important that every students get an opportunity to complete or re-engage with their education.

This year in response to COVID and blended learning, the Careers Advisors have created an online service for class groups and individual students with a new Careers Google site for student self-service and a Wakelet page to access careers resources.

COVID Challenge

Students were asked to advise the college if they had COVID or were self-isolating because of COVID.

Two hundred and fifty two students got in touch and were supported in a number of ways. First we made sure there would be no detriment to student funding while absent. We then set up regular welfare checks to ensure that students had medical support if required, food where isolating, activities and Wi-Fi to keep them motivated, support with mental health and well-being and finally helped to re-engage with studies.

Welfare checks were also put in place for vulnerable students in student accommodation, care experienced students, young carers and for students with mental health and personal issues.

Student Support and Well-Being Highlights

- Awarded the Carers Trust Going Further for Student Carers award for our work in supporting student carers. (October 2020)
- Virtual Uni Expo delivered online from 5th to 9th October attended by twelve Universities across Scotland. (October 2020).
- Engaged with the 16 Days of Action (25 Nov-5 Dec) - Erase the Grey campaign to raise awareness of gender based violence (GBV). GBV and domestic abuse have increased during lockdown and these online campaigns and activities were a visible reminder to students of the support available. (November 2020).
- Retention communications plan. Campaigns and communications focused on supporting retention via messages on money, debt, course materials, access to onsite learning spaces, accommodation issues, isolation and loneliness, homesickness, health and well-being, physical activities, GBV, homelessness and personal support.(Nov - March 2021).
- Launched first two videos of 'Coping with COVID' psychoeducation videos on Facebook and YouTube talking about social isolation, burnout and studying at home. New videos were uploaded every fortnight. (November 2020).

- Launched 'staying well at Christmas' mental health and well-being campaign directing students to 24/7 help when the college was closed over the festive period. (December 2020).
- Opened applications for ESOL Wi-Fi/dongles- procured SIM cards from Vodafone with unlimited data. Cost of £20,000. (December 2020).
- UCAS extended their deadline to 29th January. There was an anticipation that fewer students would make applications to university following the second lockdown; however, the number of applications to UCAS was 1,840 compared with 1,681 in the previous year. (October – January)
- Supported Careers Week online with employability workshops. (March 2020).
- Supported Apprenticeship Week 1-5 March. (March 2020).
- Launched new projects with Action for Children and Glasgow City Council. Two secondments from these organisations will join college staff in supporting City care experienced students and new applicants in a bid to improve access, retention and success (March 2020).

Case study on Fiona – Care Experienced Student AY2020/21

Fiona is a 20 year old care experienced student who has been with the college since 2018 progressing from an NQ to her current HND Year 1.

Fiona lives in a residential care unit and it is challenging for her to be able to study and learn remotely due her environment which can be volatile with many distractions and as a result she also has little support from staff at the Unit who are often engaged in dealing with urgent and fractious situations.
In addition, Fiona also has confidence issues and anxiety around her ability to complete coursework due to negative experiences in high school where she was not a regular attender and missed a good deal of school work leading to failed exams.

At college Fiona approached the support services for help. As a care experienced young person she is deemed to have additional support needs. After a holistic review of her needs Fiona now receives;
- Learning Support for support with dyslexic type traits;
- Careers Advisor for support on progression;
- Coaching and support from our care experienced advisor; and
- Personal support both in college and in the community from our seconded Action for Children Worker.

Fiona has greatly benefited from having people in the college she can trust and approach for help, her confidence has improved and in her own words she told us how she felt now;-

> "I'll try not to think the way I used to think like 'I can never do this, I could never do that' as it's so hard to break that but I'm starting to change it. It gives me less anxiety for going back, not as if oh no there will be exams, as at the end of the day if I want it, it will happen and I can only do my best"
>
> At the point of asking permission to share her story, Fiona told us she was very proud of her achievements having recently received a top student award in her curriculum area.

