

Board of Management

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 15 June 2022
Paper No.	BoM4-H
Agenda Item	4.2.2
Subject of Paper	Learning and Teaching Scenario
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Dr Claire Carney
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Action	For Discussion

1. Recommendations

1.1 The Board is asked to consider and discuss the scenarios presented for Learning and Teaching for academic year 22/23.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this paper is to facilitate discussion on the potential Learning and Teaching scenarios for the academic year 22/23.

3. Consultation

3.1 The contents of this paper have been discussed with Deans of Faculty and Student Experience Directorate.

4. Key Insights

4.1 The COVID-19 pandemic brought a fundamental shift to the delivery of college programmes over the course of the last 2 years, pivoting from fully on-campus teaching to fully on-line and then varying blends of online and on campus. COVID-19 shocked and challenged every aspect of our Learning and Teaching (L&T) and student support delivery systems across the whole College. The College was 'forced' into a fully online model through a series of lockdowns and, in between, pivoted to a blended model of delivery. The blend and approach were dictated by COVID-19 restrictions with physical distancing, in particular, limiting student numbers and our ability to teach on campus. In effect the driver and parameters set for our blended approach was physical practicalities rather than L&T best practice.

4.2 As our COVID-19 response developed, the College committed through the Student Academic Experience Strategy to a future approach to L&T where 'City Learning and Teaching will be Active, Blended and Connected'. In this pedagogically-driven approach, Blended learning is 'a combination of face-to-face learning with separate periods of typically asynchronous online activity' (College Development Network, 2021). It means that courses are structured for learners with a mix of online and on-campus activities. Blended learning has the advantage of increased flexibility and convenience as well as supporting effective learning. A blend of in-person and online teaching, with a mixture of asynchronous and synchronous activities, gives students opportunities to work flexibly in their own time where appropriate, but also to collaborate, socialize and undertake practical work.

4.3 The advantage of the Blended Learning model coupled with the investments made in the development of quality L&T resources through the Blended Learning Fund, the new Virtual Learning Environment (Canvas) throughout the last two and a half years has positioned the college in a very favorable position to respond to further 'lockdown' scenarios. It has further advantages for increasing international delivery and ensuring the delivery model is fitting of a College fit for the 21st Century.

4.4 The College has demonstrated its ability to move teaching fully online and given the investment made we are confident that if there is a further lockdown at any point in the next Academic year we are in an excellent position to deliver. Guidance for academic year 22/23 has been approved and shared across college (see Appendix 1). It is imperative however, that we continue to invest in development of materials to ensure we continue to enhance our provision and learning materials.

4.5 A scenarios paper was presented to PNC end of Jan 2022 (mid Omicron variant) and the Table 1 summarised potential assumptions. It was reported to Committee that we had confidence, in meeting the realistic 'assumption' as outlined below, however, fortuitously covid restrictions were reduced and in turn we met the 'optimistic' assumption, which was a welcome relief to all staff and students.

Table 1. L&T assumptions Jan 2022

Optimistic Assumptions	Realistic Assumptions	Pessimistic Assumptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campuses open • no physical distancing • Full classes with blended delivery • Increased student Satisfaction • Holistic Assessment • Local covid outbreaks • Increased Staff and student absences • Ongoing impact on student and staff wellbeing • Retain 20/21 Student Satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campuses open • 1m physical distancing • limited student numbers on site • Increased number of withdrawals • Some extending, deferring and repeat students • Local covid outbreaks • Increased Staff and student absences • Ongoing impact on student and staff wellbeing • Retain 20/21 Student Satisfaction • Changing Timetables • Holistic Assessment but pressures on practical assessment – dependant on flexibility of regulatory body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Lockdown • Closure of College Campuses. • No onsite delivery • High number of withdrawals • High number of extending deferring and repeat students • Ongoing and increased impact on student and staff wellbeing • Reduced Student Satisfaction • Changing Timetables • Holistic Assessment but pressures on practical assessment- – dependant on flexibility of regulatory body

4.6 Now the immediacy and resulting shockwaves of Covid have reduced, it is clear we need to consider and mitigate consequences of the financial, social, educational impacts of covid.

