



Student Engagement in Digital Teaching and Learning Phase 1 Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The unprecedented impact of Covid-19 has forced every higher education institution globally to rethink and refresh its management of online digital delivery. Building on existing infrastructure and teaching strategies, Regent College has significantly enhanced its systems for student learning and support online over a short period of time. However, in line with the institution's vision for flexible provision and increasing global reach, it has now strategically committed to making digital a core element of its delivery model, principally through 'Regent Digital' a branded ecosystem.

The difficulties both in moving initially to digital delivery at short notice and at scale, and the longer-term commitment to blended online models has inevitably involved a number of key challenges. In that context this project looks at improving support for the key stakeholder in the Regent Digital model – the student – and the key challenge to their success: effective engagement with the learning ecosystem.

Using established survey and focus group techniques alongside examination of central documentation, this report presents findings on

- (i) what students want from tutors for enhanced digital engagement in synchronous learning
- (ii) what students want for digital support through asynchronous learning
- (iii) what students feel are the main barriers to them achieving their full potential in digital learning,
- (iv) the practical disruptions and distractions students experience in online learning,
- (v) the profile of Regent students in terms of digital engagement as measured by the Online Student Engagement Scale and
- (vi) the relationship between personality and online engagement.

The report makes 10 recommendations based on staff and student views that can improve student engagement immediately, a further 13 based on where the College stands in relation to the JISC 2020 Horizon framework and best practice internationally. A further follow up study will take place in Spring 2021 to monitor implementation of recommendations and to track student success in the context of Regent Digital.



SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICE & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Report identifies the following areas of **good practice** in relation to promoting student digital engagement for learning :

- 1 The Regent Digital **brand and assets**
- 2 The regular use of **interactive** quizzes and polls in Microsoft teams (such as Mentimeter)
- 3 The monthly **Meet the Principal event** held online
- 4 The comprehensive package of measures introduced to strengthen **student engagement** in May – June 2020
- 5 The **customisation** of digital learning to meet the needs of the curriculum in some areas
- 6 The **pedagogical models** and technical expertise used in Computing
- 7 The **Student Representation Handbook** (September, 2020) and the use of digital technology in the processes it describes (eg elections, Freshdesk ticket support system, social media)
- 8 The use of '**check in**' apps in some modules to support wellbeing (eg <https://checkin.daresay.io/>)

The Report identifies the following **recommendations** in order to enhance and consolidated existing practice in relation to promoting student digital engagement for learning:

- 1 Based on the recommendations of students, the College should prioritise the introduction of the five highly rated enhancements highlighted by students and staff for the **delivery** of digital sessions
 - a. Checking that students understand each section as we go through
 - b. Summarising the key points at the end of the session
 - c. Check that all students are comfortable with the technology being used.
 - d. Giving a clear introduction at the beginning of the session on what will be covered and why
 - e. Making everyone feel positive and emotionally comfortable before the start of each session
- 2 Based on the recommendations of students, the College prioritise the introduction of the five highly rated enhancements highlighted by students and staff for the **support** of digital delivery
 - a. Encourage the use of online message boards for students to post questions and ideas
 - b. Be available between sessions to answer questions I might have
 - c. Run short sessions focusing on assessment tasks only
 - d. Give students specific questions to answer for each item they have to read
 - e. Facilitate optional online student-led study sessions

3 Based on established best practice, the College should implement the recommendations as specified in the JISC framework table below and as follows:

- a. A **follow up survey** of this cohort's experiences of digital learning be carried out in the Spring of 2021
- b. **Module Evaluation Questionnaires** to incorporate questions on digital engagement
- c. Advise students against **poor practice** such as using smartphones to access teaching sessions
- d. Make assessment at entry of students' digital skills a key part of the induction of students into the institution.
- e. Staff training should incorporate awareness of special needs, individual **differences** and the general dividend of inclusiveness
- f. Staff training should include awareness around the distinctive **pressures** of digital learning and the ways different individuals can be impacted.
- g. staff training should highlight how digital learning can help some students who for example lack **confidence** in classroom settings
- h. staff training should highlight how the College can help **staff** secure additional technical, pedagogical and student support skills
- i. The College should prioritise the production of the *A Student's Guide to Digital Learning* and identify a means of involving students in content creation.
- j. The College should incorporate **an annual review of assessment** with partners and ensure all assessments are in line with JISC assessment principles of being Authentic, Accessible, Appropriately automated, Continuous and Secure
- k. The College should design a series of **pilots for formative digital assessment** that does not contribute to the final module mark which incorporate remote 'proctored assessments'.
- l. The College should develop a project to identify and support those students who are **struggling with digital learning** due to home circumstances and provide additional customised help.
- m. The College should strengthen the governance around Regent Digital and develop **a road map** for the implementation of all of the components of the Regent Digital vision including **a Risk Register** for the project.

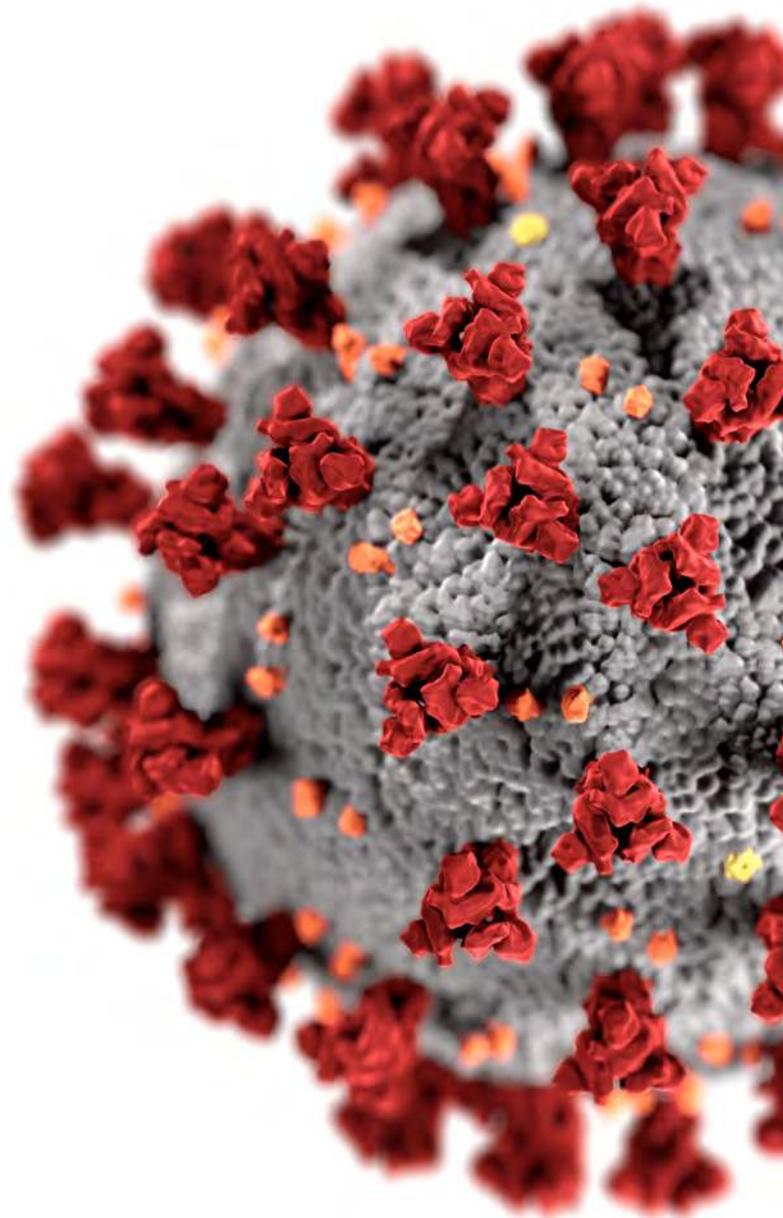


COVID – A UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGE TO LEARNING

Challenges around Student Engagement in Digital Learning under Covid

The sudden, unexpected and unavoidable shift to online learning in spring 2020 in the context of Covid-19 proved to be a significant challenge for higher education providers nationally and internationally. Some of the key issues for all providers included, but were not limited to:

- The quality and adequacy of the technology **infrastructure** in **institutions** including issues relating to server capacity, support service stretch, licencing, software and SAAS ('software as a service') availability remotely.
 - The quality and adequacy of the technology **infrastructure** in the **home** of the student including issues relating to availability, reliability and speed of broadband connections; access to shared laptops and PCs, reliance on smartphones and tablet devices with limited multithread functionality.
 - **Familiarity** issues in relation to delivery including academic staff unfamiliarity with remote functionality of existing services eg Moodle, Canvas and other VLEs, and lack of experience with services designed to support remote communication, collaboration and teaching (eg Zoom, Microsoft Teams and other video conferencing platforms).
 - The challenges associated with student management of the **home as a learning space**. This included issues ranging from noise, light and seating issues to challenges associated with domestic life and caring responsibilities.
 - Stress caused by the **lockdown** and the associated isolation impacting on staff and students alike both in relation to learning and to living generally.
 - The precise **timing** of the lockdown occurring during semester 2 final teaching weeks and project dissertation completion weeks for the majority of students.
- **Uncertainty** about the length of time the arrangements put in place by national government(s) in spring 2020 in general and the arrangements put in place by higher education providers in particular would last.
 - Uncertainty nationally for students on how any incomplete assessed work impacted by restricted, realigned or cancelled teaching would impact on **grades** awarded and therefore on progression and completion.



