

Teaching, Learning and Students Open Meeting – May 2020

Thank you for the many questions that were submitted in advance of the first Teaching, Learning and Students Open Meeting held on 19 May 2020. Professor April McMahon, Vice President of Teaching, Learning and Students and the wider panel members have followed up on all of those questions that were not able to be answered within the event itself and these are covered below.

We look forward to seeing you at the next Teaching, Learning and Students Open Meeting, on 22 June.

Contents

General questions	2
Delivering teaching	5
PGT-specific.....	9
Student experience	10
Return to campus.....	13

General questions

How do we differentiate our Teaching and Learning provision and deliver 'Manchesterness' in an on-line world?

Professor April McMahon, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students: I like the reference to Manchesterness! This features in the teaching and learning theme of 'Our Future' and we are proposing a project bringing together students, staff and alumni to revamp our Graduate Attributes which in itself will help us define the elusive 'Manchesterness'. For the time being, we can't do much better than to go back to our values – we are a socially responsible institution so we need to make sure we are not excluding any students, that we use these opportunities to do things better (such as welcome and induction), and that we work on updating our teaching just as we do in our research, by choosing methodologies carefully, reflecting on what we are doing, and redesigning so we provide the best experience we can. Manchester can also move towards a genuinely blended learning experience for our on-campus students in a way few other universities currently can. For example, we already have UCIL units online, and good (though not complete) buy-in to lecture capture, and excellent facilities like the blended learning lecture theatres in MECD coming on stream.

I am interested in hearing ideas about teaching/learning. I am also wondering if the university will be providing IT equipment for home use.

Louise Walmsley, Director of Teaching, Learning and Student Development: We've recently published [guidance for online teaching and learning](#) and this is supplemented by the new [Teaching & Learning Online Network](#) (TALON). TALON is a Yammer group set up for staff to share their skills and expertise in online learning and to get help and advice from colleague around the University. Information on the support available to staff working from home can be found on [StaffNet](#).

How has the negative reception of Durham's move to online teaching changed the landscape regarding online provision?

Professor April McMahon, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students: There has been a lot of confusion around terms like 'online', 'blended' and 'hybrid' models and like Manchester, a lot of Russell Group universities are now announcing they will be online for at least Semester 1 in terms of lectures, with online options so we don't exclude students who are not able to be present on campus, but a blended experience for most of our students in the coming year. To alleviate student concerns about 'online' it will be really important for us to keep spelling out the interactivity of even online lectures, which can be synchronous as well as asynchronous. We do know that students actively opt for a blended experience when they have a choice – for instance, in their consistent preferences for lecture capture, and their enthusiasm for UCIL units that are offered online. So Covid-19 may have accelerated the move to blended learning but I am confident we were heading in that direction anyway.

What is the SLT now doing so that we do not even try and return to the past regarding campus-based teaching, but as an institution, move on, not back and diversify in much more online and proper blended learning across the board.

Professor April McMahon, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students: You have no idea how much this question cheered me up! I have to say, this is a balancing act, because I hear a lot of versions of your question but equally some other colleagues are cautious and want guarantees that all the changes we are currently making are temporary. The Senior Leadership Team and indeed the leadership team in Teaching, Learning and Students are united in wanting to take positive opportunities to make positive changes which staff and students have been asking us to do for some time –whether that is an enhanced welcome and induction experience for all our students, or a week’s break between January assessments and the start of Semester 2 teaching, or a strong blended learning offer for on-campus students overall. We do need to keep evaluating what works well and what doesn’t, but we have already identified online and blended learning as a key priority for the University and Dan George is taking up a leadership role in driving that forward as our new Associate Vice President.

Will the University bring forward changes and investment in the LMS and online live teaching platforms, as these are likely to be needed in the short and long term to support high quality online teaching and learning?

Louise Walmsley, Director of Teaching, Learning and Student Development: Our current approach is a tactical strategy for 2020-21: what do we need, and what can be provided in the limited time available, to ensure a high quality Semester 1. We will then look at the medium and long term via an online and blended learning strategy to be developed by Professor Danielle George in her new role as Associate Vice President for Teaching, Learning and Students.