4.7 Challenges: Below is a summary list of the issues/challenges we will potentially face over the next academic year which will impact on L&T and the student experience. The list is not exhaustive nor inclusive to L&T and the student experience and many are dependent and interdependent on other areas within and outwith the College.

- Further more virulent virus breakout resulting in closure of college and move to full online delivery
- Continued Local covid outbreaks resulting in continued staff and student absence
- Reduced Mental Health and resilience of students impacting on decreased attainment and completion rates.
- Disrupted learning from the previous 3 years for new and continuing students demanding more academic and social/wellbeing support for students
- Continued demands of staff in adapting L&T methods
- Reduced Mental Health and resilience of staff resulting in increasing staff absence and staff burnout
- Removal of Mental Health Funding to support students and staff
- Decreased number of students applying to College favouring University or direct employment resulting in financial impact and reduced staffing.
- Reduced funding for support of digital transformation for L&T (including learning spaces and hardware (laptops)
- Reduced Funding to develop quality learning and teaching material

Mitigations: In recognition of these challenges, the college has in place a series of mitigations many of which in 'leading from the future' have been identified through the Student Academic Experience Strategy. There are also some areas which require continued 'external' lobbying and it is recognised that positive outcomes from lobbying are

increasingly challenging given demands on Government finances from many different areas.

- Implementation of new Virtual Learning Environment (Canvas) for students and staff which is 'stable', accessible, inclusive, reliable and adaptable;
- Development of Resilience Toolkit for staff and students to support college wide positive wellbeing;
- Enhanced induction and transition to ensure positive affiliation with College and increase completion rates;
- Review of 'Guidance' classes and subsequent development of comprehensive academic and pastoral support in line with changed student experience;
- Learning and Teaching Academy programme of activities including workshops, events and seminars to support of LT academic and digital staff skills;
- Progressively development of formal learning spaces on campuses as collaborative, technology-rich and learner-focused spaces to enable our students towards independent personalised learning and encourage peer to peer learning;
- 'Lobbying' of SG and SFC for continued Mental Health funding in recognition of 'long shadow' of covid;
- Portfolio Review – each Faculty will develop a full review (22/23) to ensure delivery of a relevant work-related portfolio meeting employer and sectoral demands. The review will: Create a suite of interdisciplinary/cross faculty courses; Develop a suite of accredited Short courses/microcredentials; Develop clear pathways with several entry/exit points to careers/further study; Provide relevant work placement, work related, work readiness and entrepreneurial/ enterprising opportunities across all courses;
- Enhanced and targeted Recruitment and marketing for low recruiting courses. New Schedule of open days and delivery of 22/23 prospectus prior to Christmas 2022.

5. Impact and Implications

- Student Recruitment: A number of external factors continue to influence the downturn in full time applications including the impact of widening access policies implemented by universities, increased percentage of students receiving higher grades at Higher, and increased numbers of school pupils staying on to S5 and S6. It has to be acknowledged that all Colleges are currently reporting the same issues.
- Failing to recruit enough students or enough students with the potential to succeed, could impact on enrolment targets, retention, achievement of PIs and therefore financial income.
- The development of the Blended Learning model brings with it the flexibility to allow immediate pivot to fully online learning in the event of a future lock-down or some other scenario that will limit access to the college. There are a number of implications the majority are being addressed and include:
 - *Learning spaces*: Active blended learning will necessitate a change in how we configure and use learning spaces, be these digital or physical. Physical learning space should support digitally enabled collaboration and community building. A blended pedagogy, where acquisition activity is mostly done online, enables face-to-face time to be used for group working, practical tasks and active participation. This might mean the redesign of classroom and social learning spaces to support collaboration and connectivity. A Learning Spaces

group (sub group of the Digital Transformation Group) has been established to develop a model of active learning spaces. A separate and important issue is understanding time tabling and the impact on room utilisation. An assessment of utilisation will be conducted for Block 3 TT and plans for Block 1 22/23 to gain an understanding of BL room utilisation.

