

The aim of Annual Monitoring is to maintain quality and improve provision through identifying action that can be taken to improve future student experience. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic annual monitoring will proceed with a significantly reduced area of focus in terms of reporting requirements.

For session 2019-20 this abridged form should be used to record Annual Monitoring Activity. Its purpose is to capture a focused and concise evaluation (or a reflective summary). In undertaking annual monitoring, online meetings should take place to support reflection, reporting and development planning towards enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards.

College	MVLS		
School/Subject/Discipline (as appropriate)	Graduate School – Compiled by Prof Cheryl Woolhead (Associate Dean of PGT)		
Provision covered	Unit of Learning	Represented by	Input received [at meeting (M)/via form (F)]
	All PGT programmes: Animal and Plant Sciences Cluster (APS) Biomedical Sciences Cluster (BMS) Health and Wellbeing Cluster (HWB) Medical and Clinical Sciences Cluster (MACS) Medical Professions Cluster (MP)	Prof Barbra Mable Dr Kathrine West Dr Julie Langan-Martin Dr Stuart Gray Dr Alison Parrett	All programme leaders and course teams Staff-student liason reports External examiners reports EvaSys returns Student feedback PTC Cluster meetings Institute and School LTC's
Collaborative Provision covered	Some programmes are collaborative with CoSS and CoSE.		

In the context of the extraordinary circumstances of this academic year, please reflect on Student Experience and Student Performance. (Please take particular account of course evaluations, data on student performance and the reports of external examiners).

What is working well?

Staff involved in the delivery of PGT teaching within the college of MVLS were able to adapt quickly professionally to the changes enforced in March 2020, to provide high-quality learning at short notice. This adaptability was perhaps most pronounced in the conversion of over 900 PGT projects to remote supervision, adapting laboratory training, fieldwork and clinical training in a short space of time.

Changes in delivery were met with some initial push-back from students, particularly about the need for projects to be delivered remotely. Discussions with student representatives helped to clarify the issues, and the consistent messaging from programme leads, College senior management and University senior management was important. Generally, the initial anxiety and disappointment from students progressed to satisfaction and enjoyment of the online delivery of teaching, assessments and projects. Excellent Moodle resources offering bioinformatics support to staff and students, as well as advice on the design and assembly of systematic reviews, were commended by many.

The implementation of the no detriment policy by Senate to ensure no student was dis-advantaged, was welcomed by staff and praised by external examiners, with several commenting it was clear that everything had to be done to ensure that students were not disadvantaged by the pandemic situation. The flexibility to modify 'high risk' assessments without going through the full approval process was also welcomed.

All areas: academics, external examiners and students, praised the work of the administrative team this year in their quick adaptation and implementation of new guidance and personalised touch for dealing with student enquiries. In addition, the Digital Education team was commended for the introduction of training and Q&A sessions that aided many who had previously been unfamiliar with remote teaching.

Additional general comments:

- Staff student liaison committees were informative about issues that students raised in real time, which could be addressed to improve the student experience throughout the year.
- Zoom works much better than Echo360 for recordings, both for pre-recorded and live sessions. Attendance at Zoom lectures was good. Students appear to be more willing to ask questions using online chat during lectures & group work, particularly students who are otherwise very quiet.
- Staff worked to ensure that students were not disadvantaged by the situation, by changing assessments, moving deadlines and altering assignments to accommodate students who may have had difficulties with working at home.
- Students commented that staff were supportive issues such as mental health and feelings of isolation by providing regular meetings, signposting to support services, extension of deadlines and the fit to study procedures.
- Students valued the introduction of the No Detriment Policy for the 2019-20 session.
- Pivot to online delivery went well and has opened opportunities to consider modes of provision in the longer term.
- Online distance programmes were, obviously, less affected by the switch to online teaching. However, they have benefited from increased software resources for students to interact with each other and additional access to statistics software this year.
- The high level of commitment from the core academic and other staff including NHS partners had a huge positive impact on adaptation to online learning.