Is it envisaged that foreign language lessons will be delivered online next semester, the same as lectures?

Professor Fiona Smyth, Deputy Dean and Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Humanities: We teach language classes to a range of different student groups. Pre-sessional English will be delivered online this summer – we are already in the process of setting this up and the 10-week pre-sessional language course will be delivered online in January. We also deliver Language Experience for All Programmes (LEAP) courses and language degree programmes all taught within the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures. We envisage that lectures will take place online and small group teaching will take place, if possible, face to face.

It would be useful to know which online delivery platforms are being considered and why. For example, trials by well-established online learning providers, such as Coventry University, showed that Aula increased student engagement by more than 50 % compared to first gen platforms such as Blackboard/Moodle etc. It would be also be useful to know when any decisions will be made so as to allow for building and designing courses. Thanks!

Professor Judy Williams, Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning: The University supported virtual learning environment is Blackboard Learn 9 and is the platform we will be using. This platform is integrated with other University systems (including the student record system, and associated teaching and learning tools) and supported by IT Services and Faculty eLearning teams. Blackboard and associated tools can be used to deliver engaging content and activities. We are creating templates and associated guidance which will support colleagues in designing online and blended versions of courses, including techniques for enhancing student engagement. Your [Faculty eLearning team](#) can provide further advice.

Can we reallocate more IT and comms staff to support an online learning experience at the beginning of the year to support staff working in student engagement?

Claire Brown, Head of University Marketing: The Teaching and Learning Group Executive (TLG Exec) is looking at how we may best use our existing technical and online learning resources to support online course delivery, across the University. Our Head of Student Communications is also working alongside the TLG Exec and wider communications colleagues across central Directorates and the Faculties, to ensure that along with getting the right messages to our students, we are also keeping staff proactively informed of those communications, so that they are equipped to provide that essential local support to students.

Top level communications to learners do create a lot of confusion with staff, mainly because we are left on the back foot trying to interpret and apply the messages within PGT where they do not work i.e. no disadvantage policy, delayed start and compressed semester - this is at little notice and also creates a lot of email traffic to staff with questions we cannot immediately answer. This is happening at a time when all staff are extremely pressured with seeing the academic year out and planning for high quality online next year. Better consultation and understanding the needs of PGT (which is more diverse than UG and the standard one year MSc) would be appreciated in FBMH where our PGT offer is diverse and where we can then better plan our comms from marketing, conversion, programme management cohesively.

Claire Brown, Head of University Marketing: Our institutional communications tend to arise from University-wide decision making and policies and some of which as you say, can then vary in their local application. We do tailor our broadcast communications to our various student audiences and work with Faculty communications and T&L colleagues on any specific message details and to identify our audience groups however; I agree that there is scope to improve our liaison with wider colleagues across the organisation, to ensure that colleagues are aware of upcoming messages to students and are sufficiently equipped to handle any subsequent local queries. Our Head of Student Communications is working alongside the TLG Exec and wider communications colleagues to develop a new framework for this.

Will colleagues be able to receive the equipment they need to produce good quality online material? Will there be central support to generate captions to make videos more accessible?

Professor Judy Williams, Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning: We are looking into ways in which we can support staff in developing good quality online learning, whether that is borrowing equipment, or using software. We are developing a set of 'core' software options and accessibility is one of the key considerations.

How can we make sure that the support we deliver and the steps/measures we are taking are inclusive of, and take into account the needs of postgraduate researchers who have dual status and specific requirements very different from our undergraduate population?

Professor April McMahon, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students: I'm afraid this is not a question we can answer within the Teaching, Learning and Students team, as our remit covers UG and PGT students – but we do have a dedicated team in Manchester Doctoral College (MDC) which looks after our PGR students, and I suggest you contact Melissa Westwood, the Director of MDC, if you have specific questions or concerns.

As the University undertakes the huge tasks ahead of changing the majority of our teaching and learning (and much of our operations) to Online and Digital, it seems very likely that the workload required will be significantly greater than the resources available, even as other work is paused or stopped. This is especially apparent in IT Services. How will this be handled?

