

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

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

College	College of Social Science
Provision covered	<p>Unit of Learning</p> <p>The outcome of annual monitoring across the five schools was reported to College with all undergraduate units and courses within the College subject to a review process. Academic Services (PGCAP/MEd) has been included with the College for reporting purposes. This report has been informed by the <i>abridged</i> School AMRs provided by the Quality Officers responsible for undergraduate provision across all of the Schools that comprise the College:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adam Smith Business School: Dr Alexander Kovalenkov</li> <li>• School of Education: Dr Julie Harvie</li> <li>• School of Interdisciplinary Studies: Dr Alexander Whitelaw</li> <li>• School of Law: Dr Dot Reid</li> <li>• School Social &amp; Political Sciences UG Studies: Dr Sophia Dingli</li> <li>• <i>Academic Services</i>: Dr Vicki H.M. Dale</li> </ul> <p>Dr Robert Doherty, College Quality Officer.</p>
Collaborative Provision covered	

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

What is working well?

### **Adam Smith Business School**

- The expansion of Inductions in some of our programmes was well received by students and has had a positive impact on the student cohort.
- Students particularly appreciated the use of teaching labs.
- Variety of assessment design across programmes.
- Successful implementation of the April/May Exam diet and the NDP with few students taking the opportunity of a resit.
- Teaching quality and efforts of academics and administrative staff to adjust to online.
- External Examiner feedback on programmes, courses, and assessment procedures.
- Online dissertation supervision.

### **School of Education**

- Online Development – The transfer of course materials and to teaching online has been successful. Some courses have benefitted from having the assistance of a Learning Technologist. Others found having a blended approach already in place made the transition to fully online easier.
- External Examiner Comments – comments from External Examiners have been very positive.
- Academic Support – Students are well supported by staff to improve the quality of their academic work. Some courses noted this particularly for dissertations e.g. when students had to move to desk-based studies due to the pandemic. Staff have been flexible and dedicated to meeting the needs of individuals.
- Student Attainment – Students attaining high standards in their assessments in all or some courses and dissertations.
- Positive Student Feedback – Feedback from students in terms of overall satisfaction indicates high levels of satisfaction in some or all courses.
- Course content and structure– a good balance between academic, professional, and practical experiences provided for students, some of which involve partnership working.
- Assessment - formative assessment used to give students next steps and summative approaches well received by students. Resources such as Aropa used by some courses and strategies such as peer feedback are in operation.
- High quality teaching – teaching and learning practices are challenging, engaging and innovative.
- Communication – communication between staff and students is of a high standard and forums such as Zoom, Teams, email and Moodle are used successfully.
- Pastoral Support – Students pastorally supported by staff.

### **School of Interdisciplinary Studies**

- Despite the disruption caused by industrial action and the COVID lockdown, the PGT offering within the School of Interdisciplinary Studies has broadly maintained a high level of quality across a range of themes.
- There have been generally high levels of student satisfaction across programmes and courses.
- Students appreciate small group teaching environment and its close interactions with staff, they also value the interdisciplinary opportunities programmes provide, the combination and distribution of theoretical and practical content, applied and field-based teaching and external guest lecturers.
- New and innovative content was created online to replace field-oriented content affected by industrial action and limited by the lockdown. The development of innovative online learning and enhanced Moodle resources and associated learning activities was evident.
- There was some evidence that these ‘distanced’ activities present at the end of semester 2 had actually enhanced individual engagement and group interaction.
- Assessment practices were successfully amended in semester 2 and there was evidence of productive forms of assessment associated strongly with the nurturing of graduate attributes. The flexibility offered by the ‘No Detriment Policy’ was welcomed and seen as a reason for the successful completion of assessment in difficult circumstances.

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- Attainment levels appear to be in keeping with previous years and in some areas has been enhanced (e.g. in the Erasmus Mundus joint programme, MSc Tourism Development and Culture).
- External Examiners were satisfied with delivery, forms of assessment and the robustness of marking processes across all programmes.

### **School of Law**

LLM: Continued willingness by staff to respond to student concerns and attempts to improve courses and their delivery. The AM process generally works well but has been hampered this year by the impact of Covid-19, and the dramatic increase in workloads and disruption in March/April 2020.

