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Initial Evaluation of COVID-19 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Contingency Arrangements

July 2020

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Introduction and Overview of Contingency Arrangements

In February 2020 CCT established a COVID-19 Monitoring and Response Team (MRT). The MRT met frequently throughout February and early March and undertook a risk assessment to identify the operational, governance, technology and regulatory matters that would be impacted by College campus closure and the mechanisms and contingency arrangements required to counteract this. As a result, the College was in a position to act quickly when the Government announced the closure of all education institutions. A detailed, research-informed contingency plan was drafted and agreed by the Executive Leadership Team and submitted to Academic Council for approval.

The health and wellbeing of all members of the CCT College community was identified as the top priority in developing and implementing contingency arrangements. The College agreed a policy position of adhering to government advice and recommendations from the outset. As the country and the College moves into different stages of reopening, any measures taken by the College to recommence on-campus activities will factor in maximum opportunities to manage risk.

The initial contingency arrangements of the College were informed by research and consultation across Ireland and internationally and resulted in Academic Council approving the following:

1. The continuation of programmes and the ongoing management and support of learners using a technology enabled approach subject to:
 - Being limited to the period of restrictions imposed due to COVID-19
 - The ongoing monitoring and commitment to essential enhancement insofar as is reasonable and practicable in the timeframe under consideration.

2. The replacement of all face to face assessments with either an alternative mode of submission or alternative mode of assessment, determined by the module learning outcomes to be assessed and the suitability of the proposed approach. In all cases:
 - All assessments will seek to assess the attainment of learning outcomes and will further incorporate the opportunity for students to evidence attainment beyond the learning outcomes.
 - Proposals will be considered in the context of all modules and assessments in the period under consideration and due regard will be given to suitable variety in assessment and the appropriate planning of assessment load and timings.
 - Semester assessment schedules and proposals will evidence incorporation of good practice guidelines and be subject to internal approval by the Dean of School.
 - All assessment changes will be subject to External Examiner approval.
 - Students will be given sufficient advanced notification of changes and, where possible, afforded the opportunity to undertake practice assessments in the same mode.
 - Monitoring of student performance, progression and award will be considered in the context of these unprecedented circumstances.

Changes Implemented

Contingency arrangements included implementation of the following:

Communications

- A dedicated COVID-19 updates section was added to the CCT website and updated regularly
- Faculty Coordinators and Student Services each established a virtual office and notified students of the ability to virtually drop in over extended office hours
- Regular bulletins were published on Moodle to keep students up to date along with communications, including a video message from the President.
- Technology tools including Google Chat, Google Hangout, Padlet and Slack were used to facilitate instant messaging, meetings and communications between staff and students or for staff to contact one another
- A notice board was created on Moodle and regularly populated to provide students with access to matters of interest or support
- Initially, an all Staff meeting was held virtually each Friday. As the contingency arrangements became more established this was no longer required
- Management updates were communicated to all staff and faculty on a regular basis
- Smaller team / cross-team meetings took place online
- Live chat was introduced to the main website with dedicated staff assigned over extended office hours
- Frequent dissemination of information, resources and services to support the mental health of students and staff
- Feedback mechanisms were introduced to allow students to inform the College of their experience, their concerns or just to ask questions.
- Class reps had a virtual meeting with the President and Head of Student Services for information sharing
- An online and telephone Assessment Helpline was set up for the duration of the alternative assessment period
- An alternative assessment FAQ database was established and shared with students
- Video meetings were made available to current and potential learners

Governance

- Agile responsive approach undertaken by senior management to further invest in online and tech enabled delivery
- The MRT continued to monitor developments and publications on a national level and to identify and implement all matters required of a HEI.
- All meetings were moved online.
- The Operations Meeting increased in frequency initially.
- The Executive Leadership Team moved from scheduled fortnightly meetings to daily interactions for the initial period of closure and subsequently to weekly interactions
- Academic Council, in approving contingency arrangements for teaching and alternative assessment, introduced a new internal sign-off process for proposed alternative assessments prior to submission to external examiners

- External examiner interaction, review of assessments, internal boards and Boards of Examiner meetings were all facilitated online
- Student input through Academic Council membership, class rep meetings, general student feedback and national publications from USI and NStEP was used to inform decision-making
- Continued progression of strategic objectives