Professor Danielle George, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Science and Engineering: We need to prioritise the work that staff are asked to carry out. This is true for both professional services and academic colleagues. Our priority for the University must be to deliver an excellent teaching and learning provision where the majority will be online in the first instance. This means that other work may need to be paused. It is likely we will need an increase in learning technologists.

Will staff have discretion to make lecture podcasts 'stream only'? This will be necessary to guarantee confidentiality to guest speakers (to allow them to speak freely) and also addresses UoM IP concerns relating to the external circulation of materials.

Professor Judy Williams, Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning: We have to be mindful that some of our students will not be able to attend campus for the start of the year and will be living in different time zones, some may be in extended quarantine, or may not have the facilities for live streaming. We need to make sure that all our teaching and learning is inclusive and accessible for them, regardless of time zones.

Delivering teaching

What is the road map for clinical academic teaching in the new academic year 2020/21?

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: Detailed discussions are underway between FBMH health professional

programmes, Trusts and regulatory bodies as to how to accommodate clinical teaching over the next academic year. This is a moving and complex area given the need to balance student clinical learning and experience with their safety and the operational and performance requirements of the diverse and changing clinical services where our students are taught. The FBMH 'Clinical Placement Group' has been expanded to consider options to address these issues, to share experience and practice across health professional programmes and to co-ordinate working with clinical placement providers and HEE.

Many questions have been asked about eLearning support to get teaching online, but what provision has been made to provide advice and guidance to staff about the principles of good online learning techniques and methods etc, so that the quality and methods of online teaching and learning is well informed.

Professor Judy Williams, Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning: We are looking at increasing the number of staff who have the expertise in pedagogy informed online learning. We peer to peer support through the [Teaching and Learning Online Network](#) on Yammer which is open to all staff. Work is ongoing to provide additional pedagogic development through University and Faculty networks such as the Faculty Teaching Academies and the Institute of Teaching and Learning. Professor Becki Bennett, Associate Vice-Dean, Faculty of Humanities, has developed an excellent short online programme, Creating Online Resources for Blended Learning, which is applicable across many platforms. You can find the link in the TALON Yammer Group.

What skill(s) do you think it's most valuable for Teaching staff to develop over the coming months / year?

Professor Danielle George, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Science and Engineering: As all lectures will be online we need to support staff to move to a blended learning model and provide training materials for both their synchronous and asynchronous activities. We could offer a buddy type system to match colleagues depending on experience. We will need to ensure we have enough learning technology support from our e-learning teams.

How will you ensure that all staff are included and consulted in planned transition to blended learning, the current threat narratives driving discussion are counterproductive?

Professor Danielle George, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Science and Engineering: So far Faculties have used the appropriate channels available to ensure staff have an opportunity to input into the ongoing discussions. Not every member of staff will have been consulted but I'm aware of many task and finish groups set up in Faculties that comprise of staff in departments. Wiki sites in FSE have been set up for any member of staff to add their thoughts. An email address specifically for blended learning queries and ideas will be set up in each Faculty, again allowing all staff to contribute.

Will there some agreement on what online learning will look like in semester 1? Are there going to be minimum expectations? And if so, when?

Professor Danielle George, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Science and Engineering: Not minimum expectations but there are a number of training materials being finalised to help support staff on what blended learning is and how to deliver a blended learning provision. It is essential that we all agree that delivering our lectures in an online environment does not mean simply making our podcasts available. There will be a significant amount of work involved in creating material and we need to support staff to do this.

How can we ensure a University-wide consistent, professional look and feel to all courses going into a fully online Semester 1? Some staff will be more capable and confident in online teaching than others.

Professor Judy Williams, Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning: We are working with Faculties to develop templates for staff to use for online eLearning to produce a consistent and professional look. We have produced guides and videos to support all staff in the move online and in addition, we have a Yammer group ([the Teaching and Learning Online Network](#)) of colleagues who are happy to support colleagues and build confidence with online teaching.

In response to the increased dependency on online learning going forward, how are senior leadership drawing on expertise in digital pedagogy and pedagogic change management in groups such as VR@Manchester, to support strategic decisions on building technical infrastructure and capacity?

