Our response to the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic

Across the GSA community we have been working in response to the COVID-19 pandemic since January 2020. Our response is outlined below, providing an overview of the approach and actions we took prior to our decision to close the GSA Campuses from 17th March 2020 and to end of June 2020, and the approach and action taken since then to ensure the GSA continued to operate while working remotely.

January to 16th March 2020

Sector Guidance
Universities UK (in addition to other UK and Scottish Government and sector bodies) advise that Universities UK, Universities Scotland and Universities Wales are working closely with Public Health England and the devolved public health authorities to monitor the situation in Wuhan, China regarding Coronavirus COVID-19, and agreed to distribute appropriate guidance and digital materials to UK higher education institutions.

The Glasgow School of Art Health and Safety Office instigates a cross-GSA Group to monitor the situation. The Group met on 3rd and 24th February 2020 and agreed initial actions:

- Enhanced information:
  - Specific e-bulletins on Coronavirus COVID-19 with public health information;
  - Including information on Coronavirus COVID-19 in weekly e-bulletins;
  - Reminders to staff on policy of any international travel to complete H&S Travel Risk Assessment

- Reviewing and updating:
  - Pandemic Policy;
  - GSA’s preparation for dealing with incidents;
  - GSA’s emergency response contact details

- Planning to:
  - Implement specific signage across campus
  - Enhanced cleaning regime across campus
  - Installing of hand sanitisers at key locations

- Travel:
  - Follow UK Government advice restricting travel to China;
  - Taking a cautious approach to any travel to Asia;
  - Increasing contact with GSA students on Exchange with focus on those in China

- Working from home
  - Local action to support staff who needed to/requested to work from home for COVID-19 related reasons

Information from GSA Representative Office in China
During this time intel was being received from the GSA staff based in Beijing on how the pandemic was impacting services in Peoples Republic of China including the closure of IELT Centres and cancellations of test.

GSA’s Student Recruitment and International Office monitored closely and, through sector bodies including Universities Scotland International Committee, Universities UK International, British Council and British Universities’ International Liaison Association (BUILA), raised concerns to the UK Government on the impacts of ILET centre closures on the ability of Chinese students to successfully apply to study in the UK in Autumn 2020.
Open Studio started to reflect on potential impact on GSA’s Pre-sessional English Programme due to commence in July 2020.

Potential impact of Coronavirus COVID-19, particularly on our Chinese applicants and wider new student community, is considered by the Admissions Target Group.

26 February 2020
GSA is advised by European partner institution Politecnico di Milano that it is closing in compliance with the Order of the Minister of Health (Italian Government). The GSA determines that it should now take the necessary steps to move from a position of awareness to preparedness relating to:

- Academic continuity in the event of campus closure including assessment and progression of students, continuation of teaching and learning, degree show and Open Studio;
- Potential impacts on admissions and enrolment for entry 2020/2021 including Pre-Sessional English;
- Current student mobility and exchange – ensuring the wellbeing of and supporting our students studying internationally, and the wellbeing and support of students from our partners studying with us;
- Health and wellbeing of all students and staff;
- Identifying, establishing and procuring the necessary IT infrastructure to ensure academic and business continuity;
- Ensuring our systems for reporting student and staff absence are able to monitor Coronavirus COVID-19 absence;
- Ensuring GSoA Singapore had in place appropriate procedures aligned with those of Singapore Institute of Technology and the Singapore Government;
- Assessment of potential recruitment and admissions impact for entry Academic Year 2020/2021.

A cross-GSA Coronavirus Working Group was established (meeting 5th and 12th March 2020) convened by Alan Horn, Director of Development. All academic and professional support areas represented. Specific Coronavirus Risk Registers produced by all areas to inform a GSA-wide Coronavirus Risk Register, actions and decision-making.

10th – 17th March 2020
The GSA cancels or postpones all GSA staff non-UK travel to minimise risk.

Information is issued to Students regarding European and International Exchange:

- Outbound:
  - follow their host country and institution advice;
  - Return home if safe to do so;
  - For Erasmus + students the GSA will pay the second instalment of your grants.
- Inbound:
  - As GSA has now ceased on campus teaching. Students advised they can either stay in Glasgow or travel home if it is possible and safe to do so;
  - Follow any guidelines issued by your programme team either on Canvas or via email;
  - Students should still remain enrolled at GSA.