THE INITIAL REGENT RESPONSE – SPRING 2020

In order to deal with these challenges and at the very least mitigate the more potentially severe consequences for staff and students, Regent College accelerated its plans to shift much learning and teaching online. This included:

1. Adoption of Microsoft Teams as a corporate platform for all learning and teaching and associated student support.
2. Appointment of new staff to new roles such as Digital Learning Manager.
3. Additional student support and engagement facilities available online.

What did Regent do to support students in response to Covid?

In parallel with the emergence of enhanced support for teaching and learning online, a number of initiatives were put in place in order to support students during the transition from pre-Covid campus-based teaching, to online digital delivery during Covid. These measures reflected the need for remote, on-demand and customised support for students. These developments were implemented to strengthen the student support function which would be effectively aligned with the digital context:

- a. Allocation of Student Support Worker to students, starting initially with HND provision and then rolling out to degree students – providing students ‘one point of contact’ for urgent matters and requests, dovetailing this with the ticket system from May 2020
- b. Student Conversation with Principal and management team – allow students to have an informal chat digitally with the Principal and bring forward any comments, concerns and recommendations
- c. Student digital drop-in sessions – allowing students to join daily morning or later afternoon and converse with other students and share ideas but also opportunity as the drop ins are facilitated by Student Support Officers to book a follow up ‘confidential’ meeting if required
- d. Digital platform launched – anonymous platform for students to submit comments, concerns and recommendations as appropriate
- e. The introduction of Induction evaluation surveys, Module evaluation surveys but also conducting quarterly digital experience surveys with students.



What were the emerging challenges with the shift to digital delivery?

The greatly increased amount of online learning gave significantly higher visibility to a number of challenges for Regent in relation to the supporting students to achieve their full potential in online learning.

These challenges were identified as:

- Significant **variation in the levels of student engagement** with online learning both in terms of participation in online sessions using Microsoft Teams and in relation to between session learning.
- Significant **variation in the extent to which good practice** was visible across academic staff
- The **lack of systematic staff development** events and training support to address effective practice in digital delivery beyond managing the basic functionality of core platforms.

THE STRATEGIC RESPONSE – SUMMER 2020

Digital Academic Delivery – DAD

The College already had a clear vision for embracing a fully blended model of learning prior to March 2020. The model being used was that of 'DAD' – Digital Academic Delivery. A framework which emphasised the importance of the digital online experience for students as not just an adjunct to face-to-face teaching, but a parallel element of equal but complementary significance. Over the summer of 2020 this broad vision developed into a more articulated, practical model which was explicitly located in the idea of a post-Covid institution. With the start of the academic year 2020-21, the institution began the roll out of Digital Academic Delivery in the context of the broader vision of Regent Digital.



Regent Digital

Regent Digital is an Eco System which was launched as Education After Covid 19 brand. It has evolved since March 2020 and as an organisation we need to accelerate now as the demand for such Eco System is massive and it is a global opportunity. This is a new business model for REGENT. Pre-pandemic REGENT was a “physical” educational business and today it is a “Digital” educational business and post pandemic it shall become a “blended” educational global business in 2021, predominately in the University sector, and also the Sixth form pre-university education

– Selva Pankaj, CEO, Regent



Education 4.0, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Regent Digital

'Education 4.0' is a term used to reference the need for a new model of education which enables learners to act effectively in the context of the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution'. The impact of the Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data, Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) amongst others on the world of work, commerce and citizenship is already significant and will be transformational. The implications for education are immense and has arguably been accelerated by the impact of Covid-19, not just on practical aspects of delivery, but on rethinking what is possible and desirable. The emergence of Regent Digital is a clear example of an institution seeking to respond to the fundamental historical challenges of the new industrial revolution accelerated by the global pandemic.

Many of today's children will work in new job types that do not yet exist, with an increased premium on both digital and social-emotional skills in the coming years. The gap between education and jobs is further widened by limited innovation in learning systems, which were largely designed to mirror factory-style growth models. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has made it imperative that education systems adapt.

At the same time, school closures caused by the COVID-19 crisis have further exposed the existing inadequacies of education systems around the world.

- World Economic Forum, 2020

To achieve this transformation, WEF outline a model for Education 4.0. The elements of this approach provides a useful longer-term framework within which to locate institutional shifts such as those pursued by Regent College.



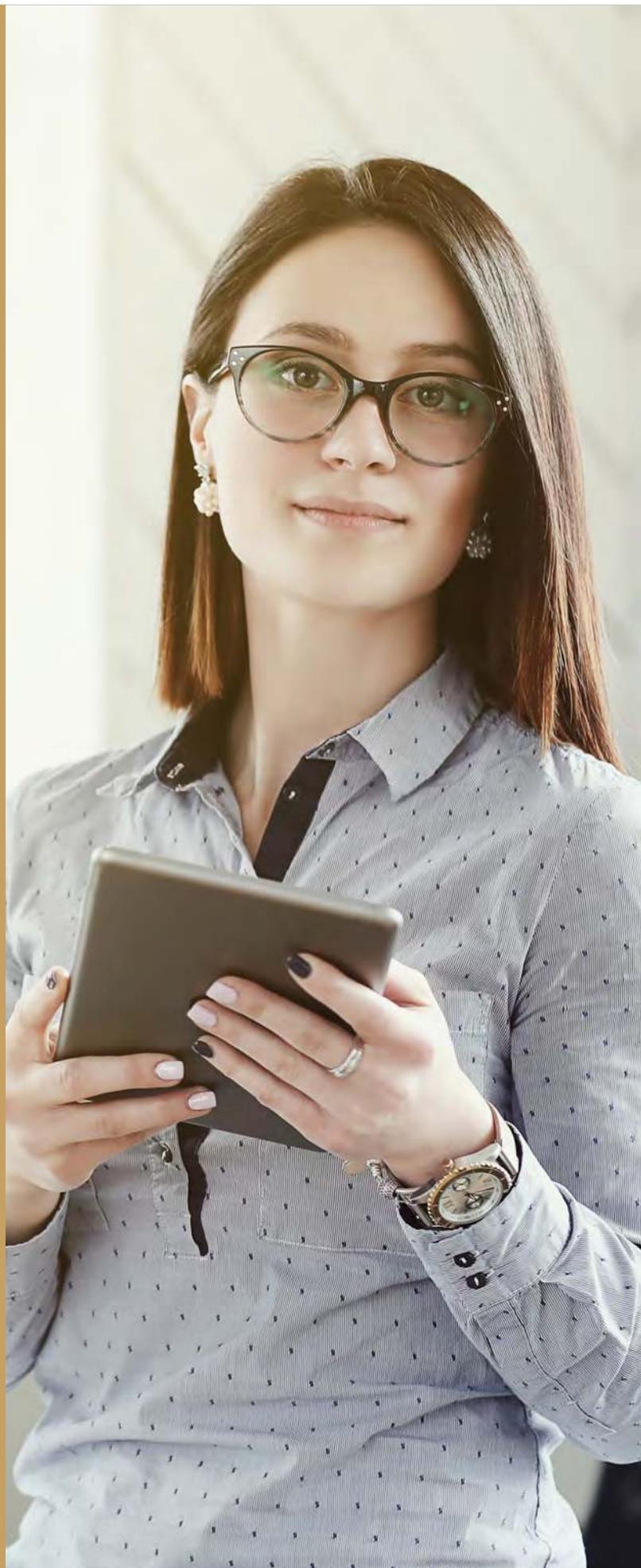
8 Elements of Education 4.0 – World Economic Forum, (January, 2020)

The need for an evidence-based review

Despite the enhanced support for students in the pastoral and broader academic support function, the effectiveness of the complete digital delivery of courses and specific support for student learning outside of scheduled sessions remained untested and unexamined prior to the start of the 2020-21 academic year. This project was designed to capture the nature of the student experience during the first full year on online delivery of Regent courses and to identify where practice was already strong but also where it could be improved. While there had been a growing focus on student analytics in the College in the period 2019-20 information on comprehensive digital delivery was inevitably lacking.

Before examining the details of the issues for Regent, it is worth reviewing the broader picture. The College was not the only institution affected by Covid. What could be learned from other organisations assessment of the impact of the pandemic and the new challenges it raised for higher education providers?

This project was designed to capture the nature of the student experience during the first full year on online delivery of Regent courses and to identify where practice was already strong but also where it could be improved.



THE BROADER CONTEXT FOR REGENT DIGITAL: JISC

One of the most useful and significant frameworks to emerge during 2020 in relation to the management student online engagement was the JISC report *Learning and Teaching Reimagined: Change and challenge for students, staff and leaders* published in July 2020. This report included a number of useful frameworks which can help organise the often disparate and interconnected elements which are involved in defining and improving student engagement in digital learning environments. The first core element of this framework is the notion of the **horizons** for managing and transforming student online learning.

JISC Horizons

Learning and teaching reimagined highlighted three distinct but interconnected 'horizons' in relation to online learning:

- **Short term:** the current (2020) rapid transition to technology-enhanced learning and support as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic (H1)
- **Medium term:** university ambitions and support for transition to a sustainable plan in academic year 2021/22 (H2)
- **Long term:** developing a vision for the future with the academic year 2030/31 in mind (H3)

In the view of JISC across the board there is generally a low, but growing level of digital maturity in learning and teaching. While that report acknowledges the variation across individual institutions it arguably does not fully recognise the importance for many emerging, 'challenger' providers of *partnerships* in tackling the challenges and opportunities of digital learning post-Covid. This is particularly important for growing but currently smaller institutions which lack the expertise, experience and networks of an in-house 'Learning Development Unit' or equivalent.

