Covid-19 – Week Eight Check In Survey: Response from Student Services

It's important also to note that Student Services are always supporting students to navigate the challenges they're facing (academically and broader student experience), working with individual students where they encounter issues, but also introducing opportunities for peer support and social engagement activities via workshops/groups etc. This is core business of course, but worth highlighting that we're adapting our services not only in response to feedback from these snapshot surveys but also what students are telling us directly in advice/support sessions with all our teams.

Actions identified include:

- working with individual disabled students to ensure they're aware and are fully accessing their DSA support, or recommending and funding support via DSF funding where not eligible. This to continue into semester
- improvements to Disability Access Plans to give greater clarity to depts re appropriate reasonable adjustments for study.
- working across the University to improve the accessibility of IT systems, improvements to Personal Tutoring etc.
- improving the process of accessing services, eg Wellbeing, making things clearer as to how students can make appts etc
- introducing online booking for students to make their own appts will be a significant step change in making it much simpler for students to arrange their own appointment.
- additional promotion of the Student Hardship Fund in the context of ongoing concern in the student body about tuition fee rebates and rent rebates.
- attached a report from a calling survey with ADHD/ASC students, which identified and align with many similar themes/feedback to the Wk8 (and Wk4) survey.

Hope that's helpful.

Best Wishes

Anthony Payne
Director of Student Services

In addition, the Disability Service element of Student Services conducted a specific survey of students with ADHD & ASC:

Disability Service: Week 7 Check-in Survey with ADHD & ASC students

Context

As part of the Student Services weekly 'temperature check' updates provided to the VP Student Experience, the Disability Service reported that some students, in particular those with ADHD and Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) were finding it particularly challenging to engage with online teaching and learning. They were also struggling with the limit on independent study space bookings in place at the time, which was felt to be further limiting the ability of some students to study free from distraction.

Further information from the University's Week 4 'check-in' survey also identified that disabled students were likely to be less satisfied with their University experience than their non-disabled peers (60.8%), particularly those with Specific Learning Differences (SpLD) such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and ADHD at 46.3%, but also those with 'multiple' disabilities at 50% and 'other' disabilities at 55.4%.

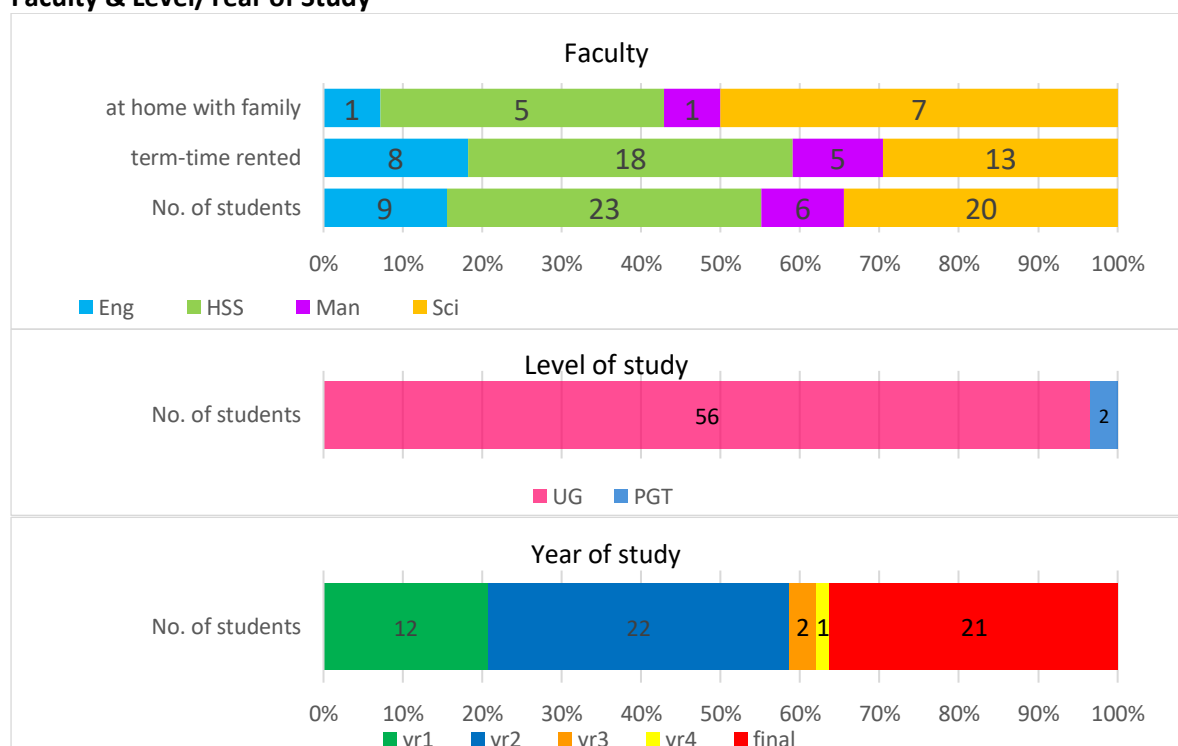Open comment themes suggested SpLD students in particular were struggling with:

- Too many systems being used for teaching (e.g. MS Teams, Re:View, Zoom, Moodle) causing confusion and a feeling that they don't always know where to find their course content.
- Not enough timetabled, structured teaching activities beyond IPT and LOIL sessions, causing significant challenges with time management and motivation.
- Visual learners finding the limited number of practical sessions challenging.
- A lack of personal contact with peers and academic staff, including their Personal Tutors.

The Disability Service decided to explore this in greater depth, in order to identify and investigate any possible causes of these trends and make any relevant actions and/or recommendations for the University to consider in order to improve the experience of disabled students.
126 students were selected to take part in a survey in Week 7, which comprised a phone-call discussion with a member of staff from the Disability Service, asking a range of questions relating to the student experience (Appendix 1). The students selected were **A**. 'known' to the Disability Service i.e. had provided evidence of a disability and had contact with the Disability Service and **B**. registered as having disability(ies) including ADHD or ASC. Of the students selected, 58 (45%) participated in the survey.
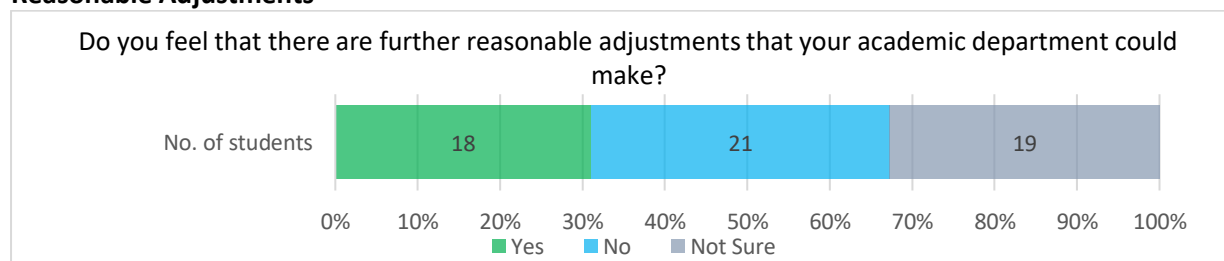
Participant Makeup
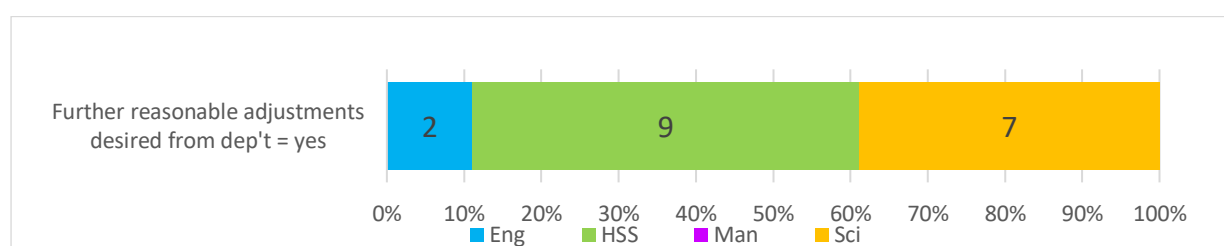
Faculty & Level/Year of Study

Reasonable Adjustments

Do you feel that there are further reasonable adjustments that your academic department could make?

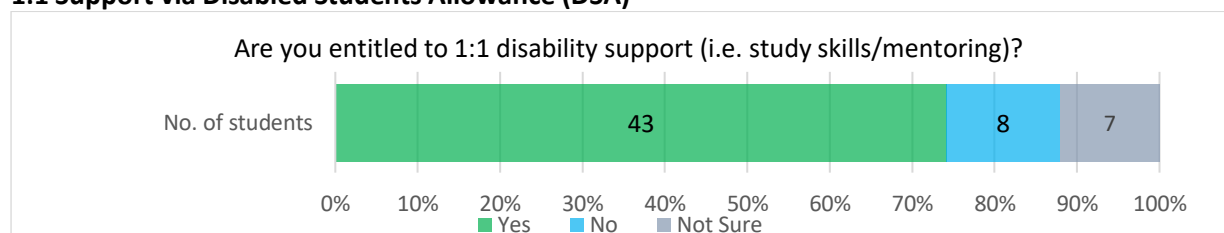| No. of students	Yes: 18	No: 21	Not Sure: 19

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure

- Most students were either unsure (19) or felt that their academic department could make further reasonable adjustments for them (18).