The GSA confirms all events and exhibitions are cancelled including Graduation and the Degree Shows in June and potentially August.
16th March 2020

Campus Closure
On the 16th March 2020 the Senior Leadership Group determined that, in light of the growing risk posed by Coronavirus COVID-19, The Glasgow School of Art campuses (excluding Singapore) should close in advance of the Mid-Semester break (due to commence on 20th March 2020) from:

- 6pm 17th March for students
- 6pm 18th March for staff

The decision to close the campus and conclude teaching and learning reflected the GSA’s studio and workshop model which is a more socialised and less distanced model than traditional lecture-based provision and our commitment to the health and wellbeing of our students, staff and wider community. Consequently, GSA acted prior to most of the university sector.

As the duration of the campus closure at that time was not defined, all staff and students were advised to remove any items they required for remote working. Students were also advised that ‘all teaching and learning was concluded for undergraduate and 2-year postgraduate students and for the rest of Semester 2 for 1-year postgraduate taught students’ and to follow the up-to-date information and guidance regarding completion of work, submissions and academic progression that would be posted on Canvas.

Exchange students (in-bound and out-bounded) were contacted again and advised to return home (if host Government restricted allowed).

All students advised to follow Scottish and UK Government, Public Health Scotland and NHS Scotland instruction, guidance and information and that GSA Student Support Services remained open via email and telephone in first instance.

All GSA staff (where possible) move to remote ‘working from home’ and to ensure operational continuity and ‘business as usual’:

- Institutional Zoom account procured;
- Virtual Private Network access granted to core departments and staff to ensure access to core systems e.g. finance systems, payroll, student records and admissions systems;
- Other GSA IT systems accessible remotely – Office 365 (including email), iTrent, IT Helpdesk, Intranet.

Staff are advised that while working from home it is essentially ‘business as usual’ and all staff should continue to work as normal as much as possible, recognising that work flows fluctuate and, in some cases, reduce. Staff advised they should, in discussion with their line managers, start working on forward planning and moving ahead with key projects.

General working at home guidance for staff is issued by Health and Safety Office (Staff Intranet pages) and Human Resources. A baseline of appropriate online support resources identified and published.

Some limited Estates, IT and Residences staff remain on-campus, following a process of risk assessment, ensuring effective cleaning and lockdown of campus buildings, support within GSA Halls, on-going security and access, and continued IT resilience and support.
Effective Management
To ensure effective operational management, delivery and forward planning while working from home, initially daily, then weekly and bi-monthly reporting from all academic and professional support departments were implemented, with all operational teams meeting regularly online.

A Business Continuity Group (Director, Senior Head of School, Registrar and Secretary, Director of Strategy and Marketing) was established to provide oversight and direct forward planning. It was supported by:

- A refocused Senior Leadership Group (Director, Interim Director of Finance, Registrar and Secretary, Strategic Director of Estates, Director of Strategy and Marketing, Director of HR, Director of Development) remit to ensure effective operations and forward planning and risk management;
- Academic Continuity Group (All Heads of Schools, Head of Learning and Teaching, Director of IT, Academic Registrar (and subsequently Head of Professional and Continuing Education (Open Studio)) established to lead on assessment, progression and continued academic delivery.

Clear Communication
Communication channels were reinforced to ensure consistency of information and included fast-tracking the launch of the GSA Student Intranet:

- All staff or student emails (from dedicated COVID19info@gsa.ac.uk) – calls to action
- GSA e-bulletins – general information from GSA and specific departments
- GSA Staff Intranet – core resources and information for staff
- GSA Student Intranet – initially COVID19 information only at point of launch
- CANVAS – for academic programme and course information
- GSA Website – for public information
- Media Centre – for public statements and announcements

Engagement with GSA Trade Unions, wider HE-sector (Universities Scotland, Universities UK), Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Government were maintained.

Recording Impact of COVID19 on the GSA Community
A specific email address to manage COVID19 related absence was set-up directing all student absence to School Academic Support Managers to allow GSA to monitor and track student absence.

The GSA iTrent system (HR employee self-service system) was also updated to allow COVID19 to be identified as an absence to allow monitoring of the impact of COVID19 on the GSA’s staff.

23rd - 25th March 2020
UK enters lockdown.