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- Excellent administration was mentioned by several programmes and this was highlighted by academics, external examiners and students. The no detriment policy despite the enormous amount of work for administrators worked well, supporting students to complete their programmes successfully and on time.

Specific comments from clusters:

- Delivery of dry projects worked surprisingly well; supervisors adapted to the more challenging mode of remote supervising and maintained connections with students through weekly virtual meetings. (APS)
- Regular virtual meetings with each programme cohort were implemented during the summer projects to ensure that students were engaged and getting sufficient support; this has now been implemented throughout the year for 2020-2021 (APS)
- The MVLS graduate school admin staff provided exceptional support throughout the challenges and created a highly personalised touch for dealing with student enquiries, both for current students and students applying for 2020-2021 (APS)
- External examiners for all programmes commented on the high level of personal and academic support that the students perceived throughout the year (APS)
- Online tests and exams seem to have been reasonably successful as well – though there is no certainty that the submitted papers represent the work of (only) the particular student. In problem-based exams it is of concern that some students may get the answers from peers rather than working them out. This is far less likely to occur in traditional invigilated exam room format. (BMS)
- Overall, student cohorts achieved very similar grades this year compared to previous years, and the percentage of students graduating with distinction or merit did not appear to be greatly altered. (BMS)
- Increased use of TELT: Zoom and Teams cited as a positive factor in facilitating interaction with students. (HWB)
- Introduction of the new Clinical and Research Laboratory Skills course was enjoyed by the students and they stated it helped to brush up basic lab skills. (MACS)
- Changes occurred to several programmes this year to provide students with a broader choice of options addressing a previous concern of students that they would have liked to take more option courses than they were previously able to. These changes were well received by the students and external examiner (MACS).
- Students felt supported with future career planning and many of our student s have been successful in obtaining places on prestigious PhD programmes and jobs within the wider bio-medical area. (MACS)
- Some modification had to be made to assessments for professionally accredited qualifications, where maintaining assessments as close as possible to the usual which meant keeping a timed exam. These changes were received favourably by students and external examiners. (MP)
- There has been a high level of student engagement and satisfaction. Several programmes reported excellent student staff relations and opportunity for discussion about teaching, feedback and progress. Students praised curriculums of several programs and the collaborative and interactive nature of the teaching. In addition, some programmes also commented on the high calibre of students coming on to the programme. There have been comments from students about the varied and innovative assessments. (MP)

What needs work?

Increases in student numbers on our PGT programmes has seen staffing resources become stretched, staff have indicated that without an increase in staffing it will become more difficult to provide a continually high-quality student experience. Lack of availability of lab equipment has also been noted as an issue resulting from increased numbers of students, the quality of equipment was also commented on.

While the training provided by the digital education team and LEADS have been greatly appreciated, we have seen potential issues with external contributors (i.e., NHS staff), not having the same access to resources. While

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adaptation and conversion of content has been fast, staff believe continued training and improved resources will help maintain an ability to deliver blended learning.

In some cases, student representatives felt the current situation has led to them being unable to effectively communicate the views of students in their programmes. Staff have also reported some student representatives have been less involved. Whether this is a communication issue or a lack of set allocated time is unsure.

It is generally felt an increased number of students were referred to Senate for plagiarism concerns this year, various options have been put in place with more robust resources to increase support given to students to help them understand this issue. We will review communication and training on this matter, as well as reflect on the specifics of this year which may have contributed to this situation.

There has been an unusually low response rate to EvaSys surveys this year, with the general feeling from both staff and students that there are better methods of communication and reporting within courses.

Additional general comments:

- We should work to develop further careers advice for our PGT students for all our programmes.
- Exploration of how to foster belonging and build community with our ODL students – particularly those in their final year.
- Still some issues with enrolling of students to the course at the beginning that causes a good deal of stress to the students are results in many of them starting the course late.

