

JULY 2019

TLSD Academic Development and Policy Bulletin (formerly TLSO Bulletin)

The University's Division of Teaching, Learning and Student Development

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1. Staffing changes

We recently said 'goodbye' to Becky Allen (Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator, Student Engagement) and Freya Corrywright (Project Assistant, Differential Attainment).

We wish both Becky and Freya all the best in their new roles outside of the University.

2. Website/policy and procedure changes

• Updated Policy on Religious Observance

At its meeting in June, Senate approved updates to the *Policy on Religious Observance for Students*. The Policy underwent review by the TLG Policy and Guidance Subgroup during 2018/19, in conjunction with Equality and Diversity, the Chaplaincy, and the central Exams Office. Research and Business Engagement Support Services were also involved in the review, with wording added to ensure that the Policy can cover both undergraduate/postgraduate taught students, as well as postgraduate research students. GAG and MDC approved the updates to the Policy.

The main changes to the policy are detailed below:

- update of the title of the policy from 'Policy on religious observance and guidance for students' to 'Policy on religious observance for students';
- addition of a statement about the University's commitment to equality and diversity;
- confirmation that the University has a fixed examination period for taught units which are published in advance and tie in with other significant events in the academic calendar, and that it is not possible to change this set examination period in order to accommodate the full variety of religious observance practices;
- confirmation that the University is only able to consider the needs of students if their requirement for particular religious observance is mandatory, as agreed with the relevant faith chaplains;

2. Website/policy and procedure changes (continued)

- the addition of a statement confirming that the University will only consider applications for amendments to the taught examination timetable with regards to religious observance that *usually occurs over a restricted period of time*; it is not able to consider applications where religious observance extends over a significant period of time (e.g. Ramadan), or where the normal expectation is that daily activities (including examinations) will continue as usual;
- *confirmation that the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances can be used in cases where the effects of strict religious observance (e.g. fainting during an examination, as a result of fasting) have a detrimental effect on a student's performance at an examination; the act of religious observance itself is not, however, regarded as a grounds for mitigation;*
- *the addition of a new statement confirming that Schools should inform students at the start of their programme whether there are any specific learning/assessment attendance requirements which take place outside of normal core weekday hours, and that it is good practice to avoid scheduling teaching sessions at times when students are likely to have mandatory religious activities;*
- creation of separate sections covering 'Teaching and learning activities', 'Assessments organised by the School', and 'Taught Examinations or assessments organised centrally by the University';
- confirmation (for all three sections above) that if no reasonable alternative can be found, adjustments to scheduled teaching or learning activities, exams or assessments, will not be possible.

The updated version of the policy is to be implemented from September 2019 and has been uploaded to the original url address on the Teaching, Learning and Student Development (TLSD, previously TLSO) website:

<https://staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/policy-guidance/assessment/practice-of-assessment/religious-observance/>

It is also now available on the University's Documents system at:

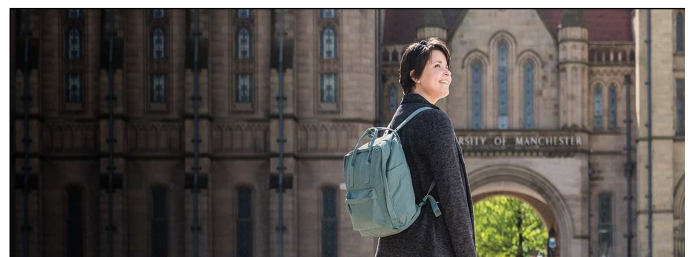
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=43243>

• **Updated Policy on Interruptions and associated Guidance for staff and students**

Also at the meeting in June, Senate approved updates to the *Policy on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study*. The associated *Guidance for Staff on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study* and the *Guidance for Students on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study* had been updated and approved by TLG in April. The updates relate, in the main, to a request to supplement the existing policy and guidance with more information to support students' return to study, stemming from the recent work carried out by the Division of Campus Life on Support to Study/Return to Study policy and procedures and work undertaken as part of the Student Lifecycle Project. As part of the review, consultation also took place with Student Admissions and Administration with regards to clarifying wording relating to fees and visas, and with Compliance and Risk regarding confidentiality.

The updated versions of the documents should be implemented from September and are available now on the TLSD website at:

<https://staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/policy-guidance/teaching-and-learning/learning/interruptions/>



3. Peer Support

- **Peer Support's Summer Preparation for 2019/20**

Now that the training season has finished, Peer Support are busy with their summer priorities to support students before they arrive through pre-arrival support and preparing for the new academic year.