GSA reconfirms it is open, but operating remotely.

Reigart Contracts Limited advises the GSA that, in line with Scottish Government policies, work will cease on the Mackintosh Building site including the on-going Scottish Fire and Rescue Service investigation. Site security to be maintained with regular monitoring and inspection of the structure to maintain integrity and scaffolding for safety.
International students advised that in response to the COVID19 pandemic, the UK Government are providing visa extensions for those affected by coronavirus and that nobody will be penalised for circumstances outside of their control. The UKVI factsheets were made available on the GSA Student Intranet.

From end March 2020 – June 2020

Learning and Teaching

The GSA’s decision to conclude all teaching and learning for undergraduate and 2-year postgraduate students and for the rest of Semester 2 for 1-year postgraduate taught students’ was designed to ensure parity (no unequal access to academic or technical resource), fairness (all students assessed under uniform institutional protocol) and a guarantee that student attainment would be at the heart of all assessment procedures and judgments (i.e. the principle of student advantage).

The immediate and uniform cessation of access to all GSA teaching resources, human, technical and spatial (studio), ensured that all students were equally affected. These principles have guided all our academic decision making. Academic resource was re-directed to ensuring that all final-year students were enabled to submit for final degree award and (for UG) Honours classification.

We acknowledge that this may have contributed to anxiety for students preparing their work for degree assessment, however, the reason for the decision was to ensure parity, and in particular to avoid disadvantaging any students who may have been experiencing digital poverty. This informed GSA’s decision not to pursue a remote or on-line continuation of study and submission for assessment (as we were unable to ensure that all students would have equal access to the necessary digital facilities).

Our approach to assessment

In the extension of the principle of parity, students were informed that no further work needed to be submitted for assessment, and that the determination of Honours classification would proceed based upon work already produced when all students had equal access to all GSA teaching resources and support facilities and systems.

The GSA aimed to ensure existing timetables for assessment and progression were met to provide reassurance to students:

- Assessment and progression of Undergraduate Years 1-3 and 2-year Postgraduate Taught students to Academic Year 2020/2021:
  - Assessment principles shared with students on 25th March 2020;
  - Exam Boards 22 May 2020;
  - Students notified on 1st June 2020 in-line with published dates.
- Assessment and awarding of degree classification for all Undergraduate Years 4 or 5 and final year 2-year Postgraduate Taught programmes:
  - Assessment principles shared with students on 25th March 2020;
  - Exam Boards 22 May 2020;
  - Students notified on 3rd June 2020 in-line with published dates.

In ensuring academic progression (to next phase of study) or attainment and graduation (accredited achievement and completion), the GSA was able to remove significant anxiety from its student community and give confidence to eligible Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students returning for continued study in academic session 2020 -2021, or pursuing the third and final stage of the Postgraduate Taught programme over the standard summer semester (2020).
Our Assessment Regime
The GSA’s approach comprised three elements:

- The utilisation of previously generated summative grades, that is, work submitted for assessment prior to 16th March 2020;
- The indicative Grade generated by formative review at Mid-Year Review (MYR), and which served as a baseline below which student (final) grades would not fall;
- The use of “teaching intelligence” as a means to track, record and acknowledge student progress subsequent to the indicative grade generated at MYR.

Teaching intelligence (T.I.) was developed from the GSA’s experience of the first Mackintosh fire (2014), when the work of School of Fine Art (SoFA) students was lost during installation and assessment. Teaching Intelligence uses the interaction between student and academic, through tutorial dialogue and supervision records, as well as individual/group review processes and presentations to amass an “attainment trajectory” for individual students, which can be used to gauge progress beyond the formative review point and grade (MYR).

The combination of these three components – summative, formative and evidence-based extrapolation – offers a verifiable record of student achievement, both individually and as a cohort, which is capable of being scrutinised via the External Examiner system, just as it would be in any other academic year or context.

The GSA’s External Examiners were advised by the Academic Quality Office of the assessment principles and protocols being developed and applied, in addition to local contact by Programme Leaders and Heads of academic departments.

The University of Glasgow, as our Validating Institution, was also informed at the meeting of the Joint Liaison Committee, and, additionally, a formal paper detailing the Institutional approach to assessment undertaken by Academic Continuity Group was submitted to the GSA’s Academic Council (Senate), upon which the University of Glasgow has senior academic representation.