Quality Assurance

- All changes to teaching and assessment practices were documented and subject to approval by Academic Council and external examiners, as applicable.
- Regulations were approved to reflect the specific requirements of the alternative assessments.
- URKUND Plagiarism Detection policy and the URKUND software settings which allow students the opportunity to submit drafts were amended to remove the ability to submit a draft in advance of final submission in the case of online open book assessments.
- Regulatory requirements for participation in online exams / quizzes and statements of responsibilities in respect of all alternative assessments were approved.
- Implications of technology failure were factored into existing policies for late submission and non-submission of assessment and in the context of no-repeat for honours.
- Revision of PMC policy to include accepting employment matters or family / household circumstances as grounds for personal mitigating circumstances and accepting applications without medical certificates or other supporting evidence in recognition of students working as frontline or essential workers, challenging home circumstances and inability to access GPs as easily.
- Online support guides on matters such as review, recheck and appeal and personal mitigating circumstances were created.
- Continued provision of reasonable accommodations in response to specific needs and revisiting all reasonable accommodation applications of existing students to ensure suitability of supports and accommodations in the online context

Supports for Staff

An initial introduction to teaching online using a flipped classroom approach was provided to all teaching staff

- A programme of workshops to support faculty become comfortable with the technologies used to teach online were implemented during the first week of closure (student reading week)
- A “tech buddy” was assigned to each timetabled class to provide technical support to teaching faculty should any issues arise
- Research that informed the contingency planned was shared with teaching faculty
- One to one technical and academic support was provided to assist teaching staff in creating online quizzes, MCQs and online exams.
- Continued support through the Centre for Teaching and Learning and resource sharing internally or through national networks
- Teaching Excellence Seminar Series moved online and focused on matters specific to teaching, learning and assessment in the online context

- Provision of office and IT equipment made available to staff / faculty at home
- Non-teaching staff agreed alternative working hours and arrangements to accommodate their home circumstances and to facilitate provision of out of hours supports to students
- An online lecturing toolkit with video guides on how to use particular tools was created on Moodle, The Toolkit advocates a 'pedagogy first' approach to the use of digital tools.
- A professional development bulletin of relevant webinars and recordings were circulated to all staff and faculty at regular intervals
- One to one updates and wellbeing checks undertaken by the College President with all staff
- Free online professional counselling and mental health support

Supports for Students

- Regular communication was the foundation of all support for learners
- Online induction to the virtual classroom and online learning tools
- Introduction of the virtual open office with extended out of hours services through email, phone and live chat, providing students with access to faculty coordinators and student support staff
- Student support mentoring service extended to cover out of hours
- Expansion of fully CCT subsidised online professional counselling services provided by a range of counsellors throughout Ireland with services provided in multiple languages to reflect the student demographic
- Dissemination of resources, information and services to help students manage their mental health or access supports to assist with this
- Access to the online library and provision of online library and academic support classes such as study skills, academic writing, research skills, developing a research proposal etc.
- Provision of dedicated academic support sessions to facilitate lecturer-student interaction between classes
- Student Mentoring Academy (peer mentoring service provided by students for students, overseen by the Centre for Teaching and Learning) moved online
- A suite of online support guides was introduced to help students understand the expectations and requirements of different alternative assessments
- Careers services moved online, and accompanying online support guides were created.
- Student on- campus laptop loan scheme was extended to off campus provision for those students who didn't have access to a laptop or PC (only 4 students availed of this).
- Specialist software required by specific programmes was made available at home to students registered on those programmes
- Live classes were recorded to support students unable to access them at the scheduled time.
- Online social events were introduced for both staff and students, separately and together
- College subsidised weekly virtual yoga classes for students
- Continuation of supports after semester end – pastoral and academic e.g. free online ICT skills summer bootcamp

Evaluation of Effectiveness of Contingency Arrangements

General

From the perspective of management, support staff and teaching faculty, the most significant challenge was noted as lack of time to implement the extent of preparation that would normally precede and inform the transitioning of programmes to an online mode of delivery. This applied in terms of developing both staff and students to have the confidence and competence to engage in online delivery, learning activities and assessments, in terms of the time it takes to develop high quality, engaging and interactive online lessons and the time it takes to design alternative assessments.

Teaching and Learning

CCT continued the delivery of all programmes but moved them online. Each programme saw a successful conclusion of the semester with all scheduled classes completed. Given the sudden nature of the move to online, the College took the decision to continue programme delivery in accordance with the on-campus timetable. Faculty were encouraged to adopt a flipped classroom approach, given the limited number with previous experience of teaching online. A recorded guide to using the flipped classroom approach in online programme delivery was issued to all faculty on March 13th. The following week was reading week for the College and two further workshops to train faculty in the use of approved online platforms took place during that week. Subsequent to this, prior to complete national lockdown, faculty could opt to deliver classes from campus. Regardless of the location of delivery, technical support was assigned to every class. Additional support for faculty was also provided through the Centre for Teaching and Learning to assist in developing competence in teaching and facilitating learning online. Throughout the semester the CCT Teaching Excellence Seminar Series moved online and switched its focus to matters related to online pedagogy and online tools.