Further reasonable adjustments desired from dep't = yes

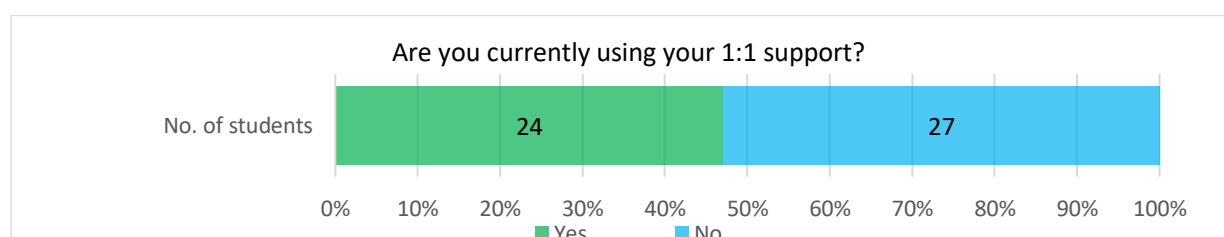| Eng: 2	HSS: 9	Sci: 7

Legend: ■ Eng ■ HSS ■ Man ■ Sci

- Of those who felt that further reasonable adjustments could be made, 2 of 9 were from Engineering, 9 of 23 were from H&SS and 7 of 20 were from Science. None of the 6 students surveyed from the School of Management felt that their department could make further reasonable adjustments for them.
- Examples given of further reasonable adjustments that could be made included greater clarification around exam arrangements for those with DAP's, as well as several comments around the accessibility of Moodle pages.
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1:1 Support via Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

Are you entitled to 1:1 disability support (i.e. study skills/mentoring)?

No. of students	Yes: 43	No: 8	Not Sure: 7

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure

- We can see that the majority of students surveyed were entitled to 1:1 disability support.

Are you currently using your 1:1 support?

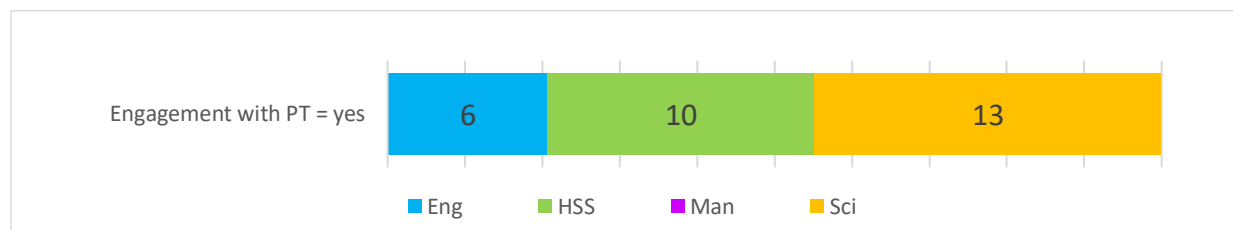| No. of students	Yes: 24	No: 27

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No

- However less than half of those surveyed were currently using their 1:1 support. This was followed up during the survey and the reasons behind this explored, with solutions provided for those who wanted support but weren't currently receiving it.
- Some of the reasons given for not accessing 1:1 support were that students didn't feel that they needed the support at this point in their course, that they were in the process of arranging their support currently or that they would like support but had struggled to organise it themselves.

Personal Tutor Relationship

Do you engage with your personal tutor? (i.e. do you meet/email/discuss your study needs with them)

No. of students	29	15

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Yes ■ No

- 65% of those surveyed are engaged with their personal tutor.

Engagement with PT = yes	6	10	13

■ Eng ■ HSS ■ Man ■ Sci

- Of those students who engage with their personal tutor, 6 of 9 were from Engineering, 10 of 23 were from H&SS, 13 of 20 were from Science. 0 were from the School of Management.
- Comments made around the personal tutor relationship highlighted that some students were unclear how the relationship should function, whose responsibility it was to arrange meetings and the kind of issues that were appropriate to discuss with a Personal Tutor. Some students were happy with the relationship, or didn't feel that they needed this support so were not currently accessing it.

Assistive Technology (AT) – the majority of students surveyed felt that they did not need to be referred through to the AT team at this moment. Some had access to assistive technology via their DSA support package, while others did not feel that they had any need for AT We referred 11 students on to the AT team for follow-up discussion and appointments if required.

Academic Skills – 37 (73%) of the students surveyed were already aware of the Skills Centre, however a majority of them had not accessed any of the Skills Centre's programmes this academic year. For those who were not aware of the Skills Centre, we agreed that we would follow up with these students in order to make them aware of what is on offer from the Centre.

Key Themes from open comments
Inclusion - some students commented that the move to majority-online teaching and learning has made university study more accessible for them. This is helpful for those who have physical health difficulties, are less mobile or find the experience of travelling to campus tiring, as well those who prefer to manage their own schedule and the freedom that this brings.
For those who struggle with attention issues, the ability to pause and rewind lectures has become a valuable tool to enhance their consumption of lectures.