PgDip (very high response rates from students in Sem 1, over 60%, dropping to just over 20% in Sem 2 because of the move to online learning):

- Students enjoy being taught by practitioners. Feedback on tutors and tutorials is extremely positive across the board.
- The mentoring scheme - A number of students were matched to practitioners and sheriffs in order to be mentored by someone working in their area of interest.
- Students are offered the opportunity to take part in three competitions: International Client Consultation Competition (ICCC), International Negotiation Competition (INC) and the UK Student Mediation Competition. This year, we are due to host the UK Student Mediation Competition in January. This has been hugely beneficial to those involved.
- Employability: The Director and Deputy Director decided to offer individual appointments on CVs and general career advice, as well as run mock interview sessions. These sessions were very well-received.

### **School Social & Political Sciences UG Studies**

- Despite the challenges posed by strikes and the pandemic, evidence from course evaluations and staff-student liaison showed that most students during the last session were satisfied with teaching provision. Student performance remained strong and this was benefited by the implementation of the no-detriment policy.
- Despite heavier than usual workload burdens addressing initiatives to respond to the pandemic, the issues raised by students to the School (both formally and informally) were effectively addressed through appropriate School mechanisms.
- External Examiners also expressed satisfaction with the performance of different programs.
- The switch to online teaching went quite well despite challenging times for staff and students, including changes to working practices. Students particularly appreciated drop-in sessions organised by programme convenors.
- Though students did express satisfaction with their cohort cohesion and community and demonstrated solidarity with each other in the face of the isolation caused by lockdown, they nevertheless struggled with its effects.
- Staff collegiality in response to the pandemic (across academic and administrative levels) proved to be high and staff responded quickly and beyond expectations to support each other and students.

### **Academic Services**

- Overall, it appears that courses were valued for their blended, flexible delivery, as well as opportunities for discussion and practically applicable elements to students' own teaching practice. Students also valued innovative approaches/technologies as well as approachability/expertise of staff.

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What needs work?

### **Adam Smith Business School**

- An unanticipated impact of the circumstances in Semester Two was the reality of students in accommodation having trouble with broadband and internet connections. This was an additional burden on students already disappointed, isolated and under some stress.
- Many Management students struggled in the dissertation as they had been trained to engage in primary research. The imposition of the injunction regarding no primary data upset students and generated complaints as they could have been collecting data via online and teleconference. Additional work was needed to support the students in this new approach.
- The complexity of the NDP was close to unmanageable and College support was dire. There was little understanding of the programmes and weighting of assessment.
- Lack of coordination between Management and Economics was reported in joint *MSc in Finance and Management*. This led to a significant drop in the number of students choosing to undertake an Economics dissertation.
- For the *Pathways* programmes there is a necessity to coordinate with other programmes in other Schools (and Institutions) but with no clear prescription from the University, students (from for instance, Engineering and MVLS) were seeing different measures across Schools.
- Student diversity in the ASBS has continued to be problematic. Language and diversity continue to be an issue and represent an area of risk for the school. Reducing the number of institutions in the majority market during recruitment has seen recent improvements in student performance.

### **School of Education**

- Developing online provision including increasing interactivity on forums.
- Ensuring information which is normally provided at face to face sessions is communicated effectively. Facilitating access to more online teaching resources giving students access to the range and variety of resources needed to fully engage.
- Offering pastoral support to students in the online environment
- Mismatch between expectation set centrally of all assignment feedback returned within 15 working days and staff capacity for such a turnaround given competing deadlines and other responsibilities.
- Length of Saturday sessions now online, (particularly for distance learners) and full day sessions for FT students.
- More staff required (we don't have enough staff capacity to manage the student numbers, too heavy a dependence on too many ATs).
- More administrative support required as capacity of administration staff to support the programmes is strained and under resourced.
- In the large PGDE programme, connections between the courses, especially to School Experience & consideration of the role of subject specialists. Logistical issues: timetabling, registration, room bookings and the location of back to back classes on campus.
- The requirement to 'upskill' very quickly and with little time to produce and provide some of the resources required.