The assessment regime also allowed the GSA to guarantee an Honours classification for all relevant degree awards. This ensures that a GSA-studies degree from 2020 will have the same value and status as previously and in future.

This decision is not to be underestimated. It has highlighted that the GSA’s experience in addressing similar academic matters in the aftermath of the 2014 Mackintosh fire, ensured a calm and measured approach, set against an internal benchmark of this prior experience and an acute knowledge of parallel decisions being made elsewhere in the university sector.

Awards and Prizes
The Academic Continuing Group considered whether the annual Awards and Prizes could be awarded taking into account the GSA’s approach to assessment.

The ACG determined that in AY2019/2020 no awards and prizes would be made. It was considered that as students were unable to access campus facilities and refine work in the normal way, it was inappropriate to make judgements of merit based on criteria outwith those expressed in Programme Specifications and through the Intended Learning Outcomes.
Continuation of Studies for 1-year Postgraduate Taught students

The GSA provided 1-year Postgraduate Taught Students with three options to ensure the successful completion of their postgraduate study:

- Options presented to students 22nd April 2020;
- Deadline for acceptance 8th May 2020;
- Semester 3 commenced 26th May 2020.

- Option 1:
  - Delivery of Stage 3 using remote and digital technology completing the programme as planned on 11 September 2020. A digital survey was issued to students to allow the GSA to understand and hardware, software and connectivity gaps that may need to be addressed;

- Option 2:
  - Exit at the end of Stage 2 with the award of Postgraduate Diploma (if eligible) as part of the GSA’s established regulations. This means that a Postgraduate Diploma from 2020, will have the same value and status as awarded previously. In line with the GSA Fee Policy students exiting at this stage will have any tuition fee paid in respect of Stage 3 reimbursed. Students who exit at this time can return to study by applying to a Masters programme through the normal channels, including the study award previously exited;

- Option 3:
  - Pursue Stage 3 PGT through a period of extended study, from May 26th (until 15th January 2021) with separate assessment dates (to be advised). This option is designed to support students who have experienced ill health, financial hardship, difficult or altered circumstances or the responsibility of caring for others. No studio or workshop access is available after the formal end date of 11th September 2020, although if Government guidance is changed and social distancing rules are relaxed a return to studio occupancy and workshop usage may be possible in line with your current Semester dates and programme timeline.

These options were developed to ensure the GSA complied with the Scottish and UK Government lockdown and rules governing social distancing which effectively preclude the standard occupation of studio and use of the library, computer labs and technical workshop facilities while acknowledging the personal, health and financial issues facing many students, including visa concerns.

Academic Engagement

GSA Engage was launched after Spring Break (10 April 2020), a new space on Canvas for all GSA students that, initially, acted as a hub for useful resources and information around creative practices and also professional development with new content added to support students engage with their programmes, staff and disciplines. In addition, Professional Practice Guides were developed and available on the GSA Student Intranet supporting students in preparing for digital graduate showcases.

Adobe Creative Cloud Free At-Home Access was made available to all GSA students for free allowing Adobe Creative Cloud applications for all GSA students for use from home. A user guide and instructions to enable access to Creative Cloud Desktop Apps on personal devices was made available on the GSA Student Intranet.
Registry
GSA Registry published (31 March 2020) guidance to students applying for Good Cause advising that because of the assessment measures the GSA is putting in place, it is not necessary to apply for Good Cause because of the extenuating circumstances caused by the coronavirus, as GSA is already taking this into consideration when assessing work. Students who have been impacted by personal extenuating circumstances (not COVID-19), and this has meant they have not been able to produce work to the best of their ability, should apply for Good Cause in the usual way.

Leave of Absence
The GSA’s standard, published, approach to applying for Leave of Absence remained unchanged during this period.

Open Studio Programme
All the GSA’s Open Studio classes planned for Easter and Summer 2020 were cancelled following the campus closure on 17th March 2020. Refunds were given to enrolled students who had paid fees.

The Open Studio Pre-Sessional English Programme was adapted to on-line delivery launching on 15th June 2020 with the 12-week programme followed by the 8 and 4 week programmes.

Degree Show
On the 17th March 2020 the GSA advised students that the June and possibly August Degree Shows would be cancelled.