The main challenges reported by teaching faculty are typical of those engaging with online teaching for the first time, particularly in a scenario which was largely unforeseen. For many faculty some lessons were learned quickly such as not using text heavy slides and breaking video content down into bite sized chunks. Some teachers felt the 2-hour live class was too long to maintain momentum and engagement and dividing the full lesson into smaller combinations of synchronous and asynchronous learning events would be more effective. A common theme appears to be the reluctance of students to interact, particularly in non-award stage classes. Student feedback confirmed this, with a percentage of students claiming they were either too shy to speak in the online forum or their living circumstances didn't allow for it.

Other challenges identified by teaching faculty include:

- Difficulty in determining student understanding and being able to pace the class correctly with the absence of non-verbal indicators
- Ensuring whole class engagement and interaction rather than just the enthusiastic few
- Working out which tools are most suited to specific learner groups
- Attempting to include too many tools in the one class
- Trying to keep an eye on chat while lecturing was a challenge – logging in on a separate device to manage chat addressed this.
- Non-award stage students were less likely to interact voluntarily

- Using the Slack channel as a chat tool was beneficial but the number of messages can become overwhelming – need to set expectations on availability.

Many lecturers used Google Meets to deliver their live classes. While not designed as a virtual classroom it does allow for live interactions and engagement and was a platform that all teaching staff were familiar with in CCT. Some faculty integrated this with the use of other approved tools to maximise opportunities for interaction. The College has also invested in Zoom for education, which was used by some teaching staff based on their own preference. Staff feedback indicates a desire for increased use of additional functionality in these tools, such as breakout rooms and whiteboard tools to increase interactivity to address some of the challenges relating to student interaction and engagement. This is supported by student feedback which identified variety in the teaching approach used by lecturers with some making classes highly interactive and engaging and others predominantly relying on text heavy slides which they read from. Student praise for lecturers was high but in some isolated instances there were recommendations for lecturers to be trained in the use of alternative tools. Faculty identified further training as the biggest priority for them going forward.

Incorporating directed learning activities for completion as part of the class or between classes was identified as increasing the workload for teaching faculty and while it was generally welcomed by students, College workload was identified in some cases as the reason for not completing these. Non-award stage students reported an average of 2-4 hours independent study per module per week, with some requiring less than one hour and a minimal number of learners reporting greater than 4 hours in a minority of modules. Award stage students indicated between 2-4 hours or greater than 4 hours independent study per module per week with the greatest numbers reporting over 4 hours per week for capstone modules. The most common reason for non-completion of learning tasks, however, was employment commitments. Only one award stage group indicated College workload as the biggest barrier to them completing activities.

The removal of face to face interaction between learners and also learner / lecturer interaction was referenced as a key change and one that many students felt impacted on their learning experience. A variety of alternative communication tools were identified with the general consensus being that lecturers were available to provide support but the loss of the immediate interaction that happens in class detracted from this.

Single stage level 8 award learners (Level 8 add-on, Higher diploma), in some cases appeared to anticipate a more directed learning approach. These learner groups include those who only joined the College in February 2020 so had very little experience of the learning approach prior to moving online. It is not possible to determine if this perception is a direct result of the online teaching approach but nonetheless it alerts the College to including greater emphasis within induction on the increasingly independent and self-directed nature of study expected of level 8 learners. Students reported feeling comfortable and confident in the technology platforms and tools used and the majority reported finding the transition easier than expected. Teaching faculty described the semester as challenging and stressful but also found the experience enjoyable, interesting and engaging and identified learnings they will continue into their teaching practice on campus.