### **School of Interdisciplinary Studies**

- There was evidence that in some cases, industrial action and the COVID lockdown did have an impact on course delivery, for example: lost opportunities for face-to-face interactions, fieldtrips and external speakers cancelled and PGT Placement course not being offered.
- Convenors reported on the need for some structural changes to programmes, for example: new courses, the development of a generic PGT 'Research Methods' course, ensuring mandatory placements.
- Some operational level issues were identified, including: the need to continue to enhance course content, the need to assess educational needs more sensitively and achieving balance between face to face and on-line work.
- There was some evidence of on-line expectations being overly onerous to some students.
- IT issues were also prominent – a perception that the IT hardware on the Dumfries Campus is relatively poor and inferior to that on the main campus.

### **School of Law**

#### **LLM**

- A dissatisfaction with infrastructural constraints giving rise to a poor teaching environment is evident. There are clearly concerns as to the suitability of teaching rooms, particularly for mid-large classes, and regarding the size of classes in general.
- Some concerns expressed by students as to the quality of discussion in classes given the constitution of the student body. Two initiatives are under way to address this: we are in the process of negotiating the implementation of a higher language entry requirement for our students in the expectation that this will raise the ability to engage effectively in classroom discussions; we are also examining ways of including discussion of educational cultures in our induction programme to facilitate students' understanding of the different educational traditions and environments from which they come.

#### **PgDip**

- As mentioned in previous reports, the Sir Alexander Stone Building is an unsatisfactory teaching environment mainly in terms of size, but also temperature control and quality of teaching environment. This has an impact on the student experience.
- Insufficient space for students to network and study. The Student Common Room is far too small and still has (rarely used) music pods taking up space. It is noted that the space at the top of the building for students in the College of Arts was renovated and decorated to a very high standard. Glasgow's Diploma compares unfavorably with our direct competitors in this regard.
- We have a large number of external tutors, who have needed a significant amount of support to make the transition online.

### **School Social & Political Sciences UG Studies**

#### **Student Mental Health and Well Being**

- Students experienced high levels of stress and anxiety. This was compounded by the rapid switch to online which meant that accessing appropriate resources and support was more challenging than normal.
- Although No-detriment worked in favour of the students, students as well as staff have expressed that University communication around issues from Good Cause and no-Detriment and to the requirement for students to be on campus was confusing and caused more anxiety than was necessary.

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- The ban on research with human subjects, even if they could be contacted online, caused stress and anxiety and dissatisfaction across the board.
- Covid-19 and the issues it created for mobility created additional problems for International Masters programmes.

### Language Support:

- For 2019-21 and 2020-21, the level of preparedness from exam-based cultures, and because of the relative isolation, the linguistic capacity of students is not improving in the same manner, so there is a significant disconnect.
- More in-session support is needed for students (particularly, but not only, students from China) for whom English is a second language. Similarly, it was pointed out that some remedial essay writing support is needed for students from exam-based cultures more generally.

### Workload

- Colleagues across the School reported that increases in student numbers which are impacting delivery of teaching (under current staffing and resourcing).
- Issues including lack of predictive planning, transparency and reciprocity between subjects has forced some to expand capacities, which has implications on teaching and learning, student and staff satisfaction and workloads.
- It should also be noted that with that the increase in student numbers have led to an increase in the demand for pastoral care which at PGT level is the sole responsibility of the Course and Programme Convenors. This is demanding work which is often highly gendered and leaves staff feeling overstretched.
- The shift to online delivery and implementation of pandemic specific policy changes has necessitated a high degree of upskilling and additional time to develop materials that has placed added pressures on workload and work life balance and integration. Although staff have delivered on this in a strong, positive manner the knock-on effects linked to mental exhaustion and wider costs to well-being are taking a toll.

