



Remote learning in Scotland's Colleges

Comments and cameos

National overview

Comments and cameos

Remote learning in Scotland's Colleges

These stakeholder comments and short case studies accompany the full report: National overview of remote learning in Scotland's Colleges.

“The speed that technology was supplied to learners was impressive.”

Head of School



Planning the delivery of remote learning and teaching

Perth College UHI

Staff supplied learners on hospitality programmes with cooking materials for them to prepare dishes at home. Learners shared their finished meals through video link with fellow learners and their lecturer. This approach supported them to apply and develop their vocational skills to good effect and helped support and develop independent learning skills.

Argyll College UHI

Teaching staff supplied horticulture learners with propagators, seeds and a variety of plant cuttings. They supported them over video link sessions to prepare a space in their own, or a neighbour's garden, in order to grow plants. They also engaged in 'guerrilla gardening' and 'wild planted' a local roundabout. Learners' seeds grew and developed and were eventually planted out in the mild Argyll climate. Learners describe getting a lot of satisfaction from this activity and purposeful learning through this experience.

West Highland College UHI

Staff at West Highland College UHI in the Art and Design team are using an online notice board (padlet) with learners to support sharing of work to be assessed, engagement in peer evaluation of work and showcasing of their skills. This has created a sense of community amongst the group who were all learning at home. It also supported learners to develop a range of digital skills, including photography and uploading of their work.

Inverness College UHI

Learners on hairdressing programmes describe how they have been well supported to engage in remote learning. They are provided with a 'cutting head' and a range of practical approaches to developing their cutting techniques. Learners were also provided with styling equipment and staff provided helpful online demonstrations often using two cameras, to provide a realistic perspective. This approach works well and is appreciated by learners.

"This is the most engaged I have ever been, and the most I have ever learned."

Prince's Trust learner

"Holistic assessment worked well last year, key competencies have been a bit more challenging."

Senior manager

“Technology has allowed us to bring back previous students who are currently at university to come on and share their experiences of previously being on the course and how they are finding their current social work studies.”

Lecturer



Delivering learning and teaching remotely

Fife College

Fife College have introduced a team of staff who are dedicated to improving digital practice. They record videos of best practice and make them available to staff. They have also produced resources such as “Pedagogical guidance for online delivery” and the development of digital learning standards, broken into smaller topics. These are shared regularly with staff to support the development of skills for teaching remotely.

North East Scotland College

The college’s ‘remote education’ strategy is designed to ensure continuity of delivery and student experience, and the safeguarding of staff and student wellbeing. A comprehensive range of Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) has been offered to staff to support their delivery of online learning. Support has been provided through the team of learning and teaching mentors who have also carried out online observation support. Staff felt well prepared for remote learning as a result of the college’s “Digital Futures Initiative” which had been helping to develop key digital capacities. In addition, staff made effective use of initial few days prior to the first lockdown to refresh these skills and become familiar with the necessary digital technology to enable learning to take place remotely.

Dumfries and Galloway College

To support effective use of MS Teams for remote learning, the college devised a tailored staff CLPL programme. This is offered at three different levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced, in recognition of the different levels of ability of staff in the use of technology. This approach worked well and supported teaching staff to develop their digital skills and build their confidence in the use of remote learning and teaching techniques.

Perth College UHI

Learners were highly appreciative of the support provided by the Student Engagement Team during lockdown. Initially the team introduced daily or weekly vlogs where they were just reaching out to say hello, then introduced key messages as and when required. The vlogs then expanded to other members of staff across the college, sharing their experiences in lockdown. These also included: baking, ‘a day in the life of’ and music and dance sessions, all which supported wellbeing and reduce feelings of isolation.

Delivering learning and teaching remotely

Forth Valley College

Staff at Forth Valley College have worked well with groups of learners with additional support needs to ensure that their engagement in learning is meaningful and motivational. They found that the digital environment works well for a number of their learners. The avoidance of the stress and worry of travel, and the option not to use cameras, has been particularly beneficial for a number of learners who have additional support needs including Asperger's and Autism. Overall, attendance and success rates for many of the groups are likely to be better in the current circumstances than they have been in previous years.

West College Scotland

Staff were aware that many learners did not always have the level of knowledge or skill, and importantly, were lacking in the level of confidence needed to thrive during remote learning. Staff have developed and introduced a specific online module to help with developing digital confidence. This was aimed at ensuring a good minimum level of capability, and has been particularly helpful where learners were less familiar with digital devices and platforms and applications used to support learning. The content has been developed to cover the main technologies used in college life. By early May 507 learners are engaged in it from 57 different classes. 174 learners have completed the programme.

Scotland's Rural College

In response to staff feedback and recognising the challenges in establishing engagement as opposed to attendance during remote learning, the college has updated their register system to better reflect the current blend of learning. This year, staff are not just registering attendance at online classes, but rather creating a record of engagement based on attendance at live sessions or engagement with online material. There are now eleven options for marking the registers. Nine of these count as a 'positive attendance'. Learners who attend live online classes should be marked as "Attended online class". The unit or module leader should then review the participant records in Moodle to establish which learners are actively participating in learning and those who may be disengaged or at risk of withdrawing from the programme. This enables staff to make contact and offer support to individual learners to re-engage and stay on track with their learning.