Some students found it harder to concentrate on online lectures and subsequently it took them longer to absorb the information in the session.

Workload & Motivation – a good number of students reported feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work that they were being expected to complete this year. Some felt that the flip side of moving to remote learning was too many resources being utilised and this led to feeling overwhelmed. Struggling with motivation was a key theme.

Moodle - Positive comments were made regarding modules which released all content from the beginning so that Moodle pages were comprehensive and consistent. Well-organised Moodle pages were consistently praised as being beneficial for this cohort. Some felt that there was a lack of consistency across modules as to how Moodle was being used, leading to time spent figuring this out before any learning could take place.

Recognition of effort – there was widespread recognition of the efforts that teaching staff have made to transfer courses online in a short space of time. Several students commented that it wasn't as bad/was better as they had expected and that they were enjoying remote learning.

Physical Learning Environment – difficulties were noted with finding a working environment that was free from distraction, with several students noting difficulties separating study and home life and the concentration issues that this can result in. There was a sense of disconnection from the University due to physical proximity.

Exams – there was positive comments on the Semester 2 19-20 'open book' exams and the inclusivity of this method, as well as disappointment expressed at the move away from this examination method back to the more traditional timed assessments in some departments (eg Maths).

IPT Sessions – a mixture of opinions on the IPT sessions was recorded, with some finding them not useful and reporting a lack of communication and clarity around what these sessions would involve.

Actions for the Disability Service

DSA Support – It is clear that students who take up their DSA allowances are valuing the support offered by their DSA Study Skills Tutors (SST) and Mentors. Indeed, separate to this survey, recent evidence from Randstad, the University's main supplier of disability support highlights significant increases of 18% for SST and 59% for Mentoring to date this academic year for University of Bath students, compared to the same period in 19/20.

The Disability Service will work with students identified in this survey to ensure they are aware and encouraged to fully utilise their DSA support, or if ineligible have access to equivalent University-funded opportunities. The service will also identify further opportunities to raise awareness of the support available to disabled students via DSA into semester 2.

Disability Access Plans (DAPs) & Disability Awareness training - The Disability Service will continue with improvements to accessibility and ease of use of DAPs, our primary method for communicating recommendations to academic departments. We will also continue to roll out disability awareness training to colleagues across the University, both in teaching roles and professional service teams.

Recommendations for the University

Review use of IT systems for teaching – Guidance to be given to academic departments to ensure consistent approaches to the use of University IT systems for teaching, for example streamlining use of different systems as much as possible (e.g. Moodle, Zoom, MS Teams etc) as well as practicalities

such as naming conventions for lecture recordings/Moodle pages etc. This would help students to effectively plan, prepare and undertake their studies and minimise the amount of time spent navigating through systems in order to find content, thereby increasing actual time spent learning.

Accessibility of IT systems – Linked to the above and ongoing as part of the wider Digital Accessibility Initiative but it would be a positive move if certain aspects of this (e.g. consistency in Moodle pages) could be prioritised and streamlined to meet the real student need for accessible teaching content in the immediate term.

Personal Tutoring system – Given the value placed on personal contact and limited opportunities for this currently, a need to re-evaluate across all departments in light of relation to our blended learning approach to ensure that all Personal Tutors are able to flexibly respond to students needs suitably. This was a [campaign aim](#) for the SU in 13-14 and Student Services has previously produced [documentation](#) to support Personal Tutors. However, it now seems an appropriate time to revisit the system and relevant guidance/documentation.

Implementation of DAP Reasonable Adjustments – Academic departments should be implementing recommended Reasonable Adjustments in a consistent fashion across the University. Our survey highlighted that there were inconsistencies, not only between faculties/departments, but also between individual lecturers around the implementation of DAP Reasonable Adjustments. This creates uncertainty and anxiety for students around their needs being met, as there is no guarantee from one module to another whether they will have the same set of adjustments in place or implemented in the same manner.

Inconsistency of implementation also makes it harder for the Disability Service to accurately discuss Reasonable Adjustments with prospective or current students during the pre-entry process and when creating DAPs, as we cannot know to what extent our recommendations will be implemented and as such what alternatives may need to be considered (e.g. providing support workers) when advising students. This can lead to students reaching out to the service midway through a semester when appointments are busiest and time is limited, meaning we are forced to become a reactive service that is attempting to 'patch holes' in disability support rather than providing a consistent and reliable student experience.

Awareness of other support available – Key professional service departments outside of Student Services such as the Skills Centre and DDAT could identify what they are able to offer disabled students outside of their general offering and run campaigns at key points (e.g. induction/Y1 exams period/final year) aiming to raise awareness amongst the disabled student cohort to meet specific needs.