Outside of the office, the team have been promoting Peer Support at the summer Open Day. It was an amazing opportunity to meet prospective students and help them gain a better insight of the different kinds of peer-to-peer support available to them at the University of Manchester including how this institution was the first to provide a form of peer-led support to all undergraduates. Peer Support have also been supporting different subject areas to create and distribute pre-arrival material about their respective PASS or Peer Mentoring schemes for incoming students. Medicine Peer Mentoring are sending printed pre-arrival guides to all their new incoming first year undergraduates, which will include information about how Medicine Peer Mentoring works at Manchester and an insight into what activities and events they can get involved in. Optometry PASS have moved from a printed pre-arrival guide to a digital one this year, which their new first year PASS attendees will be able to access online.

2018-19 has been a busy year at Peer Support and this summer is the perfect time for the team to reflect on the practices and activities that have been at the forefront of the programme for the last 12 months. Currently, the team is hard at work reviewing different portfolio areas, those of which include developing Peer Mentor training into a blended package similarly to PASS training, gaining use of more practical equipment to provide more frequent peer-led Basic Life Support sessions as well as reviewing what other new, exciting opportunities we could provide to the student leaders. Peer Support is also reviewing their communications for 2019-20, to make it more relevant, exciting and useful for the approx. 1800 students who are involved with the programme. So far, this has involved meetings to develop different social media channels and creating student timelines to map what students will be experiencing at different times of year to ensure that communications are useful and relevant for them.



3. Peer Support (continued)

Peer Support have also been planning and preparing for different events to support our students and communicate with them both over the summer and in September. This month, Student Engagement Graduate Interns Matt and Hannah delivered a session on networking to students who are currently working on a Summer Experience Internship. The event was a great opportunity to help support these students develop their communication skills and promote Peer Support – some photos from the event can be found below. Planning is also well underway for the Setting Up for Success event, taking place the Friday before Welcome Week. Setting Up for Success is the first opportunity that all of the Student Coordinators across all subject areas can come together and network with each other, as well as find out about what they can get involved with as a scheme. Last year's event was really successful, and this year's event will be even better!



4. STELLIFY

- **STELLIFY Students 'give back' to the local and University Community**

UoM Students have been showing their commitment to Social Responsibility via their participation in STELLIFY. <https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/stellify/my-role/>

STELLIFY is a University wide initiative which encourages students to undertake activities which contribute to the University, local community and their own personal development. These activities include volunteering and leadership roles in UMSU/ Sports/ Accommodation societies and clubs. It also includes leadership roles on their course such as PASS Leaders, Student Representative and Peer Mentoring! Students are also encouraged to 'Learn without Boundaries' with UCIL and think about their future, whilst developing employability skills. STELLIFY is strategically important to the University, enabling students and staff to identify and talk about the 'distinctiveness' of our graduates. In the most recent report from the President to the Board of Governors; STELLIFY was identified as an area of future growth and potential.