"Online has expanded the range of people who can take a college course. 100% you would engage with more learners by keeping online."

Class rep

“When I get back into college I will keep the recording of lessons going.”

Lecturer



“Some people are thriving, some are struggling.”

Student Association President

Monitoring and assessing learner progress during remote learning

City of Glasgow College

Staff have developed an online learning module showcasing ideas for asynchronous assessment, avoiding plagiarism, assessment tools, digital portfolios and remote invigilation. It also features ideas for task-based feedforward, video screencasts, and audio, written and animated feedback. Links are provided at the end to the more up-to-date versions of City of Glasgow College assessment policies, procedures and guides.

West Lothian College

Course teams across the college have built on their experience during the first lockdown to embrace holistic assessment. Staff have built on their experience and identified opportunities for assessment integration and cross-assessment. As a result, the colleges anticipates that most students will be able to complete their course successfully in year, with only a small number of students, mainly in hair and beauty, expected to need to defer completion. This experience has now helped the college to consider an approach which will continue beyond the pandemic, and encourage teams to introduce project-based learning, sustaining the positive aspects of the holistic approach taken over the last two years.

“Senior management at the college gave staff and learners the space and resources to create their own solutions to problems, which generated highly flexible and creative results.”

Vice Principal


Assuring the quality of remote learning and teaching

West Lothian College

From the start of academic year, 2020-21, a cross-college group of staff have been meeting to ensure that learning continuity is supported and promoted, with a focus on pedagogical approaches, especially in the digital setting. A dedicated digital lead was appointed to lead and support group sessions with course teams and to run open tutorials as well as devise a set of competencies against which staff can measure progress and receive training. Training sessions included use of tools such as Microsoft Forms for learning and teaching, and for formative and summative assessment, and the use of Microsoft Excel to track progress across a course amongst the course team. A dedicated learning resource assistant was put in place to specifically support individual staff and students to gain confidence in their IT knowledge. The group have met weekly throughout the year and are now outputting a series of recommendations on staffing, technology and CLPL, which will now be taken forward by the College Leadership Team. It is expected that the group will remain as a steering group, to promote continuity, for the rest of the year and into the next academic session

New College Lanarkshire

The 'Be Heard' approach has been updated and revised to support learner engagement remotely and help class representatives to gather views and feed these back to support improvement. Arrangements were developed as a partnership between college managers, college learner engagement staff and the Students' Association (including one Student's Association executive member with a specific remit for learning and teaching). They used Education Scotland and SPARQS Covid recovery support materials to inform approaches and to help class and subject reps gather views from their peers. As a result, 'Be Heard' online sessions have enabled student representatives (subject and class reps) to have a direct discussion with faculty heads and curriculum leaders to raise concerns and feedback what is working well and what could be improved. Examples of adaptation to practice as a result of student feedback include greater use of breakout rooms within live online lessons to provide more opportunities for peer-to-peer discussions which allowed time for students to get to know each other better and help create social networks and social interaction.



"If there is a barrier of any sort for a learners to overcome whilst engaging in remote learning, then it is much easier for them to slip out of the teaching and learning experience."

Lecturer


The impact of remote learning on the wellbeing of learners and staff

North East Scotland College

The Virtual Café initiative was set up in September 2020 to support students who may be experiencing loneliness and isolation during the pandemic. On Tuesdays and Thursdays each week, students from across the college are invited to take part in an activity such as an online escape room, quiz or multiplayer game via Blackboard Collaborate. A schedule of activities for the block is posted online and promoted through teaching staff to encourage participation. The café gives students an opportunity to socialise with their peers in a virtual environment and build a community at North East Scotland College.

West College Scotland

The “Calm Curriculum” is an initiative that aims to help staff and learners cope better in a stressful environment. It is based on mindfulness and relaxation, and aims to share techniques that will help staff and learners better manage their stress. This has been offered to class groups if recommended by the course leader as an introductory half hour session and as an option to staff groups. As it has grown, these have been supplemented by further sessions based on demand. To date at the end of March CALM sessions have been taken up by 223 learners and 193 staff. In addition, sessions can be followed up by additional ‘Mindfulness in the Moment’ sessions



“A changing point [for me] in remote learning was building social elements into synchronous delivery.”

Curriculum Manager

“In some ways we have been more in touch with individual learners through these pandemic times than we ever have been.”

Support Services Staff



Education Scotland
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA
T: +44 (0)131 244 4330
E: enquiries@education.scotland.gov.scot
www.education.gov.scot

(c) Crown Copyright, 2021

You may re-use this information (excluding images and logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence providing that it is reproduced accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Education Scotland copyright and the document title specified.

To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Published June 2021