Professor Danielle George, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Science and Engineering: That's a great question. I don't think we are yet, but we certainly need to. I will follow this up and get back to you.

Some SBS year 1 course units will have approx. 700 students in the coming academic year. Can you reassure our lecturing staff that there will be software which will allow simultaneous live delivery of lectures to a cohort of this size? Currently Zoom allows a maximum of 300 participants so will not cover our needs.

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: Options are being explored to extend the Zoom license. However, consideration should also be given to alternatives to synchronous on-line delivery of lectures. A recorded lecture accompanied by a blog/forum Q&A could be considered as a better way for these kinds of numbers and cut down on stress for both staff and students.

Clarify blended vs flipped and how blended is being defined here. Surely, adopting a flipped teaching perspective is useful?

Professor Judy Williams, Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning: There are overlapping elements to flipped and blended learning, with common elements and objectives. You may find [this](#)

[blog](#) helpful. Our aim is to provide effective online and blended learning, bringing in active learning, flipped teaching could be useful as one approach

Will there be extra staff for eLearning and IT teams and provision of specialised IT equipment for staff to deliver high quality online resources? How can you ensure staff will be safe on returning especially if we have multiple small group face to face teaching?

Professor April McMahon, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students: The first part of your question is straightforward – yes, absolutely! We are advertising right now for additional e-learning colleagues, as this is recognised as a priority area in terms of recruitment. Our existing e-learning team has also been working closely with the Faculties to collect requests for priority software and other resources, and you can find support and training / development opportunities through our [Institute for Teaching and Learning](#). In terms of safety, of course we can never absolutely guarantee anyone's safety in the workplace or anywhere else, but we have a group dedicated to planning for returning to campus which is chaired by Nalin Thakker, and they are operating closely within government advice and guidance at all times.

What platforms/software will we be using for the online delivery of units and what training and support will be available to create the most effective design and delivery of these?

Professor Judy Williams, Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning: Faculty teaching teams together with eLearning teams will be looking to develop online templates to help colleagues with the design of effective online teaching and learning. We are currently discussing with Faculty Teaching and Learning teams the most effective platforms and software to make available across the University. Support and guidance to get started with these platforms and to make the most of the functionality will be developed as soon as a decision on the suite of solutions is agreed.

At what point in the summer can we expect to have the firm information about semester 1 that will allow us to begin effective course planning? Awaiting guidance from a government that apparently gives it only days in advance is not appropriate for an activity that requires significant advance planning. In what ways has the decision-making process of the last few months included consultation and input from the academics and PS staff actually responsible for working directly with students?"

Professor Danielle George, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Science and Engineering: A paper outlining further details of the Semester 1 has been prepared by the Teaching and Learning Group Executive and will be discussed at Senate on June 3rd. Once approved more detail will be available. However, we know the dates and the decision to deliver all lectures online for Semester 1 so many colleagues have already started to plan their courses, starting with their lectures. Wiki sites in FSE have been set up for any member of staff to add their thoughts. An email address for blended learning queries and ideas will be set up in each Faculty, again allowing all staff to contribute.

What are your practical tips on when and how academics should start planning and developing their Semester 1 teaching?

Professor Danielle George, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Science and Engineering: Many colleagues have started to plan and develop their teaching, starting with lectures which we all know must be delivered online. There are a number of training materials being finalised to help support staff on what blended learning is and how to deliver a blended learning provision. It is essential that we all agree that delivering our lectures in an online environment does not mean simply making our podcasts available. There will be a significant amount of work involved in creating material and we need to support staff to do this.

PGT-specific

When will we have a revised workload provided to staff? When will we have a revised academic calendar provided to PGT courses?

Professor Fiona Smyth, Deputy Dean and Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Humanities: Workload is managed at School level so any changes in workload will be communicated locally. Changes in the calendar for postgraduate taught students will be communicated as soon as they are approved by Senate. The revised start dates have already been approved by Senate and communicated to staff and students. A further paper will be going to Senate imminently that outlines the remainder of calendar for undergraduate and postgraduate taught cohorts for 2020/21.

