

Covid-19 – Week Eight Check In Survey: Response from the Department of Mechanical Engineering – PGR

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Subject: Response to results of Covid-19: Bath Check In Survey 2020/21 Wk8

Dear Doctoral students

Here's a summary of the week 8 (16-20 November 2020) Bath Check In Survey responses from Mechanical Engineering Doctoral students, and the Departmental response.

Summary of survey results

24 responses were received.

In response to "I am satisfied with my education experience this year" 14 chose "definitely agree" or "mostly agree", and 3 chose "definitely disagree" or "mostly disagree".

In response to "I am satisfied with my wider university experience this year" 12 chose "definitely agree" or "mostly agree", and 3 chose "definitely disagree" or "mostly disagree".

The main themes of the verbal responses are summarised below.

1. Thinking about your education experience this academic year, what is working well for you?

There were some positive comments about supervisors, IT systems for remote working, online meetings, online training, but there were some concerns about isolation.

2. Thinking about your education experience this academic year, do you have any suggestions on how we could improve?

The University should consider wider activities to restore mood and vibrancy. Informal meetings/chats are missing. There could be more support for doctoral students, especially international.

3. Thinking about your wider university experience this academic year, what is working well for you?

Virtual meetings work well; they have the benefit of no need for travel.

4. Thinking about your wider university experience this academic year, do you have any suggestions on how we could improve?

Communication has improved but more could be done to listen and respond to concerns. More varied online activities could be planned, including themes of British culture for overseas students.

Departmental actions in response

We recognise that, whilst working from home and meeting remotely may suit some, it causes feelings of isolation, demotivation, disengagement and mental health issues for many others. We will strive to provide the best possible experience through providing flexibility with office access, regular communication and clear information.

- Continue access and booking arrangements for labs and offices, with regular review and with a focus on Covid-safe practice.
- Continue online departmental forums/Q&A sessions on a regular (4-6 week) basis. Integrate these with SSLC, and work closely with academic reps and DSAT* (last meeting took place on 11th December 2020). The one will take place on January 22nd (details to be released soon).
- Ensure students are aware of support networks, and encourage engagement with secondary supervisors (email sent to students on 16th December 2020).

*DSAT is the Departmental Self-Assessment Team, with a focus on diversity and equality.

Best wishes

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Nigel Johnston, Director of Doctoral Studies

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