"There is widespread awareness and experimentation in technology-enhanced learning and it remains far from mainstream. However, the imperative of the current situation and the scale of the challenge also mean there is significant willingness to support national sector-wide efforts to develop capabilities and share best practice in online and emerging hybrid (blended) models of learning and teaching. It is an opportunity that must not be squandered" - JISC *Learning and Teaching Reimagined* (July, 2020)

The JISC review indicated that there was uncertainty amongst students in relation to online learning and that not all students are similar in terms of their perceptions of the value of digital learning.

Students entering university in autumn 2020 have very mixed feelings about online learning, based on their experiences to date and affected by negative media reports. They may not have a deep understanding of how varied and beneficial good online learning can be. - JISC

This recognition of the variety of feelings by students about online learning highlights the importance of personality and engagement styles amongst students which any analysis of what might be effective in digital delivery and support would need to incorporate. Interestingly, the JISC report comments on the role of 'negative media' in shaping students' views of online learning and how they may not as of yet have a fully rounded, deep understanding of how 'varied and beneficial' good online learning can be. In this context two key issues are raised which are reflected in the research reported in this project and in the project more generally: (i) that students' **initial reactions** to online learning – during a period of crisis and transition – may not fully reflect their longer term attitude as they experience more online learning and develop their own skills in achieving their potential in that medium, and (ii) that whatever the importance of underlying pedagogic principles and evidence-based design in identifying "how ... beneficial good online learning can be", online learning **co-designed** by students and staff is not only a critical feature of maximising the effectiveness of online learning, but is itself a key element in that journey from initial scepticism to realising their full engagement. In that sense the effect of co-creation is to make exploration of online learning not just a voyage of discovery, but an exercise in creative construction - of building, as well as of finding.

JISC also highlights how students will need additional support in order to bring their digital skills to an appropriate level.

They have a wide range of digital skill competency – it should not be assumed they come with all the necessary digital skills. They are likely to need more digital upskilling and some may need greater support.

This research builds on these observations in two further specific ways. First of all, by considering **individual differences** in students' personalities and profiles of engagement with online learning and secondly by examining **the social and logistical** issues students face in managing online learning beyond the basic challenges of specifically technical skills.

The JISC Report highlights as a key Recommendation that:

Universities should ensure they have strategies for maintaining high levels of student motivation and engagement as a core feature of the technology-enhanced learning experience. (p29)

This present research project is designed to address this recommendation and rise to that challenge.

What are the four areas of Student Engagement as defined by JISC and why are they relevant to Regent?

JISC break down the overall issue of student engagement into four interconnected elements:

SUPPORT: a supportive culture of motivation to progress and succeed with students' personal tutors playing a key role; straightforward and consistent access to information and resources

ENVIRONMENT: a future-focused digitally-rich learning environment; accessible and up-to-date online resources across all subject areas; gathering granular engagement data from learning systems to inform how individual students are interacting with content

COMMUNITY: a focus on academic and social belonging opportunities including mentoring and peer support mechanisms

LEARNING DESIGN: close interaction with tutors, small group teaching and teamwork; activities that reflect the workplace; short and snappy chunks of content, such as 10-minute-long narrated PowerPoint/prerecorded Zoom content sessions, placed as the trigger for a VLE quiz

These areas are important to Regent as they lay out different interconnected contexts for the analysis and enhancement of student engagement. While the principal focus of this report is *Learning Design* and *Community*, the requirements of *Environment* and (pastoral) *Support* will also be considered.



Modelling Student Engagement in Digital Learning – The Online Student Engagement Scale

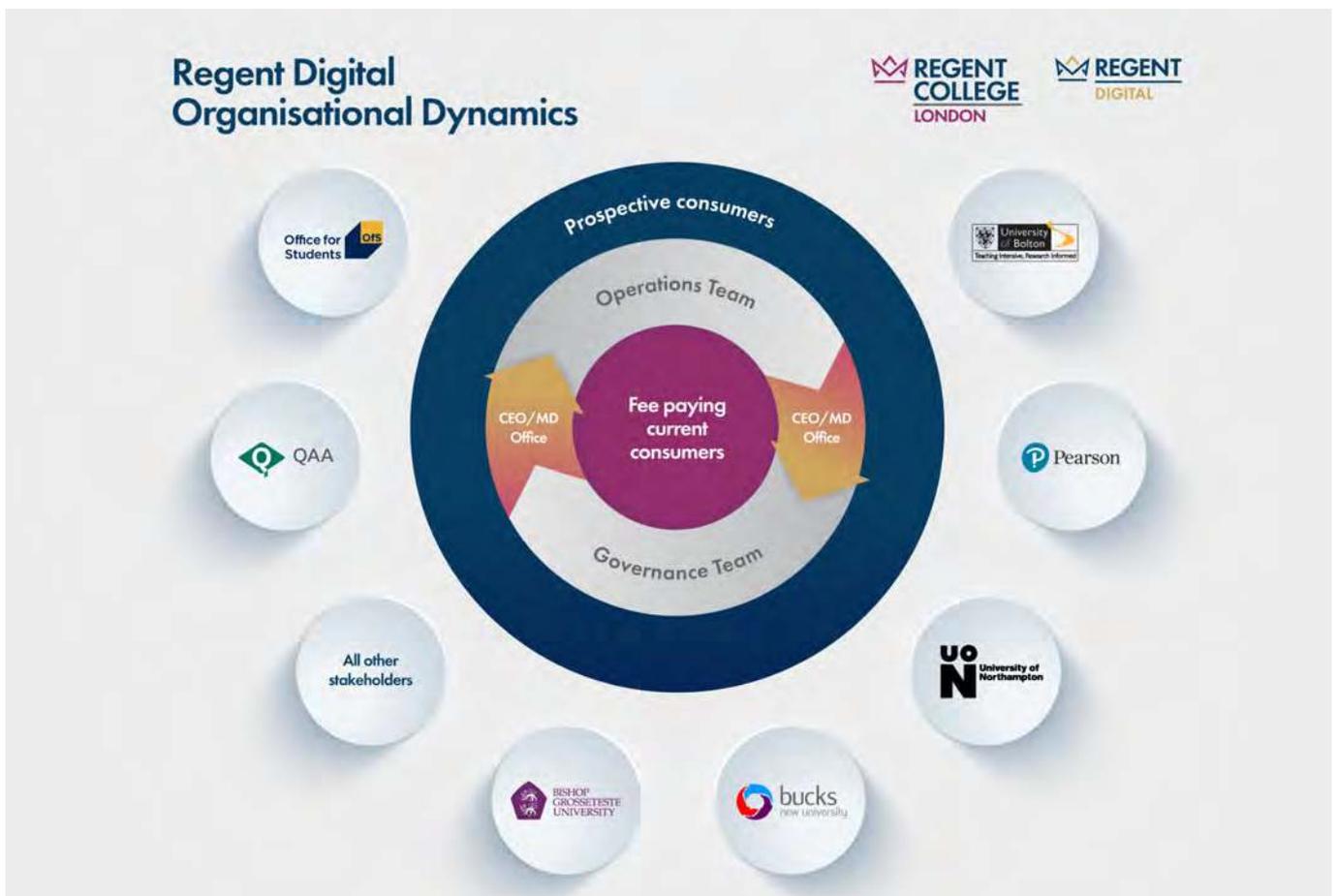
One of the initial issues in exploring and improving student digital engagement is the need to have a clear and practical **model** of what student engagement is. One useful and practical framework is that based on empirical research by Dixon (2015) which offers a four-factor model of student digital engagement. Using the Online Student Engagement Scale (OSE) we can identify a profile for each student - highlighting not just their level of engagement, but the *overall profile* of that engagement. These four dimensions are highlighted in that table below.

OSE FACTOR	Meaning - Extent to which students focus their digital engagement on...
SKILLS	...Conscientious academic study, attention and review
EMOTION	...Personal relevance, desire to learn and staying interested
PARTICIPATION	...Collaboration with peers in forums and chat
PERFORMANCE	...Securing high grades

One of the strengths of the Dixon model is that it moves debate away from a simplistic binary notion of engaged versus non-engaged students, to not only to a more nuanced concept of a spectrum of engagement, but to a multidimensional model which helps us see that students are engaged to a greater or lesser extent and in different ways. It is possible, and indeed common, in the OSE model to have two students with almost identical levels of overall digital engagement online, and yet displaying completely different behaviours, emotions and attitudes to that learning. Crucially, in relation to attempts to *improve* student engagement and student success generally, it is important to note that students with different OSE profiles will want different things to improve their experience and will value attempts to improve engagement in different ways.

As will be reported later, in the context of this project we have (i) examined the profiles of Regent students (ii) compared these profiles to the published 'norms' and (iii) examined the extent to which different profiles value different enhancements to digital delivery and digital support.

There is limited research on online student engagement and such research as there is relates to a period prior to third generation VLEs, and the routine use of videoconferencing for teaching. Nonetheless a series of principles have been identified which can be incorporated into any evidence-based approach to enhancing online student engagement:



AIMS OF THE PROJECT

In the context of the sector-wide challenges, the Principal of Regent decided to commission a research project to identify practical steps which could be taken to help staff help students and to help students help themselves. The focus was on a bottom up approach to recommendations and implementation.

- 1 To enhance the **quality** of student engagement in online learning at Regent College London
- 2 To enable extensive student engagement in that **process** of developing more effective arrangements for student engagement online
- 3 To develop a **toolkit** for tutors and students to help collaborative working in online sessions
- 4 To develop as a key part of the toolkit, a short user-friendly **guide** for students and staff on getting the most out of online sessions
- 5 To document existing and developing **good practice** at Regent College London amongst staff in this area.