Learning Support

Our Learning Support Team provide essential study and skills development support to students with a disability or learning support need. At the end April 2021, there were 1,697 completed Personal Learning Support Plans (PLSPs); an increase of 6% on last year's figure at the same period.
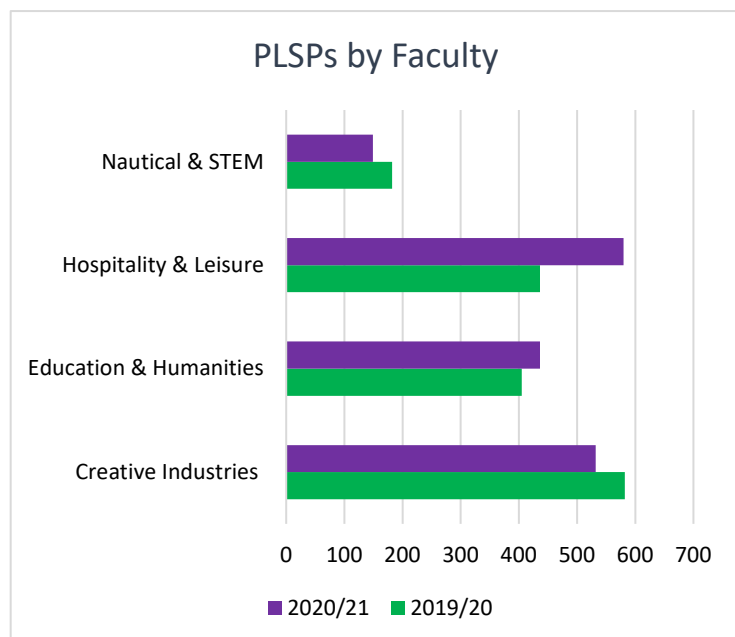
PLSP by Faculty

Table 4 compares PLSPs by Faculty over the last 2 years and shows a 33%

Table 4 – PLSPs by Faculty

increase in the number of students requiring a PLSP in the Faculty of Hospitality and Leisure, and an 8% increase in Education and Humanties while both Nautical and STEM and Creative Industries have decreased.

Changes in the distribution of PLSPs across faculties can, in part, be attributed to an increased number of students requiring support during remote learning and teaching, particularly around digital literacy skills.

PLSPs by Faculty

Nautical & STEM
Hospitality & Leisure
Education & Humanities
Creative Industries

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700

■ 2020/21 ■ 2019/20

Disability by Type

Under the Reasonable Adjustments Duty, of the Equality Act 2010, the College must anticipate and prepare for what disabled students might need to remove or minimise barriers to learning.

To do this we record disability by type and Table 5 provides detail by Faculty and shows the percentage change in disability type this year compared to AY 2019/20.

- Faculty of Hospitality and Leisure has the highest number of PLSPS at 580.
- 'Needs led' has the highest number of PLSPs at 569. 'Needs led' refers to those students not registered as having a disability at application/enrolment but their lecturer has referred them for support in year.
- 'Needs Led' has overtaken the 'Specific Learning Difficulty' category in recent years which is a challenge to manage as referrals are an unknown quantity in terms of number and need. This category is most likley to include care experienced students, carers and estranged students.

Table 5: Disability Type by Faculty in AY2020/21

Disability Type	Creative Industries	Education & Humanities	Hospitality Leisure	Nautical & STEM	Disability Type Total	% change compared to 2019/20
A specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD	132	78	156	46	412	+26%
A social/ communication impairment such as Asperger's Syndrome/other autistic spectrum condition	56	32	29	9	126	+24%
A long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy.	12	17	14	6	49	+32%
A mental health condition such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder	43	31	42	12	128	+25%
A physical impairment or mobility issue such as difficulty using arms or using a wheelchair or crutches	4	6	4	0	14	-13%
D/deaf or hearing impairment	5	8	10	3	26	+37%
Blind or a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses	6	5	0	0	11	+83%
A disability impairment or medical condition that is not listed above	16	11	11	6	44	+22%
A specific learning disability such as downs syndrome.	0	1	0	0	1	0%
Multiple Disabilities	114	71	110	24	317	-21%
Needs Led	144	176	204	45	569	-23%
Faculty and College Total	**532**	**436**	**580**	**149**	**1,697**	**+6%**

Table 5 also shows that in 2020/21 the 'Needs Led' category has reduced by 23% compared to 2019/20. It is not clear if this is because fewer students need support in a blended environment or whether, in remote working, it is more challenging for staff and students to identify support needs. (This was also mentioned as a potential reason for the dip in number of referrals under mental health).