If the PGT semester 1 begins classes on Oct 25th, how long will it run? And when will Semester 2 PGT teaching begin and end?

Professor Danielle George, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Science and Engineering: The Teaching and Learning Group Executive proposal on the shape of the academic year going to Senate on June 3rd suggests 11 weeks of teaching in the first semester for PGT – and the programme-based week of induction will at least allow for a discipline appropriate introduction even though it is not intended to be a full teaching week.

Why is PGT always treated as the unloved middle child, between UGT and PGR? Delayed by 1 month to start the 2020-21 academic year and programmes expected to be delivered condensed rather than shifted in time.

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: Our postgraduate taught programmes and students are highly valued by our University. Careful consideration was given in designing the shape the academic year to accommodate the diverse needs of our postgraduate taught students and what might encourage them to study with us in the next academic year, as opposed to deferring or going elsewhere. The delayed start is a compromise to encourage students to study with us this academic year and with an enhanced induction to postgraduate study and research before commencing the formal components of their programme. This does involve a compressed year that will be accommodated

through shortening the Christmas and Easter breaks. This allows programmes to finish within the same timeframe as in prior academic years which is of benefit to students for their ongoing study and employment and to our staff as there will be no overlap in teaching between the 20/21 and 21/22 academic years.

If our teaching is to be online, why push back the start dates (esp. PGT) and disrupt the timetabling and compress the time available?

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: We are seeking as much as possible to have as many of our postgraduate taught students as possible engaged in on-campus teaching opportunities from the 5th October and the staggered start provides options to do so. Given the uncertain times and the needs of individual students we do need also to have the option for students to study online too. This is not however the preferred option for most of our applicants and offer holders.

A postgraduate student who's programme teaching starts on 26 October 2020 will be required to study 60 hrs per week to complete the 60 credits of study in semester 1. Please can this be explained? It seems to deliberately overload students.

Professor Danielle George, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Science and Engineering: The Teaching and Learning Group Executive proposal on the shape of the academic year going to Senate on June 3rd suggests 11 weeks of teaching in the first semester for PGT – and the programme-based week of induction will at least allow for a discipline appropriate introduction even though it is not intended to be a full teaching week.

Student experience

What are the main points arising from student feedback in regard to the effectiveness of teaching & learning online?

Chloe Sallins, Education Officer, University of Manchester Students' Union: For students, the experience of online teaching is varied across the University. Whilst some students appreciate the quick transition to online teaching, the critical question students are asking is what will be improved ahead of the next semester to deliver a truly outstanding online teaching and learning experience. We must work to share good practice and support staff in the delivery of this experience. Throughout all of this, it is key that we communicate to students what we have improved on, as well as ensuring we empower our student reps to feedback on the delivery of this throughout the next semester and onwards.

Louise Walmsley, Director of Teaching, Learning and Student Development: We have implemented a bespoke course unit survey for all units delivered this semester. The results are available to Schools already and will be reviewed at an institutional level by Teaching and Learning Group Executive.

I would like an update on the plans/strategy for increased use of online learning in semester 1. What resources are being put in place to ensure a quality digital learning experience for students?

Louise Walmsley, Director of Teaching, Learning and Student Development: We are currently seeking approval for additional eLearning support (for staff) and are developing plans for an enhanced welcome, induction and transition (for new and returning students).

What opportunities are there for us (as teachers) to develop our teaching skills to ensure we produce online materials that students will find engaging and promote their learning?

Professor Judy Williams, Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning: There are many opportunities through the Institute for Teaching and Learning to enhance your online and blended teaching skills. These will be delivered through the [Institute for Teaching and Learning website](#) in combination with Faculty Teaching and Learning teams and eLearning teams to ensure that you get the support you need when you need it. In addition, we have created a Yammer group, [the Teaching and Learning Online Network](#), where colleagues can offer advice and support.

How can we convincingly address the concerns of undergraduate students who feel that they will not be getting value for money for the next academic year?