This Phase 1 Report covers Aims 1, 2 and 5. Aims 3 and 4 are supported by the work reported here but will be subject to further development under Phase 2.

METHODS

Summary

In order to capture a wide range of views a mixture of focus group and survey techniques were employed. There was one student focus group and one staff focus group followed by two surveys one for staff and one for students. These had a range of identical questions to identify similarities and differences across the two groups. The survey was designed to enable future follow up tracking surveys without compromising the anonymity of respondents.

Student Focus Group

A student focus group was held on 19 October to which 13 students attended. The prompts and responses for this focus group are presented in Appendix 1. The aims of the student focus group were to (i) signal that the College was committed to improving digital engagement, (ii) capturing students' views on how that could be achieved, (iii) inviting students to participate in the development of the toolkit and guide and (iv) guiding the final wording of the questions in the survey.

Staff Focus Group

A staff focus group was held on the 19 October at which 15 staff members attended. The prompts and responses for this group are presented in Appendix 2. The aims of the staff focus group were (i) signal that the College was committed to a bottom up approach to improving student engagement in online learning, (ii) capturing staff views on what would be practical and effective for students (iii) inviting staff to reflect on their practice in this area and (iv) guiding the final wording of the questions in the survey.

Student Survey

The student survey comprised a range of questions covering recommendations to improve digital delivery and support, aspects of accessing digital sessions, and interruptions and distractions during digital sessions. In addition, students completed the well-established Personality questionnaire Big Five Short version (Ramstedt & John, 2007) and the *Online Student Engagement Scale* (OSE; Dixson, 2015). Furthermore, students were given three open ended questions namely, (i) *Overall, what could your educational institution do to help you succeed in online learning?* (ii) *What aspects of online learning do you enjoy / expect to enjoy most?* and (iii) *Overall, what barriers might prevent you from achieving your full potential when learning online?* The survey was set up online and a link was emailed to all Regent students. Entry into a draw for three vouchers of £50 each were advertised as an inducement to participate. Participants comprised 133 male and 216 female students with 3 not specified (See table below)

	Number	
How would you describe your gender?	Male	133
	Female	216
	Prefer not to say	3
Would you consider yourself to have a disability?	Yes	4
	No	341
	Prefer not to say	7

Reflecting the makeup of the student population, 85% of students were in the area of Business & Enterprise.

Staff Survey

The staff entailed an abbreviated version of the student survey without the personality scale. Staff were asked to consider what students would benefit from and to assess the forms of engagement in relation to the OSE model (ie their views on student engagement dimensions).

In addition, staff were invited to respond to a set of open-ended questions:

- 1. What aspects of teaching online learning do you enjoy / expect to enjoy most?*
- 2. Overall, what barriers might prevent you from achieving your full potential as a tutor or support service professional when tutoring or supporting learning online?*
- 3. Any other comments?*

In all 42 staff completed the survey of which 79% were academic staff.

The surveys and instructions were approved by the University of Bolton Education & Psychology Ethics Committee.



FINDINGS

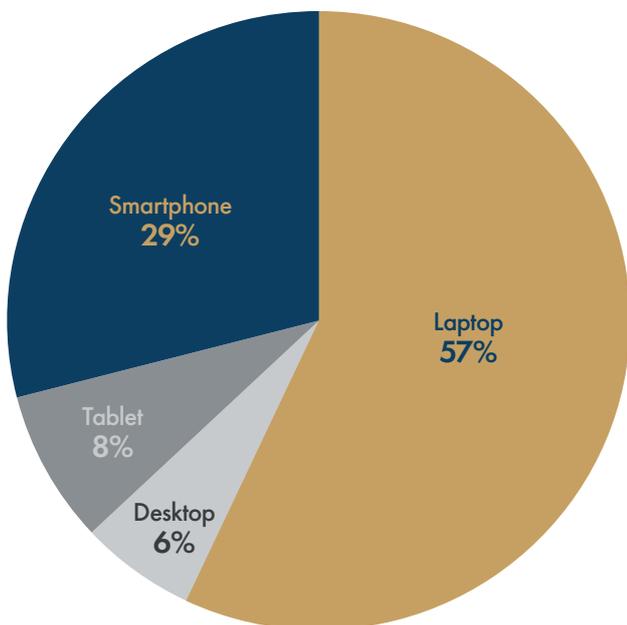
How are students at Regent accessing digital sessions?

Students are accessing digital sessions principally through laptops with only 6% using desktops. Interestingly, 29% of students are accessing digital sessions via smartphones. This can frequently lead to a limited experience of a session as (i) the Wi-Fi connection is less stable – though a 4G signal may be available as a backup (ii) much interactivity and functionality is lost or made too difficult (iii) other apps such as notetaking facilities may be complex to manage and (iv) if the learner has an incoming call or text it will disrupt the direct experience of the session. Laptops are generally less powerful than desktops and can manage bandwidth less well. However, laptops have the advantage in home learning of being portable and often owned by one individual rather than shared.

While overall students are engaged in learning during digital sessions, they are multitasking. Sometimes this is learning related, and sometimes not.

This issue has not previously been raised and will need to be addressed by Regent Digital. While smartphones can provide important additional functionality to support digital learning, they are suboptimal in relation to fully immersive engagement in digital sessions.

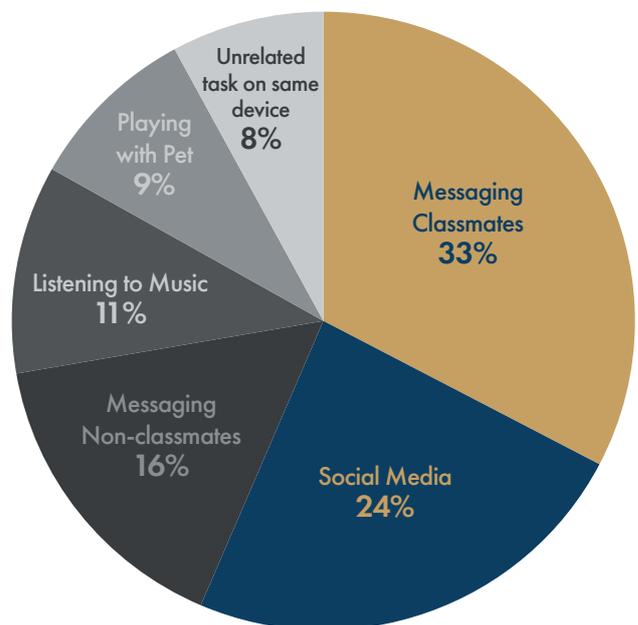
How are students accessing digital sessions?



What are Regent students also doing during digital sessions?

It has long been recognised that one of the limitations of synchronous, remote digital learning is the 'attention economy' of student engagement. That is students make active decisions about much attention to pay to learning experiences in context. The setting often has competing demands on attention and although it will vary for different students, there is a threshold where other sources of information or distraction become more attractive even if only temporarily. Not all attention paid to sources other than the primary source in a digital session (eg the tutor or a presentation) is necessarily unconnected to the primary aim of a session however (eg a student googling a new term presented by the tutor).

What are students also doing during digital sessions?



What is the nature of Regent students' current digital engagement?

Delivering educational session online through video or otherwise is a complex process, involving multiple, technological, intellectual, emotional, curricular, pedagogic and logistical factors. Any given session can have a particular combination of these factors, some controlled some unpredictable, some visible while others might be less obvious.

In this context the level and format of student engagement can be difficult to model as that which is to be engaged with is itself complex and subtle. To make modelling of student engagement in this context more tractable it is useful to have a model, while noting that all models emphasis some features while minimising others.

One useful and practical model is that based on empirical research by Dixon (2015) which offers a four-factor model of student digital engagement. Using the **Online Student Engagement Scale (OSE)** we can identify a profile for each student highlighting not just their level of engagement, but the character of that engagement. These four dimensions are highlighted in that table below.

OSE FACTOR	Meaning - Extent to which student focus their engagement on ...
SKILLS	Conscientious academic study, attention and review
EMOTION	Personal relevance, desire to learn and staying interested
PARTICIPATION	Collaboration with peers in forums and chat
PERFORMANCE	Securing high grades

Regent students demonstrate higher levels of engagement than is normally found in comparable cohorts.

REGENT STUDENTS' MEAN SCORES ON THE FOUR OSE DIMENSIONS

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
OSE_SKILLS	372	4.15	.65
OSE_EMOTION	372	4.19	.67
OSE_PARTICIPATION	370	3.83	.85
OSE_PERFORM	371	4.19	.70

The average score on the OSE across all subscales is approximately 4 with a standard deviation of 0.49 (Dixon, 2015). Overall, then Regent students demonstrate higher levels of engagement than is normally found in comparable cohorts. However, the in terms of the specific dimension of 'Participation' – that is engagement in online chat forums outside of specific digital sessions, Regent students are somewhat less engaged. As we shall, however, this is an area where they feel increased engagement could be of benefit to them.

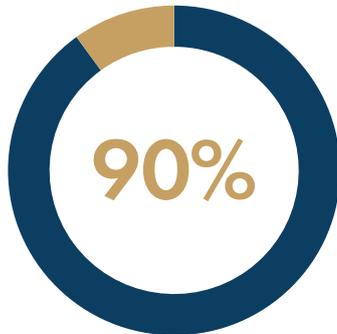


What enhancements do Regent students want to see?