Further research will be undertaken to better understand this finding.

Those declaring multiple disabilities and mobility issues are other categories which have reduced and it may be that students in these categories are more vulnerable and have chosen not to enrol in college in 2020/21 as a result of COVID-19.

All other categories have increased with a 26% increase in 'A Specific Learning Difficulty'. Students in this category tend to cluster in Hospitality and Leisure and Creative Industries, which confirms research that suggests people with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, can be drawn to more visual arts and practical subjects as a result of their visual – spatial processing ability.

Case Study on Max and Carly – Two Deaf British Sign Languauge User Students

Max, is undertaking an HNC in Social Sciences which has been taught entirely remotely through a combination of Zoom classes and supporting resources.

An Educational Support Worker (ESW) has been provided to produce electronic transcriptions of pre-recorded video content, together with taking notes during in-class support. In addition, Max has benefitted from an Sign Language Interpreter (SLI) being present to provide live interpretation support during remote classes.

English is Max's second language but he does not experience issues with reading English. However, like many deaf people, he does not have the same (aural) access to spoken language as hearing people, and this has had an impact on vocabulary. Similarly, Max is able to produce written work in English, having already achieved a B pass for Higher English. However, he can take longer to compose/structure written work compared to hearing students. To support assessment needs, Max receives remote study-skills support from a Learning Support Lecturer. Following a successful assessment and application, the maximum available costs for ESW, SLI and study-skills support is being claimed through Disabled Support Allowance (DSA) – approximately £20,000 per annum.

In contrast, Carly began an HND in Professional Cookery. As this course includes practical elements, some units are being taught on campus. Similar to Max, Carly also benefits from having an SLI to provide live interpretation support during classes. However, in addition to some classes being delivered remotely, Carly has received socially distanced on-campus SLI support.

Depending on course activity, the SLI is positioned near Carly or the lecturer, taking advantage of a portable and transparent perspex screen to ensure social distancing.

Being a cookery programme, there are a number of specific supporting terms based on sizes and shapes - many of which are of French origin - such as 'julienne'. As there are no BSL signs for these, such terms require finger spelling.

In addition, some terms are based on colours, such as "brown". Of interest, Carly is from the east coast of Scotland, whilst the designated SLI is from the west coast and each region has distinct signs for specific definitions of words, including "brown". As such, to meet Carly's needs, a glossary of terms has been devised and the SLI has adapted to using east coast signs.

As English is also Carly's second language, to provide written work which has a richness of detail that matches her ability to produce information in BSL, extra support and access to a BSL/English interpreter is required. As such, Carly receives additional translation support outwith classes, together with study-skills support to help produce written assignments in English.

Again, following a successful assessment and application to the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS), the maximum available costs for in-class SLI support, language support for coursework and study skills support is being claimed through DSA – approximately £20,000.

Learning Support Highlights

The Learning Support Team are rightly proud of the way in which they were able to pivot their support service - in response to COVID restrictions - to deploy a combination of on campus and/or remote support. Their agility and ingenuity in maintaining support for students was in their words 'a key success'. In particular, the following interventions were all delivered remotely:

- Assistive Technology training.

- Disabled Students' Allowance assessments and applications.

- Equipment Loan on campus and via courier.

- Education Support Worker (ESW) and Sign Language Interpreter (SLI) in-class support; see case study for more details.

- Dyslexia screening and formal education psychologist assessments (with external partners).

- PLSP needs assessments.

- Private transport needs assessment and pick-ups for on-campus practical courses.
- Study skills support.

