

Distinguished Achievement Awards 2022

Professional Services and Cultural Institutions awards

For both the individual and team awards the judges were looking for outstanding contributions plus evidence of how the individuals or teams have shown flexibility and agility and a willingness to embrace new challenges and change and, also, to show their determination to continuously improve. We were looking for team players not only within their own areas but across organizational boundaries and when working with external partners, teams also had to demonstrate that they have a shared ethos and have worked synergistically which has led to either a significant one-off achievement or to sustained high-level performance.

MECD Early Opening Team

During the initial lockdowns and campus closure in Spring 2020, the University postponed the opening of MECD (Manchester Engineering Campus Development) to September 2022. Though construction would continue – albeit at a slower pace – many of the University staff involved in the project were re-allocated to support COVID-19 mitigations, or furloughed.

However, due to increased admissions and uncertainty over COVID restrictions, a revised decision was taken in January 2021 that the ground, first and second floor of Engineering Buildings A and B would be opened in September 2021 to accommodate both the increased student numbers and the potential additional space requirements should social distancing continue.

The early opening required teams from across the University to work in true partnership, drawing on different skillsets and expertise. Despite the challenges associated with opening buildings of this size and complexity 12 months ahead of schedule, the teams worked well together. They delivered – at pace – new timetables, risk assessments, study spaces and training, culminating in a full support programme for student during Welcome Week.

The teams have received overwhelmingly positive comments from our staff and students about the building being available. Student focus groups held at the end of Semester 1 noted how comfortable the spaces were and how they particularly enjoyed the new informal study spaces with the style and set-up encouraging them to speak to students from other courses and departments; while staff members have reported how helpful the teams have been in facilitating the use of new spaces.

Domestic and Portering Service Team

The Domestic and Portering Team have demonstrated their commitment to our students and the University by the continuous provision of their service during the Coronavirus pandemic from March 2020 to the present time.

They have continued to have a daily presence on campus to ensure all our resident students have their needs met. This includes international students who were unable to leave the country, those who had to stay to complete their studies or care leavers for whom we provide all year round accommodation. The team attended work when people were fearful for themselves and their families and when risk of infection was high, even when many had high levels of personal anxiety.

The team have adapted to the changing demands and challenges put on them whether it be responding to changing risk assessments and procedures through changes to government guidance,

working in new locations within different teams, amending duties such as assisting with post, meal deliveries, laundry support and performing a welfare role beyond that of their job description.

Their resilience was significantly tested during the lockdown period in the second wave when residents were unable to access the academic campus for lectures. The behaviours presented by a number of residents were challenging and the team faced a lot of antagonism on issues outside of their control.

Despite this, they have always demonstrated a can-do positive outlook provided a vital service to our students and the wider University.

Debbie Allan, Customer Services Manager, UoM Library

Debbie Allan, Customer Services Manager for the UoM library manages the largest and most visible team in one of the UK's largest University Libraries and has been responsible for steering her team through numerous lockdown scenarios as one of the few consistently present teams on campus.

Debbie's knowledge and experience ensured her team response when the University closed on 17 March 2020 was calm, professional and customer focussed; she was last to leave site that day in an effort to ensure that the final rush of panicked students could borrow what they needed. By 9.00 am the next morning Debbie had made sure her team were up and running online, helping students find what they needed via our extensive digital collections. Under her guidance over the coming weeks, the team demonstrated just what an amazing level of customer service they could offer through Library Chat combined with an imaginative use of Microsoft Teams.

Debbie also worked hard to encourage other specialist and second line enquiry teams onto the Library Chat platform, so that customer referrals could be handled seamlessly, and establishing a pattern that would see us through many further lockdowns to come.

Once the situation began to ease, Debbie played a pivotal role in planning the return to a physical service on campus. Debbie's extensive experience, knowledge and wisdom gave her the confidence to devise a plan that would see her team pioneering a successful approach, leading the way for other library teams to follow.

Stuart Phillipson, Assistant eLearning Manager, Humanities Faculty Office, Teaching Learning & Student Experience (TLSE), Humanities eLearning

In summer 2021 in response to COVID-19, the Humanities Leadership Team decided to offer, during the first semester of 2021-22, a remote study option to students who were not able to come and study on campus.

To accommodate remote students while responding to strong student calls for a return to on-campus teaching, Humanities opted for a new delivery: the teaching of on and off campus students simultaneously.

Stuart Phillipson has been the architect of this dual delivery. In doing so, he has advanced practice on over 900 course units dual delivered in semester 1 alone, pioneering new forms of flexible teaching that Manchester can be recognised for across the sector and globally.

Dual delivery was not only large-scale but a complex for the range of technical challenges but also for it involved the need to successfully bring on board and work together with other University services – Media Services, Estates and IT Services.

Stuart is a highly dedicated individual who, committed to excellence in innovation, worked well beyond the call of duty to deliver a positive innovative teaching experience in times of a pandemic. Throughout the project Stuart received extremely positive feedback from Schools and PS staff alike, demonstrating not only his professional calibre but also responsive but also absolute dedication to the success of the venture.

Ellen Stephenson, Sport Co-ordinator

Despite all the challenges faced over the last 12 months, Ellen Stephenson has consistently shown resilience, professionalism and positivity in her role as Sport Coordinator.

Not only has she delivered her core priorities, she has taken on additional workload and line management responsibilities meaning she now oversees 70+ contracted coaches as well as the Sport Intern.

Ellen has had to be creative and solution focused ensuring students are able to access valuable volunteering opportunities.

To ensure that students felt connected to sport and volunteering opportunities Ellen organised a weekly online drop in session for students to dial into to discuss concerns, share ideas and find out what they could access during COVID restrictions.

Ellen took part in the Manchester Gold Programme in 2019-20 and still meets with her mentor to discuss her professional development.

She was also successful in getting a position on the BUCS Workforce Development board. Here she is able to work with peers across the sector which allows her to be both up to date with workforce and volunteering opportunities and programs, as well as sharing good practice from the University.

She has made significant changes to the relationships with coaches, ensuring improvements to the way they are paid and taking time to value their contributions.

This has resulted in positive relationships with the coaches and ultimately the services they are providing to our students have improved.