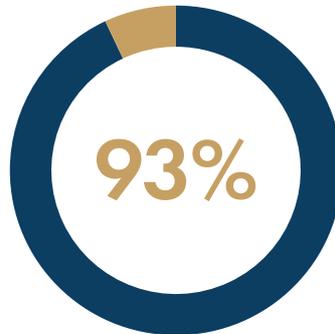
Students were asked two sets of questions regarding potential enhancements to help them achieve their potential online.

The first set related to possible improvements to the management of specific online **digital teaching sessions** through video and the second related to **support between digital sessions**.

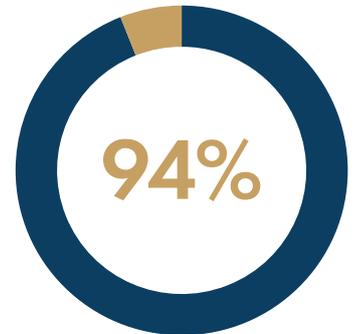
What can your tutor do to help you?



Make everyone feel positive and emotionally comfortable before we start



Summarise the key points at the end of the session



Give a clear introduction at the beginning of the session on what will be covered and why

STUDENTS PREFERENCES FOR ENHANCEMENTS TO DIGITAL TEACHING SESSIONS

“Thinking about online video sessions (eg via Zoom or Microsoft teams), to what extent would each of the following behaviours by tutors help you achieve your potential when learning online?” (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree)

	Mean	Std. Dev
Summarising the key points at the end of the session	4.49	
Giving a clear introduction at the beginning of the session on what will be covered and why	4.44	.63
Making everyone feel positive and emotionally comfortable before we start	4.39	.73
Check that all students are comfortable with the technology being used.	4.33	.72
Checking that students understand each section as we go through	4.30	.75
Indicating what kind of assessment questions have been used for this topic in the past	4.16	.79
Telling us at the end of the session what the next session will be about	4.13	.91
Having small group discussions online about the topic or a related case study	4.00	.89
Having weekly informal online quizzes at the start to check understanding so far	3.96	.95
Having weekly informal online quizzes at the end to check understanding of session	3.94	.91
Asking everyone to comment via chat what they have been doing since the last session	3.82	.99
Have students pair up for each online session to help keep each other engaged and on track	3.78	1.03
Assigning a small task to each student to do before the next session	3.75	1.09
Giving some homework for everyone to do before the next session	3.65	1.14

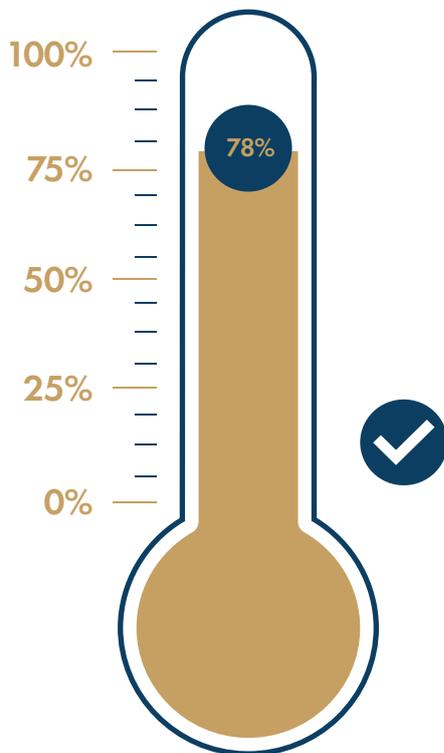
STUDENTS PREFERENCES FOR ENHANCEMENTS FOR DIGITAL SUPPORT BETWEEN TEACHING SESSIONS

The second set related to possible improvements to the management of support between or outside of online digital video sessions.

Thinking about the individual learning you do on your own outside of specific online teaching sessions, how much would these actions by your tutor or other staff help you? (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree)

	Mean	Std. Dev
Encourage the use of online message boards for students to post questions and ideas	4.21	.74
Run short sessions focusing on assessment tasks only	4.04	.84
Be available between sessions to answer questions I might have	4.01	.89
Give students specific questions to answer for each item they have to read	3.94	.87
Facilitate optional online student-led study sessions	3.87	.91
Organise a mentoring system where a student who has already done my level of the course provides some help and guidance to me	3.83	1.06
Organise a buddy system where two students from the same year of the same course help each other	3.81	1.04
Have weekly or fortnightly online tests that do not count towards your final official grade but help students see how they are doing	3.64	1.05

Students want sessions dedicated to Assessment



Interpretation

In terms of video sessions students indicated that they would welcome structured openings and closings for online sessions, alongside care for learners throughout the digital event. In relation to support between video sessions the emphasis was on facilitating peer and tutor support and feedback, alongside support for engagement with assessment.

Combining the preferences for both in-session and between-sessions enhancements, four clear dimensions emerge: (1) Task management, (2) Tutor Support, (3) Peer support, and (4) Communication

Percentage of students who said they try to find ways to "make the course material relevant to my life"

86%



What do Regent staff think Regent students would benefit from?

Staff were asked two corresponding sets of questions about student engagement during online sessions and student support between or outside of online sessions.

When asked *Thinking about online video sessions (eg via Zoom or Microsoft teams), to what extent would each of the following behaviours by tutors help students at your institution achieve their potential when learning online?*

	Mean	
Checking that students understand each section as we go through	4.45	.968
Summarising the key points at the end of the session	4.42	.984
Check that all students are comfortable with the technology being used.	4.41	.974
Telling us at the end of the session what the next session will be about	4.41	.836
Giving a clear introduction at the beginning of the session on what will be covered and why	4.40	1.014
Making everyone feel positive and emotionally comfortable before we start	4.37	1.019
Indicating what kind of assessment questions have been used for this topic in the past	4.24	.969
Giving some homework for everyone to do before the next session	4.24	.888
Assigning a small task to each student to do before the next session	4.20	.901
Having small group discussions online about the topic or a related case study	4.20	.954
Asking everyone to comment via chat what they have been doing since the last session	4.10	1.031
Having weekly informal online quizzes at the end to check understanding of session	4.05	1.139
Having weekly informal online quizzes at the start to check understanding so far	4.03	1.121
Have students pair up for each online session to help keep each other engaged and on track	3.78	1.037

Items in white indicate the top three requests for enhancement by students.

Do the expectations of staff and student match in relation to digital delivery?

Overall, there is broad agreement between what students want and what staff think would be beneficial in relation to the delivery of digital sessions. All the items are rated highly in absolute terms with some differences when it came to the relative strength of feeling about specific items. For example, while students rated *Summarising the key points at the end of the session* as their top item this was rated second highest by staff (and only 0.03 behind the highest rated item). By contrast *Giving some homework for everyone to do before the next session* was rated last by students at 3.78 but 8th by staff at 4.24. Overall, the correlation between the mean scores for staff and students was 0.78.

Do the Expectations of staff and student align in relation to digital support?

While there were some differences in relation to student versus staff ratings of in-session digital delivery, there was more convergence in relation to student and staff ratings of between-session support.

Thinking about online video sessions (eg via Zoom or Microsoft teams), to what extent would each of the following behaviours by tutors help students at your institution achieve their potential when learning online?

	Mean	Std. Dev
Encourage the use of online message boards for students to post questions and ideas	4.48	.6
Be available between sessions to answer questions I might have	4.29	.8
Run short sessions focusing on assessment tasks only	4.24	.6
Give students specific questions to answer for each item they have to read	4.17	.8
Have weekly or fortnightly online tests that do not count towards your final official grade but help students see how they are doing	4.07	1.0
Facilitate optional online student-led study sessions	4.02	.9
Organise a buddy system where two students from the same year of the same course help each other	4.02	.9
Organise a mentoring system where a student who has already done my level of the course provides some help and guidance to me	3.98	1.2
Valid N (listwise)	41	

As can be seen there is a very high level of agreement between students and staff in relation to support outside of scheduled online sessions with the same items appearing in the top three selections for both.

In terms of staff views about student engagement some interesting differences were discernible.

RATINGS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT BY STAFF AND STUDENTS		
OSE SUBSCALE	Staff	Students
T_OSE_SKILLS	3.5	4.15
T_OSE_EMOTION	3.7	4.19
T_OSE_PARTICIPATION	3.8	3.83
T_OSE_PERFORMANCE	3.6	4.19

As can be seen from the table above staff rated students as being less engaged than the students rated themselves, except for the 'participation' dimension.

What do Regent students think about digital learning and assessment?

Students were keen for additional sessions to be organised that focused solely on assessment and the highest rating on the OSE Scale was the Performance Subscale which comprises two assessment-focused items.

JISC have identified five features of assessment which they recommend should be adopted by higher education providers. These focus on relatively complex and technical aspects of assessment rather than broader pedagogic principles. They are identified as areas which will be the focus of improving assessment in an online environment over the period up to 2025. Nevertheless, they do highlight key features that must be managed by any institution expanding their digital offer.

JISC - FIVE FEATURES OF ASSESSMENT

Authentic	Assessments designed to prepare students for what they do next, using technology they will use in their careers
Accessible	Assessments designed with an accessibility-first principle
Appropriately automated	A balance found of automated and human marking to deliver maximum benefit to students
Continuous	Assessment data used to explore opportunities for continuous assessment to improve the learning experience
Secure	Authoring detection and biometric authentication adopted for identification and remote proctoring

Overall Regent students' engagement in relation to issues associated with assessment are high and higher than average. They also wish to see additional sessions dedicated purely to assessment matters.



What are the personality differences in student engagement?

One of the developing issues in the understanding of digital learning is the differences amongst students in relation to preferences for different types of engagement and overall level of engagement. One specific way to examine this in relation to personality dimensions which are regularly seen to be associated with different forms of education activity and performance.