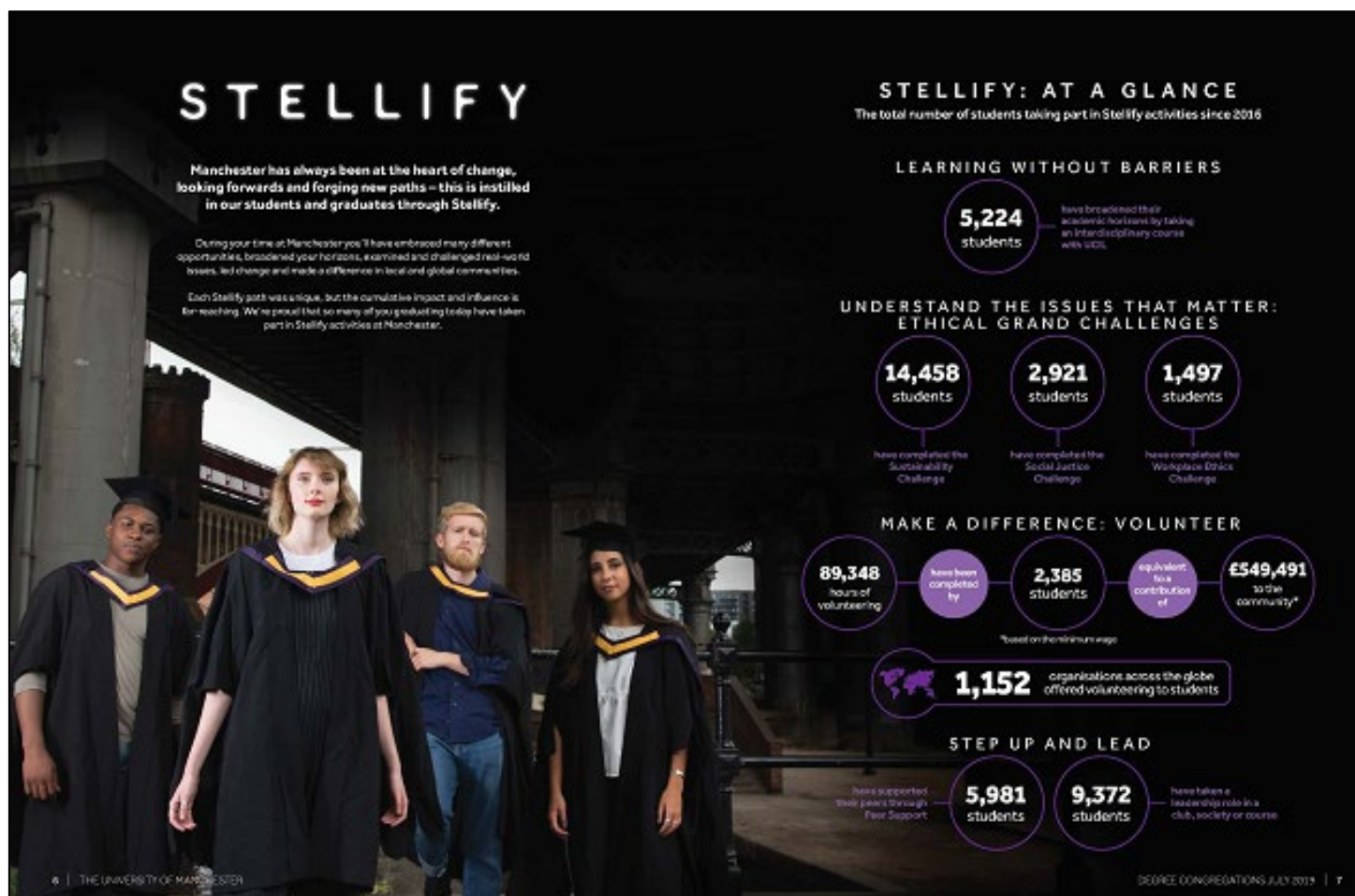
Across the University, 2019's graduating cohort has contributed to the following:

- 5224 learned without boundaries, via UCIL
- 14458 undertook the Sustainability Challenge.
- 2385 students undertook 89348 hours of volunteering, which contributed the equivalent of £549,491 into the community.

4. STELLIFY (continued)

This year was the first graduating cohort that was eligible for the STELLIFY Award. To receive the award, students must complete 2 'Step up and Lead' activities, complete 40 hours of Volunteering and all three Ethical Grand Challenges. We are very proud to report that 104 students will receive this prestigious award.

So as we celebrate graduation and the academic achievements of our students, we can also consider the impact that these extra-curricular activities are having on the local community and within the student body. It's a huge achievement, which really does make our graduates stand out from the crowd!



5. Information from other areas of the University

- **IT Services: eLearning support: Blackboard unavailable from 5pm on Thursday 25 July to 9am on Sunday 28 July**

The annual upgrade to our VLE (Blackboard) will be taking place in July. Blackboard (including Turnitin and Grademark) will be unavailable from 5pm (BST) on Thursday 25 July 2019 until 9am (BST) on Sunday 28 July 2019. The upgrade will improve current functionality, incorporate security enhancements, performance improvements and bug fixes.

Any staff who will be using Blackboard for any teaching activities during this time, please remind your students of the downtime and ensure that any online activities you are asking students to do take into account this downtime.



For further information, please visit the Staffnet news article:

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/news/display/?id=22162>

6. Contact information

If you are aware of other staff members who would like to be added to the Academic Development and Policy TLSD Bulletin mailing list to receive future editions of the Bulletin, please contact Miriam Graham (email m.graham@manchester.ac.uk).

If you are from a Collaborative Partner and you are having difficulties accessing any of the linked documents or web pages, please also contact Miriam Graham (m.graham@manchester.ac.uk).

The Academic Development and Policy/Peer Support area of the TLSD website is available at: <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/>

