JULY 2017

TLSO Bulletin

The Bulletin of the University's Teaching and Learning Support Office

1. Staffing news

- Jo Hicks joined the Teaching and Learning Support Office in mid-June in the new post of Teaching and Learning Manager (Programmes).
- Emma-Lee Yarwood and Mark Lobjoit joined the Distance Learning team in June. We welcome Jo, Emma-Lee and Mark to the TLSO.

- Kelly Pickard-Smith, Teaching & Learning Advisor (Innovation) recently won an award for research impact presented at the Post Graduate Summer research Showcase. Kelly won the Manchester Doctoral College Excellence Award for best contribution to society. Information about the Postgraduate Summer Research Showcase and the awards, can be found at:

    o   http://www.psrs.manchester.ac.uk/mdcexcellenceawards/

2. Periodic and Institutional Reviews

The latest version of the review schedule for internal programmes and collaborative provision for the next six years is available below:

    o   Periodic and institutional review schedule

3. TLSO Website/policy and procedure changes

- **Mitigating Circumstances**

During 2015/16 the Teaching and Learning Support Office (TLSO) received feedback on the then current Policy on Mitigating Circumstances and Mitigating Circumstances Panels: Terms of Reference. The Policy and Terms of Reference were subsequently reviewed again, which included extensive consultation (http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/consultations/) across the University as directed by the Teaching and Learning Group (TLG).

Key changes and updates

1. Policy on Mitigating Circumstances (approved by Senate in June 2017) (http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=4271)
   a. The Policy has been shortened and much of the procedural information has been placed in the new Procedures for Mitigating Circumstances Panels.
   b. There has been replacement of some instances of the word 'should' with 'will' or 'must'.
   c. The ill health example of grounds for mitigation has been expanded.
   d. There has been clarification of pregnancy-related grounds for mitigation.

2. Mitigating Circumstances Procedures (approved by TLG in June 2017) (http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=23163)
   a. This document replaces the Mitigating Circumstances Panels: Terms of Reference.
   b. There has been clarification around the involvement of the Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS) in relation to disability-related requests for mitigation.
   c. The accepting mitigation codes have been slightly amended.
   d. The applying mitigation codes have been expanded to allow for further recommendations to be made by Mitigating Circumstances Panels.

3. DASS Guidance for Dealing with Disability-Related Requests for Mitigation (approved by TLG in June 2017).
   a. This document has been produced by the DASS to clarify further its role in mitigating circumstances. It will be uploaded to the University's website shortly.

4. Request for Mitigation Form (http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=23160)
   a. The Form has been expanded to include clearer separation of the sections, key principles from the Policy and Procedures, a stronger statement consent and to allow students to indicate when they believe that they may / do have a disability.

Continuing work
1. The Student Systems Office will be asked to update Campus Solutions with the revised mitigating circumstances coding.
2. The TLSO will be working on providing more clarity around the evidence requirement for requests for mitigation, including the standing of self-certification.
3. Mitigating circumstances is grouped into the A4 workstream on the Student Lifecycle Project.
4. During the review above the link between religious observance and mitigating circumstances was considered and it has been noted that the University's Policy on Religious Observance may require review.

3. TLSO Website/policy and procedure changes (continued)

- **Mitigating Circumstances (continued)**

Version control
The new policy documents come into effect from September 2017. The pre-September 2017 versions will remain available here:
http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/teachinglearningassessment/assessment/sectionc-reachingdecisionsfromassessment/policyonmitigatingcircumstances/archivedversionsofpolicy/.

4. Differential Attainment Project

- **Tackling Differential Attainment for Undergraduate Students**

Reports on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) highlight differences in outcomes and experiences for students from low socio-economic groups, disabled students, and those from black and minority ethnic groups (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015). Robust analysis further demonstrates these groups achieve lower rates of attainment and progression even after controlling for other potential influencing factors (HEFCE 2015/21). As is the case across the sector, these differences are evident here at Manchester, with mature students, students from low socio-economic groups, those from black and minority ethnic groups, and international students, experiencing differential outcomes.