Academic Standards and Integrity

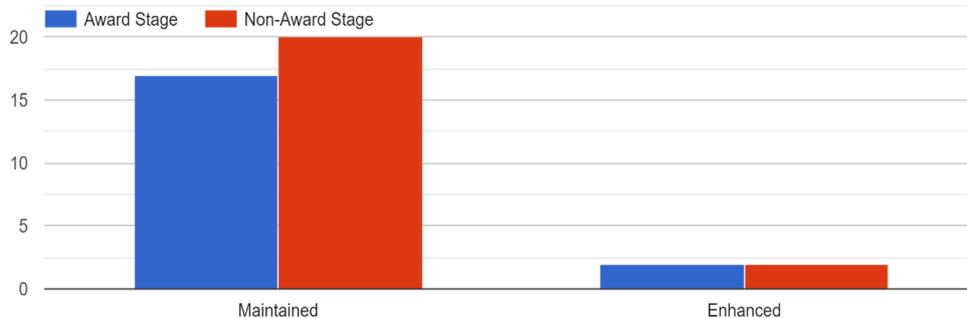
Academic integrity was highlighted as key area for consideration at the outset of the closure and was a central element of discussion in the formulation and approval of the contingency plan. Initially, faculty held concerns that alternative assessments raised the potential for increased academic misconduct. Consultation across the higher education sector, engagement with peer networks and review of research and good practice resulted in a number of different mechanisms being implemented. Primarily, faculty opted to replace face to face exams with time limited open book assessments and therefore questions were designed to reflect students having access to information sources. The requirement to submit these assessments through URKUND was an essential element of such assessments and the standard policy that allows students to submit drafts to URKUND was revised for these assessments to limit URKUND use to one final submission only. In some instances, faculty utilised online exams which were time restricted at either question or exam level, or both, and involved random question allocation from a bank of questions to reduce the potential for collusion. Practical lab assessments were replaced with virtual lab activities or case study and problem-based assessments. Additional initiatives included online presentations, video submissions and live discussions. In all instances, the right to request a student to participate in a viva voce interview was communicated to students.

When asked about impact on academic standards and outcomes, all learner groups generally felt that outcomes were met, and reported satisfaction with the standard of teaching, the acquisition of new knowledge and assessments providing them with the opportunity to demonstrate this. There was a repeated concern about individual ability to perform to their potential. The primary causes were associated with lack of motivation to study and inability to study due to distractions as well as being too shy to ask for help in live classes. There was some concern about the assessment load and accessing reliable sources for research. First year students in particular were very concerned about exam expectations. Some students expressed concern about the potential for cheating, but the main concern for students was their ability to perform to their full potential, particularly where time restrictions of specified hours, rather than days, were included in assessment parameters. Significant work was undertaken at institution, programme and module level to promote academic integrity and strengthen students' understanding of sound academic conduct and also to combat concerns about assessment requirements and expectations. In order to alleviate student concerns the following measures were put in place:

- An assessment FAQ database was published,
- Online guides relating to different types of alternative assessments were made available, see <http://learningspace.cct.ie/subjects/index.php>,
- Sample alternative assessments were provided,
- Study skills, referencing and academic integrity classes along with the full range of library support classes were made available online
- An alternative assessment helpline was set up for students to drop in to at any point

The College took the view that providing additional resources and supports to help alleviate assessment related anxiety and promote the requirements and expectations of alternative assessments would deter students from seeking deferrals, withdrawing from their programme, or being tempted to engage in conduct that may compromise the academic integrity of their work. Once these supports were brought to the students' attention, there was a notable drop in assessment related concerns outside of class. However, many teaching faculty reported ongoing

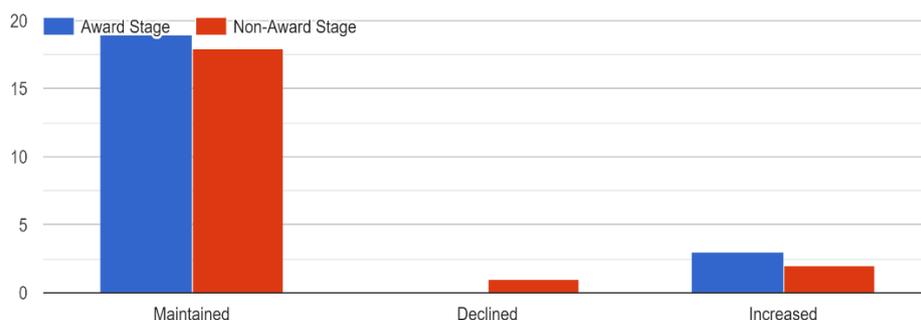
evidence of assessment anxiety within the classes. The benefit of the supports implemented is well reported by faculty and students alike and will continue to be built upon moving forward. Teaching Faculty were asked for their views on both academic integrity and academic standards. In respect of academic integrity, while a minority felt integrity had been enhanced the significant majority felt it had been maintained and nobody felt it had declined.