Student Engagement

The Student Engagement Team support the activities of CitySA and work across the college to involve and engage students in learning and teaching and a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

In AY2020/21 the Team identified those student groups hardest hit by remote learning and most at risk of losing touch with our services. Fortnightly drop in sessions were facilitated to provide an opportunity for students to meet each other, share support and feedback on their learning experiences.

Case Study – Virtual Drop in for International and ESOL Students

Online drop in sessions were developed as a response to the blended learning environment this year, and to ensure student priority groups had a platform to offer feedback and have their needs met during the on-going pandemic.

The drop-ins were offered to international student groups and ESOL intermediate and advanced level groups with 144 international students attending over seven sessions and 62 ESOL students attending over eleven sessions.

Themes varied depending on the student group.

International drop-in sessions discussed learning and teaching; with emerging themes such as careers guidance, 1:1 CV writing support/signposting to academic advisors, meeting alumni for peer support, digital transitions, involvement in SA initiatives, and end of term quizzes/informal social space.

Attendance was supported by the Faculty which has made a difference to numbers and efficiency of student feedback being actioned.

ESOL drop-in sessions were designed to help students meet each other in an informal setting, help with signposting to wider college services, make friends and practice speaking English outside the classroom. Themes included creating a local map for students, conversational sessions with informal topics (food, music, holidays) to give students a chance to practice English, topical quizzes, digital transitions, and emerging themes have included a need for IT support, pandemic

isolation and a desire to work with a wider range of students from different class groups and faculties. A cultural exchange is in development to finish the year.

Findings
All students reported having digital issues which were supported by the Learning and Teaching Academy and IT. International students were interested in having more careers guidance and progression opportunities from their Faculty which has now been put in to place. ESOL students were keen to have conversations within a clear framework to support their language development and to meet new people.

Student Engagement Workshops

The Student Engagement Team offered their annual cycle of Engagement Workshops throughout the year as planned adapting the sessions to accommodate an online delivery.

Topics this year included Representation, Online Team Building, Social Media Awareness and Blended Learning.   A total of 193 workshops were delivered engaging students in discussion across all four Faculties.

COVID Insight

This year the Engagement Team moved all Sports Clubs and Societies online.
Social Media spaces and zoom became the new space for students to meet and engage with one another around shared interests and experiences.

Interestingly, this year has been the most successful year for club engagement. 16 clubs and societies have regular attendance and there are 1,250 members recorded in total.

Class Rep System

This year the Class Rep system has created a fantastic opportunity for class reps to work in partnership with college staff to create local change. This year, 87% of courses have a Class Rep, of these 60% have an Inducted Rep and 19% have a Rep who has accessed further training.

To support Reps online and offer spaces to engage with one another the team set up an online Class Rep Forum which hosts 291 Class Reps members. Additionally, 12 Class Rep Meetings were hosted.

Your Voice Counts

This year the team worked with the Learning and Teaching Academy and IT Staff to gather student feedback on the design of a new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) ensuring that the student voice was represented from the start of this major new development. Focus Groups Sessions and a Digital Transformation Survey were facilitated and feedback was used to shape the scope and tender process for the new VLE.

Student Engagement Highlights

- [Wellbeing Workshops](#) were facilitated online in **April** and a new focus was placed on the team social [media](#) accounts to ensure effective communication with our students

- [Societies](#) moved online in **May**

- **June** delivered the first virtual [Summit](#)

- **July** welcomed the [Presidential Team](#) to their online induction and training experience

- In **August** the team ran the [Staycation Campaign](#) to encourage students to stay local and welcome students to Glasgow

- **September** delivered the launch of the [student mask campaign](#) and our [class reps](#) were elected

- **October** was [Black History Month](#) and the beginnings of [Go Green for a better Future](#)

- **November** launched the first [Step Count Challenge](#) of the year and 10,125,294 steps were taken. In addition the first [Student Parliament](#) session was held

- **December** encouraged the students to turn their cameras on with the [Christmas Jumper Campaign](#) as well as delivering gifts and student designed Christmas cards to [Burlington Care Home](#)

