

# Mitigate the Risk of Student Non-engagement and Assessment Failure Policy and Procedure

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This temporary Policy has been introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic to support students and faculty with changes to usual programme delivery.
2. It is acknowledged that an online learning and/or a hybrid model of learning deviates from the originally advertised mode of teaching at New College of the Humanities (the College) (i.e. largely synchronous face-to-face delivery). Students typically did not 'sign up' to these terms, which flags a Competition and Markets Authority concern.
3. It is also recognized that, with a heightened risk of faculty and student illness, changes may need to be made to teaching and assessments at relatively short notice as the year evolves.
4. Student engagement and assessment are likely to be especially challenging under the COVID-19 pandemic, with failure (relative to expectations) of summative assessments the most likely trigger for student dissatisfaction.
5. Additionally, it is well publicised, and through some forums actively encouraged, that students formally complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) where they feel that they have not received appropriate (or appropriately 'flexible') delivery and assessment.
6. Although advice to institutions during this unprecedented time is limited, the College is committed to identifying and addressing challenges in advance.

## AIM

7. To put in place appropriate supplementary measures to support student engagement and achievement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## GUIDANCE AND TRAINING FOR ONLINE/HYBRID TEACHING AND LEARNING

8. The College has put in place the following dedicated guidance and training to support online/hybrid teaching and learning:

### For Faculty:

9. An accessible Online Learning Resources site for faculty to support their development of high quality online/hybrid teaching, and bringing together all the items listed below.
10. Professional-led training on the use, scope, and limits of the virtual learning

environment.

11. Faculty-led training on best practices in online and hybrid teaching, including on how to translate existing teaching into successful online and hybrid formats and on techniques to facilitate engagement:
  - 11.1. Introduction to Online Teaching: a self-illustrative presentation
  - 11.2. Teaching in the hybrid classroom: a self-illustrative presentation with asynchronous workshop component
12. Faculty-authored guidelines on online/hybrid teaching strategies:
  - 12.1. Transitioning to Online Learning: A Guide for Faculty
  - 12.2. NCH Online Learning Guidance
  - 12.3. Transitioning to Online Learning FAQs
13. A timeline with minimum requirements for faculty to upload online course materials, overseen by the Heads of Faculty (HoFs) and the Academic Deans.
14. An enhanced peer observation process to assess hybrid and online content.
15. A summary of key avenues of further support/guidance.

#### **For Students:**

16. An accessible Online Learning and Resources Hub for students, bringing together all the items listed below.
17. A professional-led student induction to using the virtual learning environment (with interactive tasks).
18. A professional-led induction to digital library resources (with an interactive task).
19. A faculty-led student introduction to online and hybrid learning, including
  - 19.1. Video 1: Introduction to Online and Hybrid Learning
  - 19.2. Video 2: Getting the Most Out of Online and Hybrid Learning
  - 19.3. Video 3: Strategies to Become an Effective Online Learner
  - 19.4. Online and Hybrid Teaching and Learning Questions discussion board
20. A summary of key avenues of further support/guidance.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES TO MONITOR AND SUPPORT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT**

21. The College has put in place the following measures in addition to its usual monitoring and supporting processes (as described in its Undergraduate Student [Attendance Policy](#), [Marking, Moderation, and Feedback Policy](#), [Support to Study Policy](#), and other documents):

#### **MONITORING AND SUPPORTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

22. Heads of Faculty (HoFs) will oversee the following monitoring and support activities and ensure that records are kept of all associated communications (including student responses):

23. By weeks 7 and 11 of Michaelmas and of Hilary terms, the HoF (or their nominee) will prompt their Course Leaders to inform them - or, in the case of minor students, the relevant major HoF - of any students who are showing inadequate engagement on their courses in that half of term (e.g. in assignments or tutorial discussions). Course Leaders can identify the relevant major HoF by consulting the shared 'NCH Student Numbers 2020/21' spreadsheet on Google Drive.
24. The HoF (or their nominee) will review these updates alongside the SAS-supplied attendance reports supplied at the same dates to inform judgments about overall student engagement. The College has enabled faculty access to reports of individual students' Canvas activity via the left-hand Canvas course navigation menu 'New Analytics', then 'Students', where additional context is required.
25. Where challenges with engagement are identified, the HoF (or their nominee) will contact the student (i) explaining that their current engagement profile looks likely to have a negative impact on their academic success and (ii) inviting them to attend relevant Faculty Office Hours or (if it is week 11/12) Collections to address any challenges and identify constructive ways forward.
26. If the student does not respond or attend after one week, the HoF (or their nominee) will inform the student's Personal Tutor and the Student Wellbeing Team who will reach out to the student independently, and report back to the HoF. (HoFs can check personal tutor allocations on the 'Personal Tutors 2020/21' spreadsheet on Google Drive.)
27. If the student's engagement profile at the next review point (week 11 of Michaelmas or week 7 or 11 of Hilary as the case may be) remains problematic (despite the above-mentioned interventions as well as those falling under other relevant policies), the HoF (or their nominee) will refer the student's case to the Registrar who will arrange a Student Attendance Panel (StAP) or other initiative as appropriate (depending on the policy under which the case by that time falls).