The most common justifications for this were:

- Higher level of support to students
- Expectations clearly articulated
- Existing structures and practices retained
- Students used the opportunity for review of drafts
- The College provided constant support
- Use of randomised questions in online exams
- Time restrictions
- Concept of plagiarism and its implications were reinforced
- Assessments designed to reflect students having access to third party material or sources
- Use of authentic assessment recognising that in the world of work students have access to other sources
- Assessments submitted through URKUND
- Use of presentations to supplement written assessments
- Potential for a viva voce interview
- Removal / reduction of potential for teacher bias due to lack of face to face interaction

Teaching Faculty predominantly feel that academic standards were maintained in both the award and non-award stage teaching. One person felt the standard declined in the non-award stage, three felt it had increased in the award stage and two felt it had increased in the non-award stage.



Faculty justified their responses and, in general, the assertion that standards were maintained or increased is explained as follows:

- Students benefited from increased resources being provided to mitigate loss of face to face
- Faculty providing varied means for students to contact them, and students capitalising on this
- Discussion and engagement were increased in some cases.
- The College provided the supports to help maintain the standards
- Recording classes and providing video-based content allowed students to revisit them

With regards to the view that non-award stage standards declined, this was explained as being a result of the online learning experience not being as productive.

Verbal reports from External Examiners commended the level of commitment and the approaches taken to ensure protection of academic standards and the use of effective assessment tools with remote learners.

A total of 29 cases of academic impropriety were upheld by the Academic Standards Board. Twenty of these were non-award stage and the remaining nine incidents were award stage with three of the nine relating to the one student. The total number represents a marginal increase on previous years. It is difficult to determine whether this increase results from the use of alternative assessment approaches, increased awareness within the teaching faculty following recent College and sectoral initiatives, the College's migration to Urkund plagiarism detection software, or a combination of these factors.

As a result of student concerns relating to attaining their potential, likely fed by media activity on the topic, the College was approached to consider the introduction of a no-detriment policy. The merits and challenges of such a policy were debated and it was felt that adoption of a policy had the potential to deter students from fully engaging, which may ultimately impact on retention, and may also result in students not making a real attempt at assessment. The College took the decision to continue without a no-detriment policy but advised the student body that performance in the semester prior to the closure would be compared with performance during the semester of the closure and that Boards of Examiners would exercise their decision-making authority where it was felt that circumstances had impacted student performance.

A review of student performance, as described, identified that in general, performance was largely consistent with previous cohorts and, generally, there was no notable difference in individual

student performance between the previous semester and the semester under consideration. Some students improved their performance. Student survey feedback suggests that this may stem from pandemic unemployment allowing more time to study, recorded lectures allowing revisiting or catching up on missed classes, and increased availability of reliable, rich information sources provided by teaching faculty. In some cases, individual student performance did decline with poor performance or non-participation. In the majority of these cases the College was aware of personal mitigating circumstances of the students concerned. The level of assessment deferrals or non-participation was in line with previous years.

Overall the analysis of stakeholder feedback and consideration of assessment performance indicates successful implementation of effective contingency arrangements.

Communication and Supports

CCT has always operated an open-door approach for students, staff and potential students. Identifying and implementing effective means of continuing this was a priority and not having forewarning of the College closure meant that this was a challenge that had to be addressed with urgency. The College quickly implemented a range of tools including live chat, video conferencing, online meetings, virtual office drop-ins and a virtual appointments service in addition to the existing text-based communication tools such as email and Slack. Many of the communication channels had been highlighted as future enhancements as the College looks to increase capacity and further digitise its campus. The closure resulted in fast-tracking these to ensure maximum support for students and staff in an unprecedented situation.

In the post semester survey of teaching faculty, 100% of the respondents asserted that they felt they were supported by the College throughout the closure. Student survey results identify a high level of satisfaction with the supports and receipt of regular feedback from lecturers was consistently identified as a further benefit, particularly in preparing for alternative assessments. The College has recognised that different communication channels has the potential for student confusion and also requires clear parameters to manage expectations. As a new online induction programme is under development, reflecting delivery of the programmes continuing as blended or online, familiarising learners with the different channels and the role and purpose of the different ones will form a part of this. The virtual appointments service for potential students and the virtual office drop-in service for existing students were both identified by staff and students as valuable and effective. The use of these will be continued and extended.

Personal Circumstances

Continuation of programmes and provision of services along with support for learners and staff in the context of personal circumstances was difficult to predict and fully foresee.