### Online Teaching and University Policy

- Some students were also overwhelmed by the requirements of learning online since they either lacked the necessary IT skills or access to necessary resources.
- Staff and students have also raised the problem of lack of person-to-person engagement within some teaching elements (both synchronously and a-synchronously delivered) due to the move online and that this may be related to issues including lack of confidence, IT capabilities etc. As a result, staff often provide more time and effort into encouraging participation
- Although the No-detriment policy proved to be beneficial for students during the pandemic it did prove challenging to understand and apply at PGT level with staff feeling guidance was often slow to be received compounded by a heavy sense of bureaucratic oversight that was often perceived to be unhelpful even if it was undertaken with the best of intention.

### Academic Services

- The recurring theme relates to assessment guidance; the programme lead will emphasise to course leads the importance of clarification here, particularly given the blended/online nature of the delivery going forwards.



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

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

## **School**

### **Adam Smith Business School**

- The lack of admin staff to support programmes is a problem. This appears to be related to recruitment issues, and a lack of opportunity for promotion. Staff leave and this is costly in time for programme leaders.
- More investment is required to support the blended approach to learning in both software and people: When we go back to face-to-face teaching we need to invest in software. There is a reliance on staff designing and making front-end teaching content and interfaces of the appropriate standard. There needs to be investment in skill development and in people, e.g. a Moodle expert is desperately required.
- Programme leaders would prefer to have named administrators for specific programmes. The newly introduced programme support structure does not allow for a dedicated professional service person and focuses almost exclusively on the management of a large programme (or 2-3 smaller programmes at the most), is not a sustainable way of working effectively. Both programme leaders and professional service staff are forced to work longer hours, but this is not fully acknowledged.
- Admin restructuring in ASBS also led to the sending of sensitive doctor's letters from students to a generic email box: this is not acceptable. Overall, there is a feeling that there is less support for the programmes and students than there has ever been before.
- The January start was a choice that may have eased the load in autumn, but it is expected to cause far more pressure later in the calendar year. Academics need time to focus on research and this timetable impacts research time. The January intake and dual cohort is a huge pressure on any programme and is a potentially a highly damaging change to the structure and teaching delivery. Major problems are likely to be encountered later, with the students being supervised in their dissertation/project simultaneously with teaching of another cohort. We simply do not have the staff to accommodate this. In addition, we expect an increase in the stress experienced by staff over the summer period, by affording no 'breathing space' or decrease in the intensity. These are decisions which will impact heavily on both L&T and R&T contracts.

### **School of Education**

Workload – recognition needs to be given in the workload model for:

- The extra work required of staff in moving to online provision.
- Programme Leaders who are responsible for very large programmes and teaching teams.
- Course leaders who manage and support Associate Tutors.
- Longer lines of communication in relation to dissertations; supervisors time allocation needs to be increased.
- More technical support /Computing Capacity – training for staff and employing more Learning Technologists for example.
- Academic Staffing – more staff required.
- GTA Support – this should be increased.
- Administrative Staff – below capacity in terms of new demands being made on them. Increased staffing and support are required as a priority.
- Overwhelming amount of information.
- Staff wellbeing – concern about staff resilience in the face of increased workload and working from home.

### **School of Interdisciplinary Studies**

The following themes were expressed by programme convenors:

- There is a perception of a need for more formal support for teaching online/remotely (both technical and in relation to teaching methods and approaches)
- There is a need for continued improvement in IT provision.
- The need for a mandatory Research Methods PGT course is recognised (to be initiated in January 2021).

There is a perception of a need to review the broad strategy within the school on how PGT programme will be delivered in the future and the relationship between face to face, on-line learning and blended options.

### **School Social & Political Sciences**

- Colleagues welcome the extra tutor resourcing as well as current efforts underway to collect and analyse enrolment data in order to conduct predictive planning and to increase transparency and foster reciprocity between different subjects.
- Colleagues also highlight that increasing student numbers and changes in student dissertation-topic preferences (due to changes in the composition of the student body) are creating issues particularly for programmes like GLOCAL and the JGS. Spreading supervision (for example, in the case of GLOCAL of clearly economics and business school-oriented theses) would be helpful.
- The School should reconsider or clarify the recommendation to limit research involving human subjects which has increased anxiety and dissatisfaction for students and their supervisors.
- Colleagues across the board are reporting issues related to staffing and very high collective workloads and note links to hiring policy.
- Administrative colleagues should be better supported while working from home, taking into consideration their caring and other responsibilities as well as the increase in workloads caused by the move online and issues caused by Covid-19. Support may include resourcing and staffing as well as training in IT, including managing Moodle in the context of online learning.
- Some more support is needed in how to build online learning communities.
- Ensuring a balance between developing a clear strategy for online learning with autonomy of teaching is desired.
- The School requires further resources and support for students who are dealing with mental health issues and with the effect of isolation. This should include enhance training for staff in pastoral care roles
- The school needs to become more responsive to changing student demands and needs in the context of employability and applied skills.