- The [Make Your Own Reusable Mask Campaign](#) kick started the New Year in **January** and the [2021 Staff Awards](#) were launched

- [Fit in February](#) challenged the teams to get out and about and walk the Andes Mountains

- [Climate Cafes](#) were the place to discuss the Climate Crisis in **March** and we celebrated [International Women's Day](#) by interviewing our Vice Principal Claire Carney

- **April** was back on campus with the popular [DR Bike Sessions](#) and the return of our favourite [International Pet Day](#)

- **May** was the launch of ['It's your Shot'](#) Campaign, the exciting information partnership initiative with Professor Jason Leitch as well as our [Random Acts of Kindness](#) initiative and the third Step Count [Challenge](#)

Student Experience Staff Conference

On 17th March, exactly one year on from the first lockdown and college building closure we held our virtual Student Experience Staff Conference 2021. The themes included consultation on the Student Academic Experience Strategy and a specific topic covering 'How Will Home Working Work in the Future'.

On strategy development and feedback - discussion forums and break out rooms were hosted by the Vice Principal Student Academic Experience.

On the future of home working the Principal and Director Student Experience hosted a live poll of student experience staff asking staff to rate a series of statements on hybrid and home working.

To kick off the poll staff were asked to describe how they felt about hybrid working and the results are shown in the word cloud below.

The following statements were than ranked.

1. When asked to rank the greatest benefit of home working, most staff chose the 'no commute to work' option and 'improved work/life balance'. The third most popular option was 'saves money/time'.

2. When asked to think about personal productivity while working from home, most staff agreed they were 'more productive at home' with the remaining staff split between 'equally productive at home' and 'less productive at home'.

3. When asked to think about how connected staff felt with colleagues whilst working from home, most staff agreed they felt less connected with colleagues with a smaller number feeling equally and a few saying more connected.

4. When asked 'do you feel connected to our students/customers while working from home?' Fifty eight percent of staff said yes. With the remaining responding in equal numbers 'no' or 'not sure'.
5. Staff were asked if we moved to a hybrid working model, how many days working on campus would optimise your productivity and meet the requirements of your students/customers. Most staff (50%) thought 1 -2 days working on campus was sufficient, 40% thought 3-4 days with 6 % saying 5 days and the remainder were unsure.

Finally staff were asked if we move to a hybrid working model how might this benefit students and the results are shown in the word cloud below.

Conclusions

We should note that the poll was taken on 17th March 2021 during a lockdown period which could skew results.

Generally staff feel positive about the prospect of hybrid working. They feel it is a balanced approach which offers flexibility. However, we need to be mindful that a small number of staff have mixed feelings about hybrid working and this needs to be explored more fully. On working from home staff said that the greatest benefit was

having no commute and having a better work/life balance. Worth noting was the third highest option i.e. saving money on travel costs, and this needs to be factored in when planning for time on/off campus i.e. one week on/off would save money more than a part week on/off. For some lower paid staff this is a significant saving.

Some staff would also prefer flexible start and end times combined with days on/off campus.

Staff said they felt more productive working from home and while that may be true for some staff line managers felt there was increased workload in having to check in with individuals on a more regular basis. The college may need to consider investment in a professional workflow system which offers a more efficient way to monitor productivity.

Most staff said they felt less connected with colleagues whilst working from home but 58% said they continued to feel connected with their students/customers while working from home. This is interesting, and we should be mindful that students were also at home at this time and mostly available. However, once restrictions are lifted it is not clear whether students will continue to engage with professional services online or will students want face to face support and/or see this as more valuable.

Staff were asked how many days they thought they needed to work on campus to optimise productivity and meet student needs and the results were evenly split with fifty percent opting for 1-2 days and the remainder 3 or more days. These results will be skewed towards 1-2 days due to responses from part time staff who may only work on campus 1-3 days.

Finally the greatest benefit that staff saw for students in relation to staff hybrid working was flexibility and accessibility.