Staff and students worked through the semester balancing College requirements with managing their own underlying health conditions, caring for elderly or high-risk family members, home schooling young children, removal of childcare / creche facilities etc. Some students were frontline or essential workers with increased employment demands, there were heightened mental health related concerns caused by the isolation, loss of employment and, for international students the added anxiety relating to COVID-19 media reports and communications from family members in their home country. The potential of students and staff having to self-isolate was also factored in

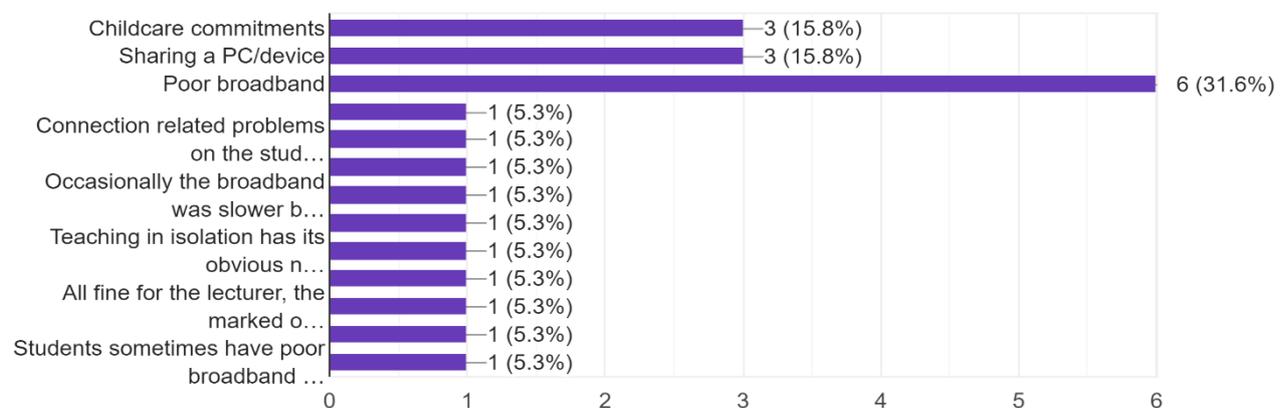
along with recognition that many students live in shared accommodation without adequate private study space. The student survey results cited mental health / anxiety, employment demands and lack of suitable study space as the main challenges students faced.

Mental health and well-being of students was identified as a matter of notable concern in the planning stage and became increasingly apparent. The College commenced upscaling of the CCT subsidised online counselling service in anticipation of increased demand prior to the closure. This proved invaluable, particularly as the services the College contracts are available in multiple languages, making it more accessible to international learners. The College intends to continue with the increased availability of services.

The provision of the virtual office drop-in replaced the on-campus Main Office and Student Services and enabled students to have a private video discussion with a member of student services or administration. This was vital to managing student mental health, supporting students with their general college related concerns and assisting students considering deferrals, withdrawals or extensions. Student feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction and appreciation for the supports provided and staff feedback indicates that the virtual office is a useful resource to continue with on return to on-campus activities.

Student feedback did indicate that the move to online had resulted in an increase in student workload and the alternative assessment approaches further increased this. This is recognised by teaching faculty and consideration of increased use of integrated or cross modular assessment is being undertaken for the upcoming semester.

Access to reliable internet was a concern for both students and staff. Teaching faculty were asked to outline the barriers to their teaching. While a small number outlined childcare commitments and sharing a pc/device as a barrier, the primary issue was poor broadband. Six teachers identified this as an issue for themselves and three identified it as an issue for students, impacting their teaching.



In the vast majority of cases students reported accessing their classes and materials through a laptop. A limited number used a PC and a very small minority indicated use of a mobile. Non-award stage students were more likely to report sharing a device, but this was only very limited numbers. The College extended its on-campus laptop loan scheme and arranged for home delivery of laptops to those learners who identified as requiring a device. Only 4 students availed of this option. While there was minimal disruption resulting from this, the College has recognised the need to be more explicit in promotional materials of the requirement for students to have access to a laptop or PC and off campus internet in order to ensure all students are prepared for an equivalent scenario in the future.

Lessons Learned

The duration of the semester was a great learning opportunity for the College and, on reflection, pushed the College to more rapidly implement structures that were planned for the future stages of blended learning developments. Overall, despite being enforced and therefore largely unplanned, moving all provision and services online provided valuable feedback and assurance to the College in terms of its preparedness for teaching online. The College blended learning strategy had informed a steady and planned move towards blended learning delivery. This was intended to be “light touch” online with significant on-campus teaching and learning remaining at the core to allow the College to grow its confidence in online delivery and establish support services, platforms and techniques suited to the business and IT disciplines. Completion of the semester through a wholly online approach has enabled the College to more rapidly progress its intentions in this regard quite significantly with valuable insights into what is highly effective, what needs further consideration and what remains best addressed in a face to face format. Perhaps the most significant lesson learned, based on stakeholder feedback is that the College and its staff (including faculty) are more advanced and better prepared for maximising technology in programme delivery than had been initially anticipated.