The University is committed to ensuring that all students are able to thrive regardless of their background. This is evidenced within the Manchester 2020 strategic objectives, by identifying action on differential outcomes as a priority in both teaching and learning and social responsibility. To this end, a range of interventions have been identified to tackle this issue. The two main activities are the **Differential Attainment Project** commissioned by the University, and the **Diversity and Inclusion Student Ambassador Programme** funded through the HEFCE Catalyst fund.

- **The Differential Attainment Project**

The Differential Attainment Project intends to explore the factors that may influence undergraduate degree attainment at the University, to determine interventions that could bring about change, and to establish and oversee pilot projects testing the effectiveness of these interventions. Data compiled by the Planning Support Office has identified that the largest gap is between International and Home undergraduate students, and therefore the differential attainment project will focus its activities in this area. In addition, the Differential Attainment Project will work with the Students' Union on projects focused on mature students and students living at home.

We are working with colleagues in Schools to identify projects that will run through 2017/18 and/or 2018/19. Through the Differential Attainment Working Group we are able to offer support from the University Language Centre and the Library's My Learning Essentials.

If anyone is interesting in finding out more, please contact Emma Sanders, Teaching and Learning Adviser (Attainment Project): emma.c.sanders@manchester.ac.uk

5. The Diversity and Inclusion Student Ambassador Project

- **The Diversity and Inclusion Student Ambassador Project**

 The project aims to take action to improve outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students, home and international and those from low-socioeconomic groups. Primarily working with second year students to create safe spaces, building supportive networks and empowering students to safely challenge racism and other forms of discrimination, the project aims to increase academic attainment, improve students' sense of belonging, engagement, wellbeing, interpersonal skills and the ability to confidently tackle discriminatory behaviour.

 The D & I Student Ambassador Project is seeking 4 Schools or Divisions with which to engage and establish a Diversity and Inclusion Student Programme during 2017-18.

Find out more about the research undertaken by the HEFCE

To find out more about this project or get involved visit the Diversity and Inclusion Student Ambassadors or contact cath.prescott@manchester.ac.uk

6. Information from other areas of the University: Student Immigration Team

- **Updated guidance on integrated masters course for Tier 4 visa holders (action required)**

Students applying for a programme change from a bachelors course to an integrated masters can now apply for a Tier 4 visa in the UK even if they have not successfully completed their previous course. The CAS issued for any such student must state the basis for their exemption from academic progression rules. The Continuer CAS Guidance contains specific wording for students in these circumstances.

It must be a fully integrated masters course e.g. MEng, MPhys, MPharm etc. where there cannot there be the option to undertake the same courses separately.

 We have created an information leaflet which we recommend be issued to students who are changing levels as part of an integrated masters course.

For details of other exemptions which allow students to apply for their visas in the UK without having successfully completed their previous course, please see our full academic progression guidance.

Full guidance regarding programme changes and when students must obtain a new visa before the course change can be applied to their record can be found here.

- **British National Overseas Students**

There is now a nationality code in Campus Solutions for students with British National Overseas (BNO) nationality. The code is BNO and should be used when creating a CAS as opposed to the previous system of using Hong Kong as the nationality and including an explanatory note in the offer documents section of the CAS. This is no longer required and the BNO nationality can simply be chosen in the Add/Update a Person field in Campus Solutions which should feed through to the CAS Screen.

7. Information from other areas of the University: eLearning

- **Blackboard unavailable Thursday 27 July (17:00 BST) to Sunday 30 July (09:00 BST) for Annual Upgrade**

The following information is provided to inform staff members about this update:

a. **Who is affected?**
   All staff and students.

b. **What is happening?**
   As communicated throughout the last academic year in StaffNet (http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/news/display/?id=17369) and eUpdate, and via local faculty routes, the annual upgrade to our VLE (Blackboard) will be taking place in July. The upgrade will improve current functionality, incorporate security enhancements, performance improvements and bug fixes.