Specific comments from clusters:

- The NDP did not apply to the MRes Biomedical project 1 this appeared to be unfair and inconsistent, in the opinions both programme staff and students. This decision was made very late upsetting several students. Several appeals have been received as a result. (BMS)
- We need to explore, discuss, and share knowledge around the allocation of dissertation supervisors. (IHW)
- One course was cancelled at last minute which had adverse impact on Programme. Courses should not be dependent on a series of lectures conducted by a single person. (MACS)
- In some programmes the role of advisor of studies falls to a few members of staff and it would be beneficial to have more staff available to provide pastoral support to students. (MP)
- Appropriate laboratory and clinical space are required with up-to-date facilities to improve the student experience and meet expectations of the students to undertake laboratory studies. (MP)
- In the dental programmes there has been a concern over the significant deficiency in the clinical component due to the lack of clinics over the past 9 months. Similarly, the removal of anatomy labs has greatly affected relevant degrees. (MP)

In the context of the extraordinary circumstances of this academic year, and any anticipated requirements and challenges in 2020-21, please reflect on any themes or issues that you wish to report to the responsible level of the University.

(Check with your School or College Quality Officer if advice is needed on which is the most appropriate level)

School/Cluster

- Provide “Breathing space” for staff to review /refresh provision and be innovative.
- Ensure teaching, assessment, and project supervision loads are distributed evenly.
- Infrastructure support is required for laboratories and equipment.
- More academic support is required for programmes before quality is severely impacted. For many programmes the workload is not sustainable, students pay high fees and have high expectations.
- Explore increased course sharing between programmes.
- Dental programmes flagged up the reduced access to operating theatres and consultant clinics due to the unprecedented circumstance of Covid-19 pandemic compromising the clinical component which may require an extension to compensate.

College

- The need to provide sufficient staff resources to deliver large and growing MSc programmes.
- Students feel that have missed out significantly on practical skills. Some institutions, are providing weekly testing for all researchers, allowing greater occupancy of the labs. The college needs to find ways to offer a lab-based project to all students on relevant Masters degrees.
- The closure of the Teaching and Learning Building at the QEUH leaves a gap in our infrastructure to provide labs for PGT students on several programmes.
- Earlier enrolment deadlines would enable better planning for the number of students arriving. More control of the numbers is required.
- Student numbers should be capped for some programmes and have an interview-based approach to admissions.
- Fees should be returned to the programmes to enable real time resource sourcing for specialised programmes.
- Delay to academic year 2020-21 beginning has led to a disconnect between F2F and ODL programmes. The potential consequence of this is a difficult 2020-21 and 2021-22 transition period.
- PDR for this session should be adapted to reflect increased workloads for those engaging in teaching and research work.
- Revise remuneration process for external staff and for student expenses needs streamlined.
- Although No Detriment has now ended, a substantial number of students are working in frontline NHS roles during the ongoing pandemic and may require considerable flexibility with deadlines in the academic session 2020-21

University

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- Could better transcription software be resourced - Zoom transcripts are incomprehensible and re-doing these is a massive amount of work.
- Resources will be needed to facilitate remote and blended learning that can be used flexibly (e.g. some students in the room, some online).
- Students felt there could have been clearer communication centrally about the no detriment policy (particularly in relation to MRes students).
- Mental health remains the largest issue for students; although there is a lot of information provided by the University, could the time taken for students to register with the disability office and/or obtain mental health support be improved.
- Some staff were unable to benefit from the additional holidays in 2020 as PGT courses were still running and exams were taking place. Could this be taken into next year?
- The shift to online of course was difficult but central timetabling rolled over schedules from the previous year instead of considering schedules that had been revised, could this be reconsidered for changes in 2021?
- Consider a proposal for a fully-taught PGT Masters programme, particularly in online distance learning degrees.
- Adapt PDR expectations for all staff, at all levels, engaged in the teaching process.

Additional matters

Please highlight any additional matters that you wish to raise from this year's Annual Monitoring cycle

Several programmes were unable to run last year due to the requirement of clinical teaching, training or placements. These will return for the 2021/22 session if possible.