6th April 2020 shares the proposed approach with Student Reps and Lead Reps:

- A digital showcase and a platform through which our global GSA Creative Network (the GSA’s global community of alumni, students, partners and peers) come together digitally - a platform to connect with our community and industry. A new presence which will be designed to be fast, accessible and easy to navigate.
- GSA supporting graduates in the creation and promotion of physical graduate showcases (at some point in the next period and for example within 12 months from the point of Government restrictions being lifted)

The GSA launched its Graduate Showcase on 29th May 2020 in line with the published Degree Show opening date.

The framework for delivering physical graduate showcases is currently under development.

Graduation 2020
On the 17th March 2020 the GSA announced that the Graduation planned for 19th June 2020 would not take place.

On 27th May graduating students were advised that full details on Graduation 2020 were now available on the GSA Student Intranet and students were advised that:

As a graduating student they could either:

- select to graduate in absentia on 3 July (without attending) and receive their degree parchment as soon as practicable. If you choose to graduate in absentia you can still join your friends who are physically graduating (at a later date) for a post-graduation celebration of all 2019-20 graduates, when social distancing rules permit this.
• **wait to graduate in person** (when a graduation ceremony becomes possible which at present GSA is unable to confirm)

All graduating students are able to access a printable pdf version of their academic transcript, from around 3rd July, which will detail programme, degree classification and courses studied during your time at the GSA. Employers and universities should recognise this as a formal summary of academic achievements. Parchments will be available at a later date still to be confirmed.

On 3rd July 2020 a [digital graduate celebration](#) took place.

**Supporting Our Students**

Mental Health, Wellbeing and Counselling, Learning Support and Development and Welfare Support have all continued since the campus closure on 17th March 2020:

- Counselling and Wellbeing support are available remotely online and by telephone to suit student circumstances;
- Big White Wall (24/7 moderated mental health support community) continues to be available to all GSA students and use has increased since the GSA campus closed;
- Silvercloud a comprehensive iCBT delivery platform will be in place in July and GSA is also now delivering a pilot mindfulness-based therapy group online. Students with enduring mental health conditions and known to the service are receiving proactive wellbeing checks;
- Learning Support Tutors are available online to respond to needs as these arise and mentoring appointments continue where required;
- Responding to students who have practical queries and questions with signposting and support to internal and external sources of information and support as appropriate;
- Continued support to academic and professional support colleagues at all levels with student related concerns and queries.

**Financial Support**

The GSA receives [Discretionary Funds](#) from the Scottish Government of c.£140,000 annually (The funding is available to ‘home’ students only) to support student hardship. In April 2020 extraordinary COVID-19 funding of c.£19,000 was made available to the GSA for disbursement immediately to meet need through to the end of August 2020. Again, available to Home Students only, this funding was exhausted by the late April 2020 and the Discretionary Fund was closed to applications.

Awards range from £500 - £800 and support undergraduate and postgraduate students. Students with dependent children, estranged students and students with care experience have been prioritised and received appropriate funding.

Since April 2020 the GSA has made available a total of £83,000 (from strike related salary savings) to fund [Short Term Assistance Grants (STAG)](#) to provide modest grants to students in COVID-19 related hardship and any enrolled GSA student is eligible (including international and EU students). Awards are made to meet basic needs (food, day to day essentials, maintaining contact with family). Awards are not made to meet more significant costs such as those related to rent, digital poverty, current debt, or tuition fees.

This was a critical new fund for the GSA student community which enabled the School to support some of the most vulnerable students including EU and international students with maximum awards of £500.
In June 2020, GSA allocated a further £50,000 to the Short-Term Assistance Grants from its own resources.

**GSA Student Halls (MMH and Blythswood)**

Students who held a lease for Academic Year 2019-2020 for Margaret MacDonald House and Blythswood House student halls were given refunds or had future instalments due waived for the amounts due under their leases from 14th April 2020 (28 days from 17th March when the campus closed/ the notice period required under the lease).

This applied to all students who had already checked out, those who have left Glasgow and those who remained in GSA Halls during the lockdown period.

Students who remained in GSA Halls during the lockdown period were also given access to additional space (from June 2020) to ensure their mental health and wellbeing.

**Tuition Fee Refunds**

The GSA published its position on tuition fee refunds relating to COVID-19 in June 2020.