In terms of the four dimensions of the Online Student Engagement Scale, there is clear degree of individual variation as indicated by the standard deviations highlighting the range within which 95% of the respondents fell. Some of this will be attributable to statistical and task 'noise' that resists useful interpretation. However, by examining personality characteristics it is possible in principle to identify systematic differences which have practical consequences for area such as design, delivery and support.

PREDICTION OF OVERALL DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT BY PERSONALITY

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	14.172	1.249		11.343	.000
	Extraversion	.205	.076	.142	2.695	.007
	Agreeableness	.022	.094	.013	.230	.818
	Conscientiousness	.265	.088	.174	2.998	.003
	Anxious	-.197	.074	-.151	-2.671	.008
	Openness	-.079	.104	-.040	-.759	.448

a. Dependent Variable: OSE_OVERALL Significant effects = ...

As can be seen from the table above, engagement overall was significantly *higher* for those scoring higher on Extraversion and Conscientiousness, but *lower* for those scoring higher on Anxiousness. This highlights the importance of recognising the range of variability in student engagement and that much of that variation is linked to personality. Additionally, while some commentaries highlight that digital delivery makes it easier for some less confident students to participate, it is clear that overall, this is not entirely the case. Self-reported digital engagement is highest in extraverts and lowest in anxious introverts – and this has implications for individual student support.

One other finding in relation to specific proposals was that students scoring low on Agreeableness were significantly less likely to endorse the proposals regarding *Summarising the key points at the end of the session or Check that all students are comfortable with the technology being used*. It might be worthwhile therefore for staff to be aware that some students who are less on cooperative or considerate might not see the benefits of such interventions.

Self-reported digital engagement is highest in extraverts and lowest in anxious introverts – and this has implications for individual student support.

In terms of focus of engagement as measured by the OSE Scale, Regent students generally scored highly across the board except in relation to Participation (in online discussion groups).

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
OSE_SKILLS	372	4.15	.65
OSE_EMOTION	372	4.19	.67
OSE_PARTICIPATION	370	3.83	.85
OSE_PERFORM	371	4.19	.70

What do students say Regent could do to help them succeed in digital learning?

Students were given the opportunity to respond in their own words to three specific prompts:

1. *‘Overall, what could your educational institution do to help you succeed in online learning?’*
2. *‘What aspects of online learning do you enjoy / expect to enjoy most?’*
3. *‘Overall, what barriers might prevent you from achieving your full potential when learning online?’*

Overall students’ open-ended comments regarding support from Regent were **positive**. When asked the question ‘Overall, what could your educational institution do to help you succeed in online learning?’ some simply indicated that there was nothing more that could be done.

This theme of **positive orientation** came out either in terms of positive comments about the College’s handling of the shift to digital and in terms of students feeling there was little more the College do to improve things further.

“My educational institution is doing the best to help me to succeed. For those interested in learning, it has all the necessary resources”.

“Nothing I can think about at the moment”

“I am quite comfortable with the current arrangement already in place for this institution.”

“I really enjoy learning online and so far everything is going great”

“ok as it is.”

“Everything is fine like this”

“It’s doing a great job so far”

“My educational institution is doing the best to help me to succeed. For those interested in learning, it has all the necessary resources” – Business Student

Another theme was the **gradual accommodation** to learning online after an unexpected and sudden shift in delivery.

“It’s an interesting practice. It’s convenient, since we don’t have to spend money and time for transport and food expenses”

“I like doing online learning for I find it better being able to relax in our own home while studying”

“It’s good in a sense as you can get announcements, access notes, review assignments, take practice quizzes, discuss questions, chat with fellow students and study any time you want. Other than certain due dates, you make your own schedule for completing the requirements of the course main thing for online learning is Flexibility - Students have the freedom to juggle their careers and school because they aren’t tied down to a fixed schedule. Reduced Costs - Online education can cost less due to a variety of reasons and online courses also promote lifelong learning” – Business Student

“I like the classes to be more interactive, this will facilitate the learning”

“It is very good like it is now”

“I think that it’s ok how the system is now”



I think it depends [on] everyone, not just ... [the] institution. I think the educational institution can give us a 'start-up' and show us the ways which we can follow for professional growing and for developing our personalities but in fact, it all depends how we succeed, by taking all the information from educational institution and apply [to] our life, even if they are online learning or face to face. – Business students

Some learners did not like online mode per se but did not feel there was anything particularly the institution could do to improve things. This **resigned acceptance** theme was characteristic of a minority of students but for those for whom it was an issue it appeared to be a significant one.

"I'm not very happy with online learning but in this situation is nothing better to do"

Some were very **uneasy** about the shift to digital:

Hate online based learning. I feel it's pure chatting

I don't enjoy the online learning, I can't concentrate that much

One of the biggest concerns was the consistency and reliability of home broadband connection and related technical issues. This **internet connection** theme was apparent in the experience of many students, including those who were otherwise positive about their experience of digital learning and of the College's management of digital delivery and support generally.

"Provide laptop so everyone can have access"

"Making sure we can log on to our school platform easily"

"Good connection, I'm thinking about a partnership between the institution and an Internet provider which can offer as well to the students . Then I think the issues will be sorted out"

"Provide access/ login/ username to Moodle, books via online. Students waiting for that"

"Better internet connection"

I think when I'm in school with my tutor learning is easier and better...online sometimes I don't understand everything or the Internet connection is bad. – Health student

Several students felt there was scope for more customisation of the delivery operations to their particular needs. This **personalisation** theme was often accompanied by specific suggestions for enhancement.

"Explain slowly"

"In online classes we are 35 to 50 people and I know this can sound impossible but I would like my teachers to get to know me cause sometimes I don't have chances to talk or to give an answer cause other do it before me so I might look like I'm not participating to the classes"

"Step by step instructions should be given as to how to go about things in online learning"

"Test for learning disabilities eg: dyslexia etc"

THE STUDENT VOICE ON DIGITAL LEARNING



"I really enjoy that I can learn from the comfort of my room and that no one interrupts the teacher like in real classes."



"I like it when everyone has something to discuss and it helps in understanding better with interaction."



"There is one very good aspect, which is saving loads of time. No need to travel to the school and back. It's very comfortable like this."



"Sometimes I have connection issues due to the internet and by the time I reconnect, I miss some information's about today's lecture."

Students have clear views about what they enjoy most in online digital learning.

When asked: 'What aspects of online learning do you enjoy / expect to enjoy most?' many students focused on the secure and comfortable setting of being at home to learn. This **domestic comfort** theme was clear across many respondents.

I like to be at home because i am in my comfort area.

I can be in a comfortable position in my chair or sofa and usually I don't type in the chat, I prefer to speak with the teacher and I enjoy that, especially with [tutor named].

It saves loads of money for travel

I enjoy learning in a comfortable environment

Staying at home

I'm home and I don't have to travel

I enjoy that I can be in the comfort of my house.

I enjoy working online from home because I feel much more comfortable. I honestly believe I am doing better in this environment than I would in an actual classroom – Student Respondent

The fact that is very easy to attend classes

Stay at home.

I enjoy learning in a comfortable environment

It's more quiet - on the class and I understand better

I really enjoy that I can learn from the comfort of my room and that no one interrupts the teacher like in real classes.

I can continue studies even in pandemic time from home.

Some students focused specifically on the **interactive** elements of their experience as one of the sources of their positive experience of online learning. There is some evidence that more tutors have moved to exploiting quizzes as sessions have moved online.

Presentations, weekly quiz

I enjoy the interactive lessons.

When power point slides are showed and the videos

Interacting with the class

The quiz and the way how the teachers are explaining to us.

Interaction with other students

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COLLEGE**
LONDON



I enjoy the interaction aspects the most.

Being more confident in answering during the course questioning about topics

Video, quizzes

I like it when everyone has something to discuss and it helps in understanding better with interaction.

Quizzes/tests /active participation questions and asking / giving our own opinions related to the topic

The practice part, when we need to apply what we actually learned.

Lectures are more clear and interaction between the lecturer and students are more formal and clear

There is one very good aspect, which is saving loads of time. No need to travel to the school and back. It's very comfortable like this.

Everything

Teachers

I find easy learning using PowerPoint, diagrams and graphics

Interactive lectures, interesting subjects, teachers who are enthusiastic, happy to share their knowledge with us, not boring or talking fast all the time because for us is very hard to assimilate what they are talking about.

Quizzes

I have chance to watch the video (lesson) again which give to me more options to understand the unit specification more deeply and give me more ideas to write my assignment and to create good points in.

Quiz

Quiz tests and slides in PowerPoint with schemes and all information we need in detail

Quiz, my teachers, experiences, etc...

The activities

Chatting and talking with students and teachers as in live classes.

Information about the assignments and examples of marketing

Explaining the terms and meaning

Some students were keen to highlight outstanding teaching and support mentioned **individual tutors** by name.

[Tutor's name] lectures always so well presented.

How [tutor] manage to explain, was a pleasure to listen her

the fact that there is no travel time, and save money by not travelling, even if a little ill, i could still potentially be a part of the class from home, and in some ways, students can get a little more out of classes by going back and listening to recordings if something was missed, which is something that cannot be done when physically attending class.



What barriers to learning do students report?

Students were asked to offer their views on what might be stopping them from achieving in the context of digital delivery. The specific question here was *Overall, what barriers might prevent you from achieving your full potential when learning online?* While there were a wide range of answers here, a number of discernible themes emerged.