College

**Adam Smith Business**

- Exam Board spreadsheets created by College in June were full of mistakes. The school didn't know how to fix them locally which caused delays and stress for staff. Exam Boards had to be pushed back and this had implications on workloads preparing for the incoming year.
- There is no obvious reason as to why primary research was not possible for students as this can be done online, but the College seemed reluctant. Students and colleagues alike were disappointed, and it did not help the experience. E.g. for the CIPD accredited programme of *MSc in International Human Resource Management and Development* where investigation of a business problem requires primary data with all the training being shaped accordingly. The accrediting body (CIPD) have been understanding but there were considerable efforts to ensure the dissertation remained as close to the original intention.
- Ethics: This is the most inefficient process ever encountered, in which students are asked to complete a 16-page document which takes around 2 days to complete as the first step in the process and it is almost impossible to complete without extensive input from the supervisors. Most universities have a one-page ethics approval form. This is an abject waste of time and resources. Additionally, the form is poorly written and causes the ethics approval to stall and assessors often send comments that are not related to ethics. An example of the inefficiency is an MBA dissertation where approval was received on 10<sup>th</sup> August for a 23<sup>rd</sup> August submission deadline. We would like to see a simplified form that sets out ethical principles and asks the students to confirm adherence. Alternatively, it can be 2 templates. One approved in advance for the whole MSc cohort for fast track low risk ethics approval e.g. online interview of Managing Director of company. Other shorter than currently available (2 pages) for higher risk.

**School of Education**

- Workload Capacity – more staff needed with expertise and profiles to match course demands and growing numbers on courses. Making Associate Tutor contracts more secure may help and / or capping student numbers.
- Earlier cut off point for registrations – to allow for adequate course planning.
- ICT support systems for staff – although support sessions have been offered, staff have often not been able to attend these due to workload issues. GTAs and learning technologists were appointed late and are stretched. More required.
- Staff Wellbeing – concern that issues relating to working from home and converting courses online will affect the wellbeing of academic and administrative staff.
- Administrative Support - Increasing administrative support is a priority, this is a high-risk factor in managing growth in PGT student numbers and in maintaining quality and standards.

**School of Interdisciplinary Studies**

- There is a possibility of increased collaboration between Schools in the College; this should be actively encouraged through shared teaching resources and staff exchanges across similar programmes.

**School Social & Political Sciences**

- College should be aware that the issue of Tuition fees considering the move to online learning remains an open concern for many students particularly for international students.

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- College should be aware of the impact of hiring freezes on staff's workload and the knock-on impact this can have on delivering the highest quality teaching experience
- College should be aware of the difficulties faced by students who have been either been unable to travel to the UK for their studies or face difficulties returning and/or getting back home. Often this includes specific additional and unexpected costs for students. Some advice from admissions about options would be helpful. Enhanced hardship funding would be welcomed.
- College should more effectively share data on enrolment with the School and Subjects, involving colleagues at those levels actively so that the data provided can be more appropriate and effectively utilised for planning by both School and Subject management Teams as well as administrative staff.
- We would request that a balanced approach to PGT requirement and conversion activity is taken with greater care and acknowledgment of the fact that activities often fall at key pinch points in the academic calendar making it difficult for academic staff to fully participate. Recruitment planning and activity can often seem to run at odds with demands elsewhere within the college.