- *Learning design:* active blended learning foregrounds a process of deliberate learning design that might have been implicit or unacknowledged in 'traditional' face-to-face delivery. With curriculum teams having to consider how to blend activities, delivery methods (synchronous or asynchronous, online or face to face) and technologies, the LTA will support learning design and provide staff development in this area.
- *Digital skills:* Over the past two years staff and students have had to develop a range of digital skills to support online learning and teaching. A clear outcome of the last 2 years is the recognition that a significant majority of our students did not have the necessary educationally relevant digital skills to progress or excel in their studies. The Get Ready for College sites and induction activities will be progressed to support and develop these skills. In parallel, as our model evolves support for continued staff digital skills development will be important.
- *Equality Impact:* An Equality Impact Assessment for the Blended Learning model has been developed and this will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure address issues that have been identified to comply with the Equality Act.
- *Financial implications:* Clearly the continued development of BL resources, adaptation of learning spaces and enhanced digital provision will continue to draw significant financial spend and in the current financial climate this will become increasingly challenging.

Blended learning at City of Glasgow College

The College's **Student Academic Experience Strategy** commits us to a learning and teaching approach that is active, blended and connected. Taking a blended learning approach allows us to retain the positive aspects of our learning and teaching approach in response to COVID-19 alongside the many benefits of face-to-face learning. Over the past two years educators across the College have developed a wealth of knowledge, experience and resources and it is important that we build on and incorporate what has worked well in order to continue to support and develop quality learning and teaching.

What is blended learning?

Blended learning is 'a combination of face-to-face learning with separate periods of typically asynchronous online activity' (College Development Network, 2021). It means that courses are structured for learners with a mix of online and on-campus activities.

City's principles for blended learning

The College's model for blended learning is based on the following three key principles:

- **Pedagogically driven:** Delivery of the curriculum will be drawn from best learning and teaching practices for the particular discipline/subject area and student group. Courses will be designed and developed to support active and collaborative learning no matter where students are located.
- **Inclusive and accessible:** The College will offer a supportive and inclusive curriculum where different backgrounds and cultures in staff and students are cherished and celebrated. Our students will have equal access to learning, information and services, regardless of physical or developmental abilities or impairments.
- **Student centred:** The blended learning model positions our students at the centre, supported by teaching and educational support staff.

Designing blended learning

The College is not proposing a single model of what proportion of time will be spent on campus or online. Instead, using the above principles, **course teams should feel empowered to work together to decide the appropriate blend of learning activities** (face to face on campus/online/synchronous/asynchronous) for their curricular area and student groups. Students should expect a mix of online and on-campus learning, but the blend will depend on level, experience and the subject area. The blend might change as students move through the academic year and become more independent and confident. For planning purposes, it is imperative that the student experience takes priority over staff hybrid working.

In designing blended learning course teams should focus on the following key questions:

- What blend of online and on-campus activity is best for our students at the level at which they are studying?
- What is best for the curriculum area?
- What are the intended learning outcomes?
- What blend of learning activities will meet these outcomes?
- How does this blend support active and collaborative learning?
- What resources do we need in the learning spaces (digital or physical) to support these activities?
- How can we take a holistic and constructively aligned approach to assessing student learning?

Support from the Learning and Teaching Academy

Designing blended learning

Active blended learning highlights a process of deliberate learning design that might not have been obvious in 'traditional' face-to-face delivery. With curriculum teams having to consider how to blend activities, delivery methods (synchronous or asynchronous, online or face to face) and technologies, the LTA is available to provide guidance in learning design. Through online resources and workshops, the LTA will support staff in using the **ABC learning design model**, which identifies six learning activity types and considers how best to facilitate and sequence these to meet the course learning outcomes.

Canvas and learning technology

Canvas is the hub of all blended learning activity and the use of Canvas is mandatory for staff and students. Canvas is integrated with lots of other tools – such as O365, Teams, a video library, Padlet and library resources – to support active and connected learning. The LTA has developed an open online Canvas course in Supporting Blended Learning with Canvas and has guides to using **the learning technology software** supported by the College.

Assessment

An active and collaborative approach to learning, alongside the use of digital tools, implies a change in the way that we design and support assessment. Over the past two years many have found that a blend of digitally enabled formative and summative assessment, that involves group working, project working or problem-based approaches, has allowed for a more holistic view of assessment design. In addition, the options available in Canvas and other tools allow us to support quality feedback that improves student learning. The LTA provides **resources and workshops** in designing constructively aligned assessment for learning as well as how to set up and manage assignments in Canvas.