Key Lessons

Key lessons include:

- The investment in digital infrastructure and resources along with the upgrading of Moodle to act as the student management system has provided a sound framework in which to manage students, communication, programme and service delivery and assessment.
- Increased investment and availability of in-house CPD for staff and teaching faculty, particularly in respect to the use of technologies and teaching, learning and assessment through technology served the College well, is greatly valued by staff and faculty and continues to be in demand. Please see the Appendix for a list of in-house and external CPD undertaken by staff since the commencement of the Pandemic.
- The multi-prong approach to communication ensuring all parties are continually informed is the cornerstone of successful online engagement. Ensuring that this includes a good balance of text based and live interactions is important. Identifying opportunities for further rich online interactions will be of added benefit.
- Recording lectures is greatly preferred by students and contributes towards effective learning and improved assessment performance. Opportunities to facilitate recording on-campus classes remains an objective for the year ahead.
- Continuing to give all stakeholders a voice and ensuring that change is something that is introduced in a sensitive way that recognises the personal challenges individuals may face is vital to success.
- Online lessons following the existing on-campus schedule kept a structure and familiarity that gave comfort to students and faculty and removed the need to completely reorganise timetables in a period of significant upheaval. However, greater flexibility in lesson design and construct will be of greater benefit and allow for the student-centred approach advocated by the CCT Teaching and Learning Strategy. The composition of lessons going forward will be a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning events using online and, where possible, on campus interactions, with the lesson structure being led by

the pedagogy in the context of the specific learner cohort needs, the award level and the discipline.

- Alternative assessments worked well in maintaining academic standards and providing opportunities for students to demonstrate attainment of learning outcomes. However, the replacement of exams resulted in a notable increase in workload for students. Moving forward, increased opportunities for integrated assessments will be considered. Similarly, assessment strategies need to be designed in a way that ensures assessment is not being used as a replacement for face-to-face interactions.
- Embedding use of the online library and the online library support services / classes within the core curriculum will further enhance students' research capacity, the reliability of information sources utilised and raise students' awareness of the range of supports the library offers.
- Provision of virtual office services allowing video interaction with support staff is highly valued by students, considered time effective by staff, and, within the context of published opening hours, will be a useful resource for both on-campus and remote learners.
- Provision of fully subsidised professional counselling services in multiple languages continues to be an important resource.

Continued Contingency Arrangements for 20/21 Academic Year

Overall, the contingency arrangements implemented in the 2019/20 academic year were successful, albeit challenging. Lessons were learned which will serve to further enhance the continuation of contingency arrangements but overall it is proposed that the arrangements for teaching will continue, largely unchanged for 20/21 semester 1. Opportunities for on campus face to face interaction will be incorporated where this can be effectively risk managed. It is envisaged that modules will continue to be primarily taught online but with the option of small group tutorials being either on-campus or virtual. Similarly, within the parameters of government guidelines, some on campus lab sessions may also be accommodated. Where on campus sessions take place, an online equivalent will be implemented for those learners who cannot, or prefer not to, attend the college campus.

As the national landscape in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic is impossible to predict, it is also proposed that the assessment arrangements for semester one of the 20/21 academic year will continue in accordance with the contingency arrangements approved at the March 2019 Academic Council Meeting, subject to enhancements stemming from review. The proposal to continue existing contingency arrangements, with the addition of some low risk on campus activities and services, was approved by Academic Council at its meeting on July 7th, 2020, having considered the stakeholder feedback.

An additional factor for the year ahead is the recruitment of students to programmes that will commence being delivered via contingency arrangements but may revert back to the validated programme delivery and assessment arrangements at some stage. The College recognises this and has ensured all returning students and potential students are fully informed about the possible implications for classes and assessments based upon government advice.

The safety and wellbeing of staff and students in reopening the campus will remain as the top priority. Recognising that the 20/21 academic year may operate in a state of flux with changing Government guidelines, operating within the boundaries of social distancing and space restrictions, and the possibility of a resurgence of the virus along with the need to build confidence in staff and students regarding feeling safe to access the campus, the main teaching, learning and assessment priorities for the year ahead are:

Moving from a model of crisis response to a planned and structured model of online / blended learning

Lessons will continue to be timetabled to reflect the on-campus schedule so that any decision to revert to on campus delivery can occur without significant disruption. However, programme teams will determine the online programme structure and the structure of lessons within each module, made up of a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning. While the combination of directed learning activities will continue to reflect the validated hours, the live class duration will vary from module to module, week to week, led by the pedagogy in the context of learner needs and the discipline. Moodle will be central to ensuring the effective management of this approach to facilitate a positive student experience and prevent the potential for confusion.