Professor April McMahon, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students: Our Minister, Michelle Donelan, has been very clear that the key issue is quality and standards – as long as we are supporting students to gain their qualification and protecting quality and standards, there is no case for a refund of tuition fees. Moving beyond that government framework, however, it is inevitable that both new and continuing students will have a sense of disappointment about the coming academic year purely because they feel it isn't what they signed up for – which is arguably more about the impact of social distancing on the on-campus co-curricular experience. It is going to be important for us to stress the efforts we are all going to, to ensure that the blended learning experience for students next year will be excellent. Our Students' Union has also been doing amazing work with online societies and we are prioritising academic community building and making friends in the enhanced welcome and induction offer we are designing now. And we shouldn't forget that students do choose a blended learning experience where they can, even when they are based on campus – our online UCIL units, for instance, are far and away the most popular. A lot of this comes down to reassurance, and local programme and School teams are also well placed to provide that reassurance through regular communications to students through the summer- I have seen some fantastic examples lately.

On-campus, in-person teaching (in seminars and other small classes) makes students feel they are 'really' at university and offers much that online teaching can't. However, classroom availability and safety issues may limit the amount of in-person teaching we can do. Could this be alleviated by timetabling in-person and online seminars in alternate weeks? (In other words, one week's seminar in person, the next week online.) This would relieve some pressure on classroom space.

Professor April McMahon, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students: This is a helpful and constructive suggestion, and is something our timetabling colleagues are starting to look at, just to figure out what the options are going to be. Freeing up our lecture theatres helps, but it doesn't get us all the space we need. Alternating is one option; giving students an option of a blended approach

or a face to face session is another (some of our students are very enthusiastic about seminars online, for instance, feeling much less worried and constrained by asking questions in that sort of forum). We do also need to look hard at ensuring we are using our teaching estate as fully as possible, which means throughout the teaching day and through the whole week.

Will Campus Solutions take into account that a lot of course units in FSE will be worth a reduced number of credits as the marks will be based on the coursework only? Our students on certain joint honours programs (and some others, too) take course units outside the FSE, mainly in Humanities. Will we be given the breakdown of their marks so that we can implement our no disadvantage policy?

Louise Walmsley, Director of Teaching, Learning and Student Development: The no-disadvantage approach will be applied by the Faculty which a student's overall degree programme is part of. So, for FSE programmes the FSE no-disadvantage approach will be applied, even if some of the units are delivered by the Faculty of Humanities. In terms of how assessment and progression is managed this year in Campus Solutions, there is [more information on this online](#) from our Student Data, Analysis and Records team.

We have students across four years of our pharmacy programme. I am receiving a lot of emails from students asking if they have to come to Manchester for the first semester. They are concerned about taking out leases on accommodation / private houses and being stuck in bedrooms while having very little if any contact. They are asking if they can stay at home and still register and complete the first semester.

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: We are planning to have students engaged in on-campus teaching that is supplemented by online materials and support from the start of their programme year. As such we encourage all students who can engage in on-campus learning to do so. We will need to be flexible however given the uncertain times and the specific needs or circumstances of individual students. As such we do also need to be in a position to offer online teaching for at least Semester 1. However, there may also be accrediting/regulatory body requirements that preclude this level of flexibility and students will need to be made aware of this.

Two hours on Zoom or equivalent and it feels like a day. It is tough at times. How will we manage this for programmes that normally have very high weekly contact hours? Best practices and guidance on how this work best would be good for our undergraduate courses

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: This is a consideration for both our teaching staff and students. The Institute for Teaching and Learning working with the Faculties is co-ordinating the sharing of best practice as we move to more creative and sustainable ways to deliver teaching online or in a blended format.

How do we encourage development of key skills such as; working in teams, adjusting communication styles, for students on healthcare programmes?

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: Our healthcare programmes are already actively considering how best to develop such key skills. Options such as online simulation sessions and an introduction to 'TeleHealth' have proved effective. The FBMH 'Clinical Placement Group' will be a focus for sharing such good practice and experience across programmes.

Return to campus

How will face to face classes be managed with Social Distancing? Will there have to be a mixture of booking up all the large rooms/lecture theatres for small groups to attend with distancing in place, and even then, will some classes have to be double-taught to manage class sizes?

