Implementation of core learning and teaching policies in 2020-21

Context
1. In 2020-21 the University’s primary strategic objective for education continues to be to give our students an effective educational experience that gives them the opportunities to achieve their potential. To support this, we need to continue to implement core learning and teaching policies and processes. This document gives an overview of key requirements in this area, for 2020-21 –in the knowledge that the Covid-19 situation can change quickly and if it does some elements of what is below may need to change in light of such developments.

Absence Request Forms (ARF)
2. The Student Notification of Absence Form has been replaced by the ARF. In 2020-21 the ARF will be used both to allow students indicate that they will be studying entirely remotely; and to allow students (both those not studying remotely and those studying remotely) to request approval of an absence from their studies.

Annual Monitoring and Review (AMR)
3. AMR will be running in 2020-21 (i.e. reviews of what happened in 2019-20). AMR will follow the normal policy and process, with the addition of one question asking boards of studies to identify any key learning points arising from the impact of the Covid-19 situation. AMR report forms will be available to academic units in mid-September 2020, as will the quantitative data to support AMR (via a new Power BI dashboard). Noting the pressures on academic units in 2020-21 we are extending the deadline for submission to faculties of undergraduate AMR reports. The deadline for submission of undergraduate AMR reports will be Friday 29 Jan. 2021 and taught postgraduate AMR reports will be Friday 12 Feb. 2021.

Assessment and Feedback Policy
4. The University’s Assessment and Feedback Policy remains in full effect for 2020-21, and academic units are expected to implement this consistently and in full – including new requirements for online submission and marking. To support the use and implementation of this policy, an Assessment Policy Essentials summary has been produced. An Examinations and Assessment Schedule will also be published in due course by Student Progress.

5. Given the pressures on colleagues and students in 2020-21, institutional implementation of the separate Assessment Framework (which is different to the Policy linked to above) may be slower than anticipated.

Boards of Studies
6. The University still expects boards of studies to meet and carry out their business in accordance with the terms of reference and schedule of business – but please note the some of the timescales have been updated in line with other changes set out in this document, so please check the up-to-date schedule. Meetings will take place online (and there is some guidance on running online committee meetings).

External Examining
7. Boards of studies will be asked to respond to external examiner reports relating to 2019-20, in the usual way with an extended deadline so that, the deadline for submission of undergraduate Board of Studies responses will be Friday 29 Jan. 2021 and taught postgraduate Board of Studies responses will be Friday 12 Feb. 2021. External examining in 2020-21 will take place in line with the existing policy and procedures. All academic units need to assume that throughout 2020-21 external examining will need to be managed online – i.e. samples of assessed work shared with external examiners online, and external examiner participation in boards of examiners will be online (which will be supported by the new requirements for online submission and marking).

Interruptions to Study (see also the section on Absence Request Forms)
8. Normal policies and processes will operate for the consideration of student requests to interrupt their studies. To support staff guidance on considering these requests in light of the Covid-19 situation, has been published.

Learning and Teaching Review (LTR)
9. The full round of LTRs that was scheduled for 2020-21 has been suspended. Three LTRs will take place as agreed by the PVC Education and Taught Programme Deans. The academic units that will be reviewed have been contacted directly. All LTRs will be conducted using the normal LTR policy and process, with the review visit conducted online.

Mods and Regs
10. The mods and regs process will take place in the Spring Term 2021. Recognising the demands on academic units these deadlines will be later than usual. In all faculties the deadline for the submission of new and amended modules will
be 26 Feb. 2021; the deadline for submission of amended programme regulations will be 26 Mar. 2021. Module pre-registration will take place week commencing 17 May 2021.

Peer Dialogue

11. Recognising the heavy demands all colleagues are under, we are suspending the requirement for academic units to conduct Peer Dialogue in in 2020-21 (though units may undertake Peer Dialogue if they wish to do so, and should do so if it they have any provision where it is a requirement of a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body).

Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC)

12. The PEC process has had a number of changes to take effect in 2020-21 (most importantly abolishing the numbered rating scale and introducing a ‘support/no support’ judgment relating to board of examiners’ discretion). PECs will operate in line with the new policy and guidance, but there are three variations in 2020-21 to take account of the ongoing Covid-19 situation:
   - Medical evidence for all health-related PECs will NOT be required.
   - Permitting submission of 24-hour take home exams up to 30 minutes late without penalty or requiring a PEC application.
   - Allowing PEC applications where students experience unexpected IT issues/failure.

Personal Tutoring

13. The University has approved a revised approach for Personal Tutoring for use in 2020-21, given the Covid-19 situation and the impact of this on programmes and students. All academic units need to implement this revised approach. This is set out in detail in the Personal Tutoring 2020-21 webpages.

Programme Approval

14. During 2020-21 proposals for new programmes will be considered for approval to start September 2021 and after. The normal New Programme Approval process will apply, though all PAC meetings will take place online.

Student Attendance Monitoring Policy

15. The Student Attendance Monitoring Policy has been updated to take account of the current situation. In 2020-21 the approach will be based on a combination using the SAMS system to record attendance at Present-In-Person timetabled events, and module-by-module ‘zero activity’ reports on student activity on Canvas to monitor ongoing student engagement with modules. There will be scope in a limited number of circumstances for academic units to choose to use attendance lists for teaching sessions, and for them to enter these manually into SAP.

Student Voice

16. Working in partnership with students is more important than ever in 2020-21. The changed circumstances and significantly different approaches to learning, teaching and assessment this requires makes it essential that the student voice is heard, considered and responded to. We have therefore strengthened aspects of our approach to this critical area.

17. SSC/SVC meetings should be held in 2020-21, in line with the University’s Student Representation Policy (and there is guidance on holding SSC/SVC meetings online). Academic units are asked to ensure that SSC/SVCs are meeting twice per semester, by specific points in the teaching semester defined in the Student Voice Schedule, 2020-21 (to allow timely consideration of student views). School reps will also submit one report at the end of each term to their Faculty Education Committee on key themes arising in SSCs/SVCs.

18. The University will be running stage/semester evaluation in full in 2020-21, as well as participating in NSS and PTES. The operation of these surveys will be centrally managed by LTDS. The key roles for academic units are to promote student awareness of, and participation in, these surveys; and ensure the results are considered and responded to. The University is also requiring that for all modules, in both Semester 1 and Semester 2, academic units undertake an initial informal check-in by the end of Teaching Week 4 (this requirement reflects the importance of getting early student feedback, as we implement our Flexible Learning 2020 approach, to identify any unanticipated problems for early resolution). There is no prescribed approach for these, but there is an online toolkit of potential approaches. The Student Voice Schedule, 2020-21 sets out the timeline for these activities.

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This document is primarily intended for: DELTs, School Learning and Teaching Managers, DPDs, Module Leaders
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