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University

**Adam Smith Business**

- Staff require clear guidance on the plan for returning to campus. There is a need for open discussion.
- As was thrown starkly into light this academic session, many students have problems at University residences with connectivity and access: the efficiency of these systems should be at the same level as the library.
- Although we understand the extreme pressure, not allowing timed exams is a serious problem given the nature of the subject. Moving forward we would like this rectified.
- Inadequate timetabling of large classes continues to be a problem on campus, with apparent low priority for timetabling of premium programmes during working hours. This is untenable if we are to continue attracting high quality students.
- Concerns continue around the English language ability of students. We get complaints from the non-Chinese students about groupwork and difficulties in communication.
- There is a big concern that we do not have adequate control over plagiarism and collusion. This is augmented by some recent decisions by Senate not to punish students at all in some very strong cases reported by ASBS. Such decisions have an extreme demotivational effect on staff members involved in identifying plagiarism. At the very least reports fully explaining the rationale for the negative decisions must be provided.

**School of Education**

- Library Resources – investment needed for online materials to be provided for students and managing copyright regulations.
- ICT Support Systems – adequate ICT support for staff required e.g. more and improved computers for staff and more learning technologists.
- Workload Allocation – needs increased to accommodate extra workload resulting in transition to online provision.
- Staffing – more subject specific support required.
- Consistent Guidance - having many technological options makes staff spend a lot of time trying different things and gives students a more disparate experience.
- Staff Wellbeing – concern about increased workload for staff and issues arising from working from home.
- Communication – communication from the centre needs to be timelier and more consistent.
- Administrative Issues – at the start of the academic session the registration process, room bookings and online timetabling systems need to be improved.

**School of Interdisciplinary Studies**

Three themes were expressed:

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- School level discussion of post-COVID strategy on the future nature of PGT programmes should also be undertaken at a University level – as a forum for discussion of the lessons learned and what the future will look like for learning and teaching.
- It would be important to invest in video editing software to allow updating of content without having to re-record.
- A mechanism for students to be able to access free software (e.g. InVEST, QGIS) remotely would be useful so that they do not have to download these on to their own computers.

### **School of Law**

For LLM classes, which continue to grow, suitable accommodation for teaching remains problematic when face to face teaching resumes post-Covid.

For PgDip the quality of accommodation in Alexander Stone building is below standard in terms of size of teaching rooms and student networking spaces.

For PgDip: One student required significant adjustments to transition to online learning and request for additional support from the Disability Service and the wider University.

### **School Social & Political Sciences**

- The University should do more to address issues surrounding mental health of the student body by providing more resources.
- The University should provide more support for the move to online provision, including significant upgrading of hardware and software capabilities as well as staffing resource including learning technologists and specific practical training/upskilling support on a regular basis.
- The University should also address issues related to high workloads which stem from hiring freezes and other staffing issues.
- Students as well as staff have expressed that University communication around issues from Good Cause and no-Detriment and to the requirement for students to be on campus was confusing and caused more anxiety than was necessary.
- With the pivot to online delivery and increased use of online resources (e-books etc) should be prioritised by the Library.
- University to provide students with 1) the necessary resources to effectively take part in online learning (hardware, Wi-Fi etc) and 2) upskilling so that they can make effective use of the resources and software at their disposal. Equitable access to ensure a common experience and remove digital inequalities is important
- The university should be aware that Chinese students faced racism in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. More generally, awareness of racism and other forms of discrimination should be high up on the University's agenda.
- As with ASBS, the present over reliance on students on some programmes stemming from China is financially dangerous, but it also lessens their student experience in learning and engaging in English. Even a 20-30% international or UK-based means that they cannot speak only to their peers.
- Staff welfare remains a clear issue that extends across School, College and University levels. This relates not only to supporting staff with a balance workload and work life integration, but also to ensuring that timetabling and the return to campus is properly planned and supported with staff unable to return treated in a compassionate manner.

### **Academic Services**



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- The PGCAP/MEd ran particularly well during the pandemic. One issue to highlight however is that this came at a very difficult time for our students as staff, who were managing their own pivot to online and having to combine an exceptional workload with undertaking study. We would like to commend our students (as staff) for their significant efforts to participate in exceptionally difficult circumstances and hope this is recognised at all levels across the university.

**Additional matters**

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