Faculty will receive advance notification of their teaching allocations to facilitate early preparation of teaching materials and learning activities. A stage level approach will be undertaken to ensure an integrated and cohesive student experience and to better manage workload demands made of students.

Creating an environment that facilitates rich virtual social interaction

The College is building an enhanced orientation and induction programme that equips learners to actively engage and interact in the online environment and sets the expectations for their participation in this format from the outset. Furthermore, the College will also implement mechanisms that promote and facilitate creation of learning communities and raise awareness of the range of support services and facilities available including an online learning toolkit. Promoting interactivity in lesson design will be central in promoting rich social interaction online. This combination of approaches is intended to address concerns highlighted in student feedback relating to managing personal motivation as well as factors pertaining to mental wellbeing and workload.

Continuing to Support Students, Staff and Faculty

In response to staff and faculty feedback the planned programme of professional development will continue throughout the summer and the 20/21 academic year. This will be delivered in the context of the two above-named objectives. The provision of professional development for staff and faculty will enrich the student experience and complement the existing academic, social and pastoral supports that will continue to be made available and monitored for further expansion, as may be required.

Appendix 1: CPD Undertaken Since March 2020

All CPD activity undertaken by staff at CCT is recorded on a central institutional register. Below is a list of internal and external CPD undertaken by a wide range of faculty, management, library and student support staff since the COVID-19 pandemic commenced. Recordings of webinars that staff are unable to attend are disseminated via a monthly CCT Professional Development Bulletin.

Ahead

- Annual Conference
- Preparing for Virtual Interview
- Creating Accessible Word Documents
- Creating and Delivering Accessible Powerpoint Presentations
- Converting Powerpoint and Uploading it to Youtube

CCT Excellence in Teaching Series

‘Apps to promote student engagement’ by Ken Mccarthy, Head of the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning, WIT

CCT Internal Workshops/presentations/Resources

- Google Hangouts as a Virtual Classroom
- Flipped Learning Methodologies
- Subjectsplus Training
- Online Teaching Toolkit
- Online tutorials on H5P, Padlet and Mentimeter (available on Arc)
- Monthly PD Bulletin with notifications and recordings of webinars

European and Distance Elearning Network (Pandemic Series)

- How to Start Teaching Online
- Online Teaching Competencies
- Instructional Design
- Developing 21st Century Skills by Teaching Online
- How to Design and Manage Assessments for Online Learning
- How to Engage Students in the Online Environment

- How Do We Plan for Education After a Pandemic
- Microcredentials day
- Managing the Onslaught of fake news during COVID-19

Futurelearn

- Getting Started with Online Learning

International Academic Integrity Centre

- Academic Integrity Goes Remote 1
- Academic Integrity Goes Remote 2 (Technological Tools and Tips)
- Academic Integrity Goes Remote 3 (Policies)

Irish University Association's IUADigEd Webinar Series

- 'What Just Happened?' re the migration to online teaching
- 'Planning for Effective Remote Teaching'
- 'Supporting Learners Through Remote Teaching'
- Open Educational Resources and copyright
- Index Survey
- DCU's Universal Design Toolkit (Creative Commons Licence)

MoodleMunch Series DCU

- H5P for pre-orientation, study skills and formative feedback
- Video Capture and Storage

National Forum Seminar Series/Events

- Open Educational Resources
- Launch of the Index Report
- #Openteach course in partnership with DCU
 - Teaching Online is Different
 - Getting Started With Online Teaching

- Social Presence in Online Teaching
- Facilitating Discussion in Online Teaching
- Supporting Students in Online Learning
- Teaching Live Online Classes

National Student Engagement Programme

- National Networking Event

Tony Bates Short Course on Teaching in A Digital Age (Open Access)

Tony is a Research Associate with Contact Nord (Ontarios' Distance Learning Network)

- Skills Needed In A Digital Age
- Online Teaching Methods
- Implementing Online Learning
- Understanding the Learner
- Theories of Learning
- Learner Support
- Choosing Media
- Assessment Strategies
- Trends in Open Learning
- MOOCs
- Emerging Trends