## **MONITORING AND SUPPORTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

28. HoFs will work with Course Leaders in their Faculty to seek to ensure that they:
  - 28.1. Provide formative feedback on submitted work in a 'timely' way (ref. Marking, Moderation, and Feedback Policy, paragraph 15). For formative work, that is typically within 10 working days of the submission deadline, or in any case ahead of associated summative assessment tasks.
  - 28.2. Provide an indicative mark (typically it will make sense for this to be a broad mark e.g. 'first' / 'upper second' / 'lower second' / 'third' / 'fail') and at least one key action for improvement in feedback on all submitted formative work (ref. [Marking, Moderation, and Feedback Policy](#), paragraphs 15 and 16).
  - 28.3. Receive and grade assignments through Canvas wherever possible, and in any case keep records of feedback provided (e.g. by entering the indicative grade as a note in Canvas, or sending it by email, at the end of the tutorial).
  - 28.4. Provide students with opportunities to receive relevant formative feedback (which might be in lectures, seminars, tutorials, or even office

hours) ahead of summative assessment tasks.

29. The Dean for Academic Development and Innovation (Dean for ADI) will check in with HoFs after Reading Week each term to review any difficult cases together and agree any further actions required. Additional check-ins will be scheduled as appropriate.

### **ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF COVID-RELATED CONTINGENCIES**

30. In order to support students to meet, and demonstrate that they have met, course learning outcomes under COVID-19 circumstances (given the raised risk of venue closures and of student and faculty absences due to illness), the College has:
  - 30.1. Asked Course Leaders to produce teaching plans and associated materials in advance that can be used to support students to meet the course learning outcomes in case of their absence
  - 30.2. Shared with faculty a set of key principles with examples concerning when and how to adapt teaching and assessments in the case of contingencies
  - 30.3. Created a system in which Course Leaders seek relevant approvals from their Heads of Faculty, who in turn work with oversight from the Academic Deans
31. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIAHE) states that, when considering whether to uphold a student complaint, it 'will look at whether learning opportunities were delivered flexibly, whether [the student was] supported to access the learning, and whether it was possible for [the student] to achieve [the] expected learning outcomes'; it will also 'consider whether [the student was disadvantaged in [their] assessments' (OIAHE Coronavirus FAQs).
32. HoFs are to oversee Course Leaders in their Faculty to seek to ensure that where general contingencies arise which disrupt the original teaching plan, or approved Extenuating Circumstances notifications are received, the following principles are followed and records kept:

### **TEACHING PROVISION:**

33. Key principle: Support students to meet the approved course learning outcomes (staying as close to the original teaching strategy as possible) - *e.g. emailing the affected student(s) with an alternative plan such as watching the recorded material on Canvas and coming to Faculty office hours to discuss any questions they have.*

### **ASSESSMENT BRIEFS:**

34. Key principle: Provide students with opportunities to demonstrate that they have met the approved course learning outcomes (staying as close to the original assessment brief and any specific assessment learning outcomes as possible). - *Where the HoF is the Course Leader, they should seek peer review from another member of their Faculty or from the Dean for ADI.*

### **ASSESSMENT GRADING CRITERIA:**

35. Key principle: Assign grades with reference to the overall programme grade scale and the approved course learning outcomes, in light of the learning opportunities provided (staying as close to any specific assessment grading criteria as possible) - *Where the HoF is the Course Leader, they should seek peer review from another member of their Faculty or from the Dean for ADI.*
36. Student and Academic Services (SAS) will include a note on the student Extenuating Circumstances application form stating that while awaiting a response the student should use their course Canvas page(s) to keep up to date and should consult their Course Leader or go to relevant Faculty office hours if they would like further guidance on how to meet the relevant learning outcomes in their circumstances.
37. The overall principle – whether in relation to an individual student with approved Extenuating Circumstances or in relation to a full course cohort subject to general disruptive contingencies - is that teaching plans, assessment briefs, and grading criteria are adapted where necessary to support the student(s) to meet, and demonstrate that they have met, the validated course learning outcomes.
38. For the avoidance of doubt: whatever amendments are put in place for one student on a course, the aim is for the same or equivalent amendments to be made also for any other student on the course recognized to face the same type(s) of challenge.
39. HoFs are to consult the Dean for ADI in case of any uncertainties.
40. The Head of Quality Assurance and Registrar are to oversee a higher level 'no detriment' system to deal with exceptional cases where, despite deployment of the above strategies, any disruptions to students' learning are sufficiently severe to negatively affect their ability to meet (and show that they have met) the approved course learning outcomes).

### **SUPPLEMENTARY OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO SEEK AND RECEIVE SUPPORT**

41. In addition to the College's existing opportunities for students to seek and receive support with their learning (e.g. through individual tutorials, formative and summative feedback, Collections meetings, Student Representatives), the College has put in place:
42. An early-action student survey with questions focused on student learning experience; other surveys where appropriate as circumstances evolve.
43. A discussion board for students to flag learning concerns and post questions on the Online Teaching and Resources Hub (with regular monitoring and responses from the Lead on Academic Engagement).
44. Weekly Lead on Academic Engagement online Office Hours (advertised to all students via an email from the Lead for Academic Engagement and a listing on all the student-facing Faculty Canvas pages).
45. Weekly Faculty online Office Hours (typically 1-2 hours a week per Faculty, advertised to relevant major and minor students by the HoF (or their nominee) via an email and a listing on the relevant student-facing Faculty Canvas page, with

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instructions for sign-up through Google). If the hours prove insufficient, they should typically be extended.

46. In the scenario in which regular teaching goes fully online: additional (including face-to-face) opportunities for students to interact socially and creatively with each other and with faculty.

<b>Title: Mitigate the Risk of Student Non-engagement and Assessment Failure Policy and Procedure</b>					
<b>Approved by: Contingency Planning Group and Academic Board</b>					
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1.0	November 2020	November 2020	Dean for Academic Development and Innovation	Academic Handbook; Policies and Procedures; Academic Policies and Procedures.	April 2021
Referenced documents	Undergraduate Student Attendance Policy; Marking, Moderation and Feedback Policy; Support to Study Policy				
External Reference Point(s)	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education; Competition and Markets Authority				