First of all, as with the overall comments on the digital experience, students pointed to the **poor quality of internet connection**.



Device trouble.

No barriers, except bad connection sometimes which can make me unconcentrated.

Sometimes I have connection issues due to the internet and by the time I reconnect, I miss some information's about today's lecture.

Wi-Fi connections are sometimes weak, communications are not always quick, understanding is sometimes lost in translation especially as its via video call. There is a lack of motivation outside of the classes, and it's difficult to ask for help during the classes due to maybe not being outspoken or not wanting to speak in front of everyone about personal issues.

Just my internet connection, sometimes I have problems, but I know just my intervention can solve the issue.

Just the Internet connection.

No access to IT dept at campus face to face (on log in issue to blackboard from another device).

Poor internet connection.

There are no barriers, unless the internet goes down.

The only barrier is that sometimes I can be disturbed by other family members.

Technological difficulties.

The slow internet connection.

Internet connection, laptop failure, external factors.

My home environment, kids shouting and asking for snacks, TV sound or have cooking to be done.

A small number of students highlighted how tutors were experiencing fatigue and getting to grips with the new technology arrangements themselves.

Fatigue and Teachers if they are not in a good mood and are not explained to understand.

Technical issues, teachers that do not listen us, teachers that are not well enough prepared for using online tools and technology.

What are staff views on digital teaching and support in general?

What aspects of teaching online learning do staff enjoy most?

Staff highlighted the interactivity of the online medium, the levels of engagement of most students and the immediacy of much of the discussion.

“The team efforts of the lecturer and the student in the class”.

Interactive sessions.

simulations - game like Using augmented reality e.g. QR code treasure hunt.

practical sessions.

quiet environment allows easy concentration on students and subjects.

The student engagement.

Attendance and engagement of the students, they are more comfortable and relax in taking the lesson.

Class discussions.

I like the fact that you can access it from various places so you are not confined to the classroom.

Quick sharing of information, skills of using digital platforms,

create online quizzes and research tasks.

Practical sessions.

It is convenient and saves time.

using different platforms to engage students.

Demonstrating the theoretical concepts through teaching how and practical sample.

Innovative and creative nature.

Two-way communication with my students. So that I could get feedback in real-time. Typing in Chats the only method allowed... Why?

Teaching and discussion in the class.

Interaction with students.

The flexibility.

Flexibility and the home ambience.



“[I enjoy] ... fully controlled activities, student engagement even they are virtually connected, chat box allows students to share ideas or ask questions which sometimes they feel shy to ask in face-to-face classes” - Tutor

Attendance should be linked to class engagement and participation.

Presentation of lecture and engaging student in class activities.

Discussion on any topic that relates to current affairs.

Interaction through technology.

Flexibility, Immediate response and ease of sharing documents/information.

Learning new technology and becoming digital competent.

Sharing different online resources, class activities and immediate feedback.

An increasing number of attendance and direct access to the IT.

“Being able to share my screen and files with students instantly, providing organisation and visual stimuli. Also, oddly enough, everyone is more awake and not stressed out from work and commuting” - Tutor

interactive delivery of lecture.

Brainstorming, class discussions and debates.

Interacting with students using technology and elearning.

The interaction and participation of students in the learning process.

Interacting with students and hearing their examples.

What do staff see as potential barriers to ideal digital delivery and support?

Staff responded to the prompt of 'Overall, what barriers might prevent you from achieving your full potential as a tutor or support service professional when tutoring or supporting learning online' with a wide range of issues but **connectivity and technology** issues were concerns for staff as they had been for students.

Connectivity issues, for both lecturers and students.

Technology.

poor internet connection.

students lose concentration due to background noises.

Some students turn off their microphone and cameras and I wonder if they are really there.

Internet connection needs improvement.

Some technical issues sometimes come out like not able to upload materials.

The lack of human contact- face to face class discussion.

technological issues mainly or the trust as to whether students complete the necessary actions after they are off of the call.

difficult in understanding the expressions, lack of attachment, difficult to monitor engagement when big class size.

I do not know if students are disengaged as cameras are off and sometimes it is difficult to get large classes engaged in comparison to smaller classes.

Students lack of IT skills.

Physical and active online presence online is the greatest challenge.

IT boundaries & skills.

You cannot monitor or supervise activity by physically looking at them or their body language. So you have to depend on their voices and chat messages for evaluating involvement. - Tutor

Technological barrier (possibly) Lack of unified work in terms of asking students to be active and engaging in class. We should all be stating the same statement and encouraging interaction.

They are not focused as the engagement level maybe disrupted and the repetitive nature of the questions from the

students often disjointed due to them not paying attention.

Internet connection, effective communication, lack of attention due to virtual connection.

Students unwilling to participate in class activities and quizzes.

Connectivity problem and distraction while lecture is on.

Sometime learners go off the camera as well as they mute themselves. Difficult to monitor what is going on behind the camera.

Internet issues and lack of engagement by students.

Nothing in particular.

Sometimes students joined in the class in a remote area and they have a poor connection. As a result, they may miss the lectures/ lesson.

Practicality of learnings.

There will always be some students who totally refuse to engage. It's difficult to force engagement with every single student when there can be 60 or 70 in one class.



Students having network or computer issues.

Disruption and the unseen factors that can at times take students attention away.

If the groups were smaller, the interaction with the students, and the student experience could be improved.

How do staff think student engagement could be enhanced?

A key theme from the staff recommendations was the need for more IT skills support for students and to a lesser extent exploration of providing students with IT equipment.

“Regular training and discussions together as a team (has been implemented, and it is a good approach to have on an ongoing basis)”.

Teach basic ethics when they attend lectures online.

We need a good induction programme. Maybe from our Wellbeing school.

student attendance needs to be improved.

Discussion boards for asynchronous communications.

To make sure students settle down as quickly as possible before the commencement of the semester.

May help in giving short training on using MS team or may be on IT skills.

Find innovative ways of engaging students and making the learning experience interesting.

Ensuring that firstly they are happy and comfortable accessing what they need to do regarding the technology.

Technical support in using different platforms.

stricter measures on including engagement as part of attendance monitoring.

Having smaller classes.

Provide laptops, PCs or tablets so they do not use mobiles for online classes.

Proper virtual line induction.

Activities that promote, support and provide learning guidance.

Provide better digital learning software and more training specific to the students from the IT support.

Connect with students Clear and direct IT support.

Use the full capability of MS Teams. I am not able to see or hear my students, during class or link full Class notebooks.

Make sure that each student has a specific member of staff to contact.

Have more training workshops for teachers. In my opinion, it is all about the teacher. - Tutor

Make the online learning and participation part of assessment and this might motivate the learners to attend classes seriously.

More IT Support for students.

Encourage students to be more interactive in class. Make classes more interactive through activities and videos etc.

Ensuring engagement and obtaining feedback on class progress from lecturers.

Introduce interactive technologies for improved learning. E.g. online assessment methodologies can help student success and also will increase student engagement.

Constant follow up and necessary attention given to resolve any connection or network problem.

Engage them further in various online activities.

Training on engagement online.

Give an initial training on technology and relevant software being used.

It's safe under the current situation.

Providing online resources and access.

Arrange more digital resources for students.

Availability of more online learning tools.

“Support students to overcome the boundaries between the physical and virtual classroom. Empower them to claim the ownership of their learning process”. - Tutor

Provide them with tablets/ipads.

Further understand individual concerns and challenges and try to help and support them.

“By having more staff in the administrative team, so that complaints (access to the material, connection to Moodle, etc.) set by students are solved more quickly”

WHAT ARE THE EXAMPLES OF INSTITUTIONAL GOOD PRACTICE IN RELATION TO DIGITAL LEARNING?

There are a number of examples of good practice evidence in the management of digital engagement and digital learning generally at Regent College

1. The Regent Digital **brand and assets**
2. The regular use of **interactive** quizzes and polls in Microsoft teams (such as Mentimeter)
3. The monthly **Meet the Principal** event held online.
4. The comprehensive package of measures introduced to strengthen **student engagement** in May – June 2020
5. The **customisation** of digital learning to meet the needs of the curriculum in some areas
6. The **pedagogical models** and technical expertise used in Computing
7. The **Student Representation Handbook (September, 2020)** and the use of digital technology in the processes it describes (eg elections, Freshdesk ticket support system, social media).
8. The use of '**check in**' apps in some modules to support wellbeing (eg <https://checkin.daresay.io/>)

Student Services 'Drop In' Support Sessions for Students



The 'Drop In' sessions take place daily on Microsoft Teams, 7th September onwards.

9am daily session joining link

[Please click here to join the Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

5:30pm daily session joining link

[Please click here to join the Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

Virtual chit chat with Dr Selva Pankaj, Principal

The virtual chit chat is an opportunity for students to have an open discussion with Dr Selva Pankaj, Principal, Regent College London. You can also provide feedback, recommendations or raise any concerns that you may have. Join us.



From 4.30pm
to 5.30pm

On 28th
October

Join the meeting via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83891295121?pwd=MklqZEFxMlZlZWZlZU5hVmlhMlN2pOdz09>

Meeting ID: 838 9129 5121

Passcode: 241254

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the review of the recommendations of students, the alignment of those recommendations with staff views, and in the context of recognised good practice, this report makes the following recommendations for enhancement. In some parts of the College some of these actions are already in place but they are not systematically and routinely part of digital delivery protocols. Each recommendation needs to be reviewed and implemented with appropriate recognition of the relevant disciplinary context. Nevertheless, overall, adoption of these recommendations would lead to a significant enhancement in student digital engagement in both synchronous and asynchronous learning.