Dr. Simon Merrywest, Director for the Student Experience: It will be through a combination of these measures, alongside other advice being developed by the sector and organisations like Public Health England. There is a working group considering how we return to campus safely which is planning a range of measures for each building (e.g. additional cleaning regimes). For teaching specifically, one of the reasons for saying up front that all semester one lectures will be online is to free larger spaces to allow smaller group teaching to run whilst still observing social distancing. We may have to consider other measures including mixed mode delivery (i.e. some face to face, but with streaming for students not yet physically able to be on campus) and possibly slightly extending the teaching day to take account of the likely longer transition times required between classes whilst observing social distancing. Double-teaching is a further option, but this is something that we would wish to avoid where at all possible.

We are all aware that the university are planning to cut jobs due to Covid-19. But what is the university doing to ensure that there will be enough staff (especially in PS/pastoral roles) to support students over the coming months? The student experience is at the heart of what we do, and it's times like these when many students will be seeking our support and help even more than usual.

Dr. Simon Merrywest, Director for the Student Experience: The voluntary measures announced recently have a 'local' approval step built into them in order that a range of factors are considered when making a decision to support a case for voluntary severance or, say, a reduction in hours. This includes the need to ensure that appropriate staff cover is still deployed to support students, which may involve moving roles from elsewhere or considering a different mode of delivery. You are right to highlight that at this time, more than ever, the focus on the student experience must be maintained. As one small example of this, 600 staff recently responded to the call to act as 'Check in and Chat' volunteers in order to support student wellbeing.

Can you please clarify why there are two weeks of induction being planned (especially for higher year)? Is this really necessary? This makes semester 1 shorter by one week. We will already have a lot of work to move most of our teaching online, but having a week removed requires yet more work when rethinking the content.

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: The slightly later start will provide us with time to support new students, through enhanced induction including a focus on English Language and employability. We can also welcome back returning students, all of whom have experienced disruption to teaching this year, in a more structured way. Induction will include both University and programme components.

If lockdown is fully lifted by government by September, but the virus is still in circulation, will 'vulnerable' or 'living with vulnerable' student/staff be allowed to study/work remotely?

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: We are following Government advice at all times in our planning and preparations for return to campus. The safety of our staff and students is always our priority and individual circumstances will be taken into account, on a case by case basis.

In view of the significant infection risks to patients, tutors and students on healthcare vocational programmes when on placement, to what extent can the University estate be used to support safer socially distanced student learning where possible?

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: This is a topic under discussion across our Health Professional programmes and in consultation with our regulators. There will need to be a balance between traditional clinical placement experience (and when and how this this can be offered safely across the academic year) with on-campus and online clinical simulation opportunities. How on-campus simulation and consultation facilities can be best utilised for this purpose is being actively explored.

What is going to happen to PGT and UGT technicians if there is not going to be any laboratory-based teaching this year?

Professor Gillian Wallis, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health: We are planning to offer our UGT and PGT students opportunities for laboratory based teaching over the coming academic year. We anticipate that our laboratory based teaching will need to be delivered with appropriate social distancing. UG and PGT technical support will be crucial to achieve this.

In the event of a limited socially-distanced return to campus in the autumn, and given the pressure on teaching rooms during a 'normal' semester, what are the University's plans for a staged return of students and staff, and how will decisions be made about who returns first? Following on from

that, is it possible to teach all students on campus in a socially distanced manner, even with some rooms being freed since all lectures will be online?

Professor April McMahon, Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students: We have a University group, chaired by Nalin Thakker, considering exactly these questions about priorities for access and reopening of the campus – obviously they are working closely within government guidelines. In terms of teaching options, you are right that freeing up our lecture theatres helps, but it doesn't get us all the space we need. Alternating so students might have a face to face seminar one week and an online one the next might be one option; giving students an option of a blended approach or a face to face session is another (some of our students are very enthusiastic about seminars online, for instance, feeling much less worried and constrained by asking questions in that sort of forum). We do also need to look hard at ensuring we are using our teaching estate as fully as possible, which means throughout the teaching day and through the whole week.