   In order for this work to be undertaken, Blackboard (including Turnitin and Grademark) will be unavailable to staff and students from Thursday 27 July (17:00 BST) until Sunday 30 July (09:00 BST). Blackboard (including Turnitin and Grademark) should also be considered to be at risk until 09:00 BST on Monday 31 July. Updated information will be provided on the Knowledge Base, after the downtime.

c. **Why is it happening now?**
   The functionality and reliability of our VLE is a high priority for the University. In response to feedback from staff and students about the scheduled downtime for Blackboard upgrades, the Online Learning Strategy Group (OLSG) agreed last year to change the timing for this year and future years in order to maximise the availability of the system to students. The downtime period is also shorter than in previous years. Your co-operation and efforts to accommodate this work are appreciated.

d. **What does this mean for you?**
   You will not have access to Blackboard (including Turnitin and Grademark) from Thursday 27 July (17:00 BST) until Sunday 30 July (09:00 BST). Blackboard will be available for teaching from Monday 31 July 2017.

e. **What do staff need to do?**
   Please remind your students of the downtime and ensure that any online activities you are asking students to do take into account this downtime. Please adjust any deadlines as appropriate.

   We will be giving students the following advice: Plan your work to take into account the downtime and ensure you download any materials you will need during the period Blackboard is unavailable.

f. **Follow-up**
   We will let you know about the status of the upgrade, and any new support documents developed to help you get the most out of the new features, via eUpdate and StaffNet.

7. Information from other areas of the University: eLearning (continued)

Updates to existing documentation and documentation about new features, which you might wish to incorporate in your teaching for next year, will be available as soon as possible after the upgrade.

g. **Contact for further information:**
Please contact your eLearning team via the Support Centre:
https://supportcentre.manchester.ac.uk/

8. Peer Support

- **Training**

While students were preparing to complete their final assignments and exams of the academic year, Peer Support were gearing up for a huge training period, this time targeting students who want to volunteer as a PASS Leader. From the 1st – 16th June, over 500 students attended day-long training sessions to equip them with the skills to lead study sessions and facilitate discussions with their peers. The training was very interactive and put the students' creativity to the test; they also got to meet students from a variety of different degree programmes. This, combined with our Peer Mentor and Student Coordinator training, means that during Semester 2 over 1200 students have already trained with us ahead of the next academic year. This is a huge success for Peer Mentoring and PASS schemes at the University and also for each individual who will make a huge difference to the experiences of students who will be arriving in September.

- **Peer Support Practice & Progress**

This internal event, the first of its kind, was attended by student coordinators, staff coordinators and other members of staff to discuss some key areas of Peer Support practice and possible future progress. Attendees looked at the University's Wellbeing initiative and how this is incorporated within Peer Support with a presentation from Katrina Grier, the new Wellbeing Graduate Intern. They also explored the Reward and Recognition of volunteers within Peer Support, with a presentation from Helen Franklin, Student Experience Manager for the Division of Medical Education. The final topic was titled 'The Future of Peer Support', hearing about new initiatives in peer-led learning with information on the SPACELESS peer-led distance learning project, a presentation on Basic Life Support from Patricia Conaghan from the Division of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work, and a talk on higher year Peer Support from Baljit Mudhar, a Student Coordinator from Materials Science. A lot of great ideas were generated by the attendees and it will be very exciting to see how these areas of Peer Support develop in the coming months and years.

9. Contact

If you are aware of other staff members who would like to be added to the TLSO Bulletin mailing list to receive future editions of the Bulletin, please contact Miriam Graham (email m.graham@manchester.ac.uk).

If you are from a Collaborative Partner and you are having difficulties accessing any of the linked documents or web pages, please also contact Miriam Graham (m.graham@manchester.ac.uk).