1. Based on the recommendations of students, the College should prioritise the introduction of the five highly rated enhancements highlighted by students and staff for the **delivery** of digital sessions

- a. Checking that students understand each section as we go through
- b. Summarising the key points at the end of the session
- c. Check that all students are comfortable with the technology being used.
- d. Giving a clear introduction at the beginning of the session on what will be covered and why
- e. Making everyone feel positive and emotionally comfortable before the start of each session

2. Based on the recommendations of students, the College prioritise the introduction of the five highly rated enhancements highlighted by students and staff for the support of digital delivery

- a. Encourage the use of online message boards for students to post questions and ideas
- b. Be available between sessions to answer questions I might have
- c. Run short sessions focusing on assessment tasks only
- d. Give students specific questions to answer for each item they have to read
- e. Facilitate optional online student-led study sessions

3. Based on established best practice, the College should implement the recommendations as specified in the JISC framework table below and as follows:

- a. A follow up survey of this cohort's experiences of digital learning be carried out in the Spring of 2021
- b. Module Evaluation Questionnaires to incorporate questions on digital engagement
- c. Advise students against poor practice such as using smartphones to access teaching sessions
- d. Make assessment at entry of students' digital skills a key part of the induction of students into the institution.
- e. Staff training should incorporate awareness of special needs, individual differences and the general dividend of inclusiveness
- f. Staff training should include awareness around the distinctive pressures of digital learning and the ways different individuals can be impacted.
- g. staff training should highlight how digital learning can help some students who for example lack confidence in classroom settings
- h. staff training should highlight how the College can help staff secure additional technical, pedagogical and student support skills
- i. The College should prioritise the production of the A Student's Guide to Digital Learning and identify a means of involving students in content creation.
- j. The College should incorporate an annual review of assessment with partners and ensure all assessments are in line with JISC assessment principles of being Authentic, Accessible, Appropriately automated, Continuous and Secure
- k. The College should design a series of pilots for formative digital assessment that does not contribute to the final module mark which incorporate remote 'proctored assessments'.
- l. The College should develop a project to identify and support those students who are struggling with digital learning due to home circumstances and provide additional customised help.
- m. The College should strengthen the governance around Regent Digital and develop a road map for the implementation of all of the components of the Regent Digital vision including a Risk Register for the project.

HOW COULD REGENT IMPLEMENT THE JISC (2020) FRAMEWORK ON DIGITAL LEARNING?

As indicated in the list of recommendations above, the following table maps those recommendations onto the 10-part structure of the JISC framework.

REGENT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JISC (2020) FRAMEWORK

JISC Observation and Recommendations	Current status at Regent	Recommendations for Regent
<p>1 Student perceptions of technology-enhanced learning will change and universities might wish to consider recurring pulse surveys of attitudes, expectations and outcomes. (H1/H2/H3)</p>	<p>No regular recurring surveys of TEL before Sep 2020.</p>	<p>A follow up survey of this cohort's experiences of digital learning be carried out in the Spring of 2021.</p> <p>Module Evaluation Questionnaires to incorporate questions on digital engagement.</p>
<p>2 Contrary to popular views of so-called 'digital natives', today's students have widely varying levels of digital proficiency. Universities might find it beneficial to conduct a skills audit of students and build appropriate digital skills training into curricula. (H1)</p>	<p>Currently no assessment at entry of students' digital skills.</p>	<p>Make assessment at entry of students' digital skills a key part of the induction of students into the institution.</p> <p>Advise students against poor practice such as using smartphones to access teaching sessions.</p>
<p>3 Given the diverse nature of the student body universities should adopt accessible and inclusive approaches to technology-enhanced learning from the outset of learning design. (H1/H2)</p>	<p>Current technologies are assessed for inclusiveness</p> <p>Relatively low numbers of Regent students self-assess as having a disability.</p>	<p>Staff training should incorporate awareness of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. special needs 2. individual differences 3. the general dividend of inclusiveness
<p>4 Technology-enhanced learning can amplify some student physical and mental wellbeing issues and should be carefully considered throughout university projects. (H1)</p>	<p>The College currently has a dedicated app linked to mental health support.</p>	<p>Staff training should include awareness around the distinctive pressures of digital learning and the ways different individuals can be impacted.</p> <p>Further, staff training should highlight how digital learning can help some students who for example lack confidence in classroom settings.</p>
<p>5 Universities should invest in building staff digital skills and reward and recognition frameworks as part of professional development to increase the quality of technology-enhanced learning. (H1/H2)</p>	<p>Currently no systematic scheme of reward and recognition linked to professional development of TEL.</p>	<p>Staff training should highlight how digital learning can help some students who for example lack confidence in classroom settings.</p>

6 Universities should be aware of the changing needs of staff in this uncertain and unsettling period of digital transformation. (H1)

Regent has a small number of high quality staff training sessions and is working on a framework and strategy for staff development.

Staff training should highlight how the College can help staff secure additional technical, pedagogical and student support skills.

7 Learning design is a critical part of online learning and student involvement is essential; universities should ensure they have strong design capabilities and actively involve students in content creation.

The College has a limited track record of involving students in learning design but has a clear commitment to co-creation in specified areas.

The College should prioritise the production of the A Student's Guide to Digital Learning and identify a means of involving students in content creation. While many programmes are under franchise, there is scope for co-creation of case studies, placements and extra-curricular activities and projects.

8 Universities should adopt Jisc's five principles for technology-enhanced assessment. (H1/H2)

The delivery arrangements for digital teaching and for digital support are behind those for digital assessment beyond traditional coursework submission

The College should incorporate an annual review of assessment with partners and ensure all assessments are: Authentic, Accessible, Appropriately automated, Continuous and Secure.

The College should design a series of pilots for formative assessment that does not contribute to the final module mark which incorporate remote 'proctored assessments'.

9 Universities should ensure their strategies for maintaining high levels of student motivation and engagement are a core feature of the technology-enhanced learning experience. (H1)

Regent students currently have high levels of motivation and engagement overall but there is scope for identifying those who are struggling due to care and domestic challenges.

The College should develop a project to identify and support those students who are struggling with digital learning due to home circumstances and provide additional customised help.

10 University leaders need to identify, invest in and champion their vision and a strategy for technology-enhanced learning that can adapt to change and uncertainty. (H1/H2)

The College already has high level commitment to a digital transformation as evidenced by the Principal's systematic promotion of Regent Digital. This is also evident across the leadership team.

The College should strengthen the governance around Regent Digital and develop a road map for the implementation of all of the components of the Regent Digital vision including a Risk Register for the project.



NEXT STEPS

Toolkit Development for Staff

In the transition from classroom led teaching to digital delivery there is no single trajectory for academics or professional support staff. Each individual or group of individuals will need to and want to enhance their skills in relation to digital delivery in their own way and in their own direction in the context of their existing skills, discipline and level of delivery. In that context it is useful to think of a 'toolkit' of resources which will help each member of staff work towards enhancing their own professional practice.

Given what has been highlighted by staff the following elements are recommended for inclusion in a Virtual Toolkit

1. A one-stop shop of resources highlighting best practice for digital delivery. This would be a website with links to videos, templates, reviews and examples of best practice globally.
2. A series of pan institutional CPD workshops focusing on a specific topic each week or month on digital delivery and support.
3. A named individual should take responsibility for the development and delivery of the Digital Toolkit for staff.
4. Development of a bank of short video guides and on-demand webinars for staff on key topics in the management of digital engagement.

User Guide

The development of a Student's Guide to Digital Learning should be developed jointly by students and staff and developed in line with the co-creation principles of student-led design development. This could have several different formats both hard copy and online and students should be able to take the lead in identifying priorities in relation to the production schedule and distribution.

Follow Up Review

A further follow up study will take place in Spring 2021 to monitor implementation of recommendations and to track student success in the context of Regent Digital. The survey has been designed to enable linking of individual student responses across the year without compromising their anonymity.

CONCLUSION

Regent College has responded very well to the challenges presented by the need to move teaching online in March 2020. They have taken the opportunity to accelerate their model of a blended higher education under the Regent Digital brand. Inevitably, not all students – or staff – are comfortable with the elimination of immediate face to face contact. However, in the vast majority of cases students and staff have almost no complaints about the way the College has implemented digital teaching and support.

The challenge now is for the College to recognise the emerging 'second-wave' of student support needs as they seek to move beyond the initial stage of acceptance and accommodation of digital-only delivery, and onto achieving their full potential - as online learning becomes an enduring feature of their higher education experience, and not just a disruptive, temporary inconvenience. If the College follows the action identified by students and staff in this report and recognises the importance of the actions implied by the JISC framework, there is every reason to believe that challenge can be successfully overcome.

This survey is just one part of the larger project to improve student digital engagement, and that, in turn is just one part of the broader introduction of Regent Digital. While much has been achieved so far in just a few short months, there is much that remains to be done over the months and years ahead.

The challenge now is for the College to recognise the emerging 'second-wave' of student support needs as they seek to move beyond the initial stage of acceptance and accommodation of digital-only delivery, and onto achieving their full potential - as online learning becomes an enduring feature of their higher education experience, and not just a disruptive, temporary inconvenience. If the College follows the action identified by students and staff in this report and recognises the importance of the actions implied by the JISC framework, there is every reason to believe that challenge can be successfully overcome.

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Patrick McGhee

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Summary of all Student Responses to Survey

https://www.rcl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/student_engagement_in_digital_learning_appendices.pdf

Appendix 2 - Summary of all Staff Responses to Survey

https://www.rcl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/student_engagement_in_digital_learning_appendices.pdf