

## Board of Management

### Performance and Nomination Committee

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Monday 23 January 2023</b>
<b>Paper No.</b>	<b>PNC3-G</b>
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>4.5.2</b>
<b>Subject of Paper</b>	<b>Learning and Teaching Scenario</b>
<b>FOISA Status</b>	<b>Disclosable</b>
<b>Primary Contact</b>	<b>Dr Claire Carney</b>
<b>Date of production</b>	<b>January 2023</b>
<b>Action</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>

#### **1. Recommendations**

1.1 The Performance and Nomination Committee is asked to consider and discuss the updated scenarios presented for Learning and Teaching for the remainder of 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 remainder of Academic Year 2022-23 (AY22-23). The paper is inherently linked with other scenarios particularly the Operations scenario and detail about potential strike action and redundancies and impact on delivery.

#### **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 2.5 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.
- 4.3 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 using online and in person activities. These skills and attributes are fundamental for our students in a changing world of work and it is imperative that by embracing Blended learning not only are we future proofing delivery but we are preparing students for their future world of work where hybrid is increasingly the norm.
- 4.4 Blended learning has the advantage of increased flexibility and convenience as well as supporting effective learning. Importantly and what is becoming increasingly clearer, is that it builds **resilience into the system**, allowing the delivery of L&T to continue even when faced with rail strikes, ongoing flu and covid break-outs and cost of living crisis impacting on students limited travel budgets.
- 4.5 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 and potential disruptions to service. It has further advantages for increasing international delivery and ensuring the delivery model is fitting of a College fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- 4.6 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 the development and enhancement of quality online learning materials.
- 4.7 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**

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

**4.8** 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.

**4.9 Challenges:** Below is an updated summary list of the issues/challenges we will potentially face over the next academic year and beyond 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 and 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;
- Reduced Mental Health and resilience of staff resulting in increasing staff absence and staff burnout;
- Continued demands of staff in adapting L&T methods ;
- Reduced Funding to develop quality learning and teaching materials and new courses;
- Reduced funding for support of digital transformation for L&T (including learning spaces and hardware);
- Decreased number of students applying to College favouring University or direct employment resulting in financial impact and reduced staffing;

- Restructuring of Faculties and loss of lecturing posts due to Voluntary Severance and compulsory redundancy;
- Potential strike action in response to staffing reductions in the College disrupting learning and teaching and student progression.

**4.10 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.

- 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. It is anticipated that the review will lead to a reduction or removal of delivery in some areas as a result of continued low performance. The reduction will be linked with agreed VS and potential CR.
- Structure of Academic Year: SMT recently agreed move to 2 semester and an accompanying reduction in global course hours at FE and HE levels for academic year 23/24. The decision will impact on curricular design and delivery and will focus on Active, Blended and Connected delivery model. The associated savings for teaching delivery is on the region of £3m. Proposals have been shared with LNC and will be reviewed at LNC meeting on 26 January.
- Strike action: The College maintains delivery as far as possible, especially for classes that can be taught online; but a backlog of practical classes will be addressed once a settlement is reached.
- Recruitment: 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
- 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

## 5. Impact and Implications

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2** 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.
- 5.3** The development of the Blended Learning model and the restructuring of the academic year 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. As noted above it also builds resilience into the system and prepares our students for a future world of work where hybrid will become the norm.

There are a number of implications the majority are being addressed and include:

- *Curriculum Design:* Staff development: In early 2023 the LTA will undertake work on supporting curriculum teams through the process of curriculum design. This will comprise a combination of central provision and bespoke sessions for course teams. The particular focus will be on supporting teams to undertake the ABC Learning Design process that allows them to consider the best combination of content, activity and assessment to meet the course learning outcomes. In addition, support will consider how best to facilitate active, blended and connected learning using Canvas as a hub.
- *Student Outcomes:* We will carefully monitor impact on student experience particularly around the reduction in allocation of hours, however mitigations around catch-up classes will be incorporated to ensure student progress.
- *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;
- *Systems:* Any proposed changes to the structure of the academic year and delivery methods will impact across most systems and processes of the College. As such it is imperative that Student Records, Timetabling, Performance, IT are all informed and engaged as early as possible in the planning cycle. It is recognised that certain programmes of study (primarily Nautical) do not fit within the standard academic year with multiple "spanning" events that cross Academic Years, occur within holiday breaks and require multiple enrolments. These will need to be addressed as a discreet project within the overarching principles of this paper.
- *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;

- *Equality Impact:* An Equality Impact Assessment for the Blended Learning model and the structure of the academic year 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**. We will not simply return to our traditional methods of teaching – our practice has moved on, and our students' needs and expectations are no longer met by just these models of delivery. Taking a blended learning approach allows us to retain the positive aspects of our learning and teaching approach in response to COVID alongside the many benefits of face-to-face learning. It also allows us to develop resilience in our approaches to meet potential challenges in a disruptive world. 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

Taking an active blended learning approach means that we have to make a more deliberate approach to learning design. Curriculum teams having to consider how to blend activities, delivery methods (synchronous or asynchronous, online or face to face), technologies and assessment.

When thinking about your teaching, assessment, and strategies for student engagement you need to give careful thought to how all aspects of your teaching work together to support learning so that they are effective in supporting student learning. 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?

## What does this mean in practice?

1. There is an expectation that the **majority of courses will be blended**, combining elements of on campus and online study and including the mix of synchronous and asynchronous activity.
2. The College is not proposing a single model or a specific proportion of time that will be spent on campus or online. Instead, using the above principles and prompts, 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.
3. 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
4. Regardless of delivery mode (in-person, online) there should be an emphasis on active and collaborative learning to enhance students' knowledge and understanding.
5. It is essential that lessons learned and good practice developed during COVID are retained and built upon, to enhance the quality of our student experience.
6. On-campus/in-person learning and teaching should be designed to be high value, high impact and not replicate activities which can be easily achieved online.
7. Learning and teaching activities which are primarily content focussed should normally be online, be recorded where possible and made available to students asynchronously.
8. All recordings of learning and teaching activities, e.g., demonstrations, lectures, etc., must comply with accessibility legislation. Please refer to the College's Learning Capture Policy.
9. From academic year 2022-23, Canvas will be at the heart of the student learning experience, acting as a learning hub for staff and students, not simply a space to store files or for students to upload assignments.

## 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.