

## Covid-19 – Week Eight Check In Survey: Response from the Skills Centre

We welcome the new breakdown of data into ‘Educational experience’ and the ‘Wider University experience’. Our opportunities for students relate to both, so we have looked at references to us and broader patterns, where we have thought about what skills development students might need.

### What’s working well?

Direct references to the Skills Centre are limited (perhaps indicating students don’t know what they are receiving is from us), but in ‘**What’s working well?**’ there are several positive comments:

- Two about the great range of **academic skills** provision, but ‘no time to do it in final year’.
- Four about **doctoral skills** provision (to which we contribute).
- Four about **MASH** support working very well and one where MASH support helped make up for lack of consolidation time on the course itself.
- Eight on online **foreign language skills** provision, including:

*‘Working particularly well is the foreign language class that I am taking. It is well organised and provides the opportunity not just to progress my language knowledge but to regularly engage with other students (which as a PhD student is not a given).’*

*‘Language courses have adapted well to being taught online with good resources and engaging lessons.’*

### Suggestions for what we could improve

- Three comments referenced **embedded academic skills** sessions in the course:

*‘I think that the hour of academic skills that I have in my IPTs [...] are only useful when they are explaining something for an assignment, e.g. writing an annotated bibliography or essay structures.’*

- The second cautioned against our tutors being patronising, especially on courses with experienced students. The final comment suggested academic skills sessions could be cut in length to allow more time for key concepts on the course.
- Two comments suggest types of **foreign language** provision students would like to see more of: ‘PAL sessions’, more slots for foreign language classes and more opportunities to ‘exchange culture’ and practise speaking.
- Two comments on **MASH support for first year UG Maths students** ‘always being busy’ and that it ‘should be open more often’.
- One comment that **MASH** support would have been of great benefit in the summer prior to arrival.
- One comment suggests better online resources, not just recorded lectures for **doctoral skills** (we contribute to parts of this programme, but it is led by the Doctoral College).

In general, the Week Eight survey results continue the themes of Week Four (e.g. concerns about workload), with two new areas:

- Widespread concern for online exams and the use of Inspira.
- Ability to self-pace, self-guide and go back through work was seen as very positive.

### Skills Centre actions in response

In response to this feedback, we will continue to:

1. Work with other parts of the University to ensure online skills resources are clearly linked from [webpages on exam and assessment arrangements](#) - we hope this will address this immediate concern.
2. Provide writing tutorials in a range of formats (online and in-person in the Virgil Building). We have increased the number of slots and we have tutorials available throughout the Revision and Assessment period, as feedback indicates students may want additional support.
3. Give students access to timely Maths support - MASH is extending provision into student vacation by a week and is adding more staff to increase capacity at busier times. For first year UG Maths students, in Week 9, staff were added to busy sessions and preparatory resources provided to increase staff efficiency.
4. Provide intensive online foreign language classes in June 2021. In addition, we will start new complete beginner classes in February 2021 for the most popular languages and increase the number of participants in all language classes - this is in direct response to student feedback on broadening opportunities for language learning.
5. Provide language exchange opportunities in some languages to help build students' language and intercultural skills. This is to provide more of the cultural exchange that students value.
6. Make a range of skills opportunities available, maintaining flexibility and ability to self-guide as a key part of what we offer. Work will also continue with academic departments to explore increased opportunities for integrating skills resources into the curriculum, providing students with greater contextualisation and support at key transition points. Feedback indicates flexibility and contextualisation is what students want.
7. Contribute to regular centrally emailed student updates and enhance student communications; this includes working with Faculty/School-based student engagement staff and the SU Bath, making connections to success in assignments and assessed work where we can. We know from feedback we need to continue to work on this.
8. Work with Student Services to understand any patterns in data regarding the significantly lower satisfaction rate of students with disabilities (especially SpLDs). This includes whether patterns suggest action for the Skills Centre.
9. Develop our resources in areas identified in the Week Four Check In survey.
10. Continue to work with academic departments to identify the appropriateness of academic skills delivery within IPT sessions.

New resources we have developed in response to your feedback from Week 4 Check In survey responses and other feedback include:

1. A guide to online exam preparation and two online resources on time management: a [quick guide](#) and a [more detailed course](#).
2. Blogs on [top ten tips for exam preparation](#), preparing for [multiple-choice exams](#), and top tips for taking open book exams ([One](#) and [Two](#)).

3. Blog on students' [own top tips for effective online learning](#) (we did this with Student Services, the Students' Union, Digital, Data and Technology and the Centre for Learning and Teaching). This includes links on a range of support available to students in this area, all in one place.
4. Blogs to help tackle the workload of online learning, including [how to approach lots of recorded material](#).
5. Launching our new Mandarin Chinese language [Microsoft Teams community](#).

Students can use these flexibly online whenever suits them. Access our full range of skills development opportunities via [MySkills](#), subscribe to our [Blog](#) and follow us on Twitter **@bathskills** for updates.

Rachel Wood, Head of Skills Centre, December 2020.