**Supporting our Applicants and Offer Holders**

The GSA Fee Policy was supplemented by a specific amendment in respect of Deposits paid by Students in 2020. This applies only to students who are required to pay a deposit (April 2020).

The GSA published to applicants that Requests for Deferrals of offers for entry Academic Year 2020-2021 would be considered after 15th June 2020.

For 2020-2021 admission (June 2020), the GSA confirmed it would accept a range of English language tests, but these would be validated by a member of English Language Teaching staff.

**Supporting our staff and their wellbeing**

Partnership working with the recognised Trade Unions has continued throughout the Coronavirus COVID-19 period, and weekly consultation via the Director of HR has been ongoing since the start of the lockdown period. The GSA continues to liaise regularly with UCEA, Universities HR and Universities HR Scotland on staff-related matters, synchronising with feedback and guidance from equivalent external bodies on Finance, Estates, Health & Safety and Governance matters. Feedback from staff and trade unions on the way in which the GSA is connecting with staff has been very positive and the GSA Staff Intranet, a relatively new platform at the GSA, has reached engagement levels of 82% as staff recognise it as their main information resource and links to key resources within the School.

**Physical and Emotional Wellbeing**

The Human Resources Department developed (from March 2020) a suite of resources and mechanisms to support physical and emotional wellbeing. A dedicated section of the GSA Staff Intranet was introduced at an early stage and continues to evolve as circumstances shift and issues emerge. In summary, the following resources have been made available to staff and collated on a dedicated COVID-19 page:

- 24-hour access to professional mental health support via the GSA Employee Assistance Programme;
- Access to occupational health medical professionals by telephone consultation via referral from HR;
• A range of online wellbeing resources that support mental and physical health (including self-help courses, social platforms and health and fitness apps);
• Links to key official information sources and helplines to support staff keeping up to date with national developments through appropriate means;
• Ergonomic issues related to working from home for staff have been supported by the development of a system, partnered by IT and Estates, that provides staff access to the campus in a controlled way to source equipment and furniture essential to safe working. Both teams have also worked intensively to meet any additional requirements via their respective helpdesks and have remained on campus on a rotational basis throughout (under strict guidelines informed by respective risk assessments). SLG have recently approved a system of reward for those staff who have remained onsite during this period.

The GSA also recognised at an early stage the inherent risk associated with the potential for staff working from home not taking adequate time away from work matters. Proactive measures were put in place to promote and facilitate rest, such as:

• Specific guidelines were issued on how to structure time when working from home;
• Additional rest days have been introduced each month, during which GSA does not operate and staff are advised not to undertake any work;
• Making sure staff planned and recorded outstanding annual leave for 19/20 by a deadline of mid-April. Staff were advised that they must have utilised at least 80% of their annual leave by August 2020. The GSA annual leave year runs from 1 October to 30 September;
• Additionally, it was identified that staff and line managers may need support on how to communicate remotely and how to manage wellbeing when daily contact is removed in the traditional sense. Initial guidance was issued, and the HR team has continued to develop dedicated content for the staff intranet specifically for line managers, including a manager’s e-toolkit. Online resources available have also been signposted and the HR team has been working closely with departments to identify any additional support required.

Supporting Remote Working - Infrastructure
A key element of supporting staff through the period of transition for the GSA was ensuring that they had the physical and technological means to operate remotely. Since March 2020 staff in IT and Learning Resources departments have worked to support and enhance the technical infrastructure at the GSA in response to the shifting operational landscape these include:

• GSA Zoom platform to provide a virtual meeting space for staff;
• Remote working technology (Parallels RAS) to replace the existing solution, providing staff with more a more effective means to access GSA systems on a wider range of devices;
• A comprehensive suite of assistive technologies for digital working;
• Additional collaboration tools (e.g. Padlet) that support creative networking and project work.

Staff Development
The HR department has been undertaking work over recent months to supplement staff development across the GSA which has, of course, been impacted by recent events. However, the GSA has undertaken to ensure provision of opportunities remotely where possible, so that the planned programme of activity is impacted as little as possible. As such, the schedule of events for staff development has been updated and enhanced to ensure focus on priority areas, such as Digital Skills, Emotional Resilience and Managing Through Change.
The staff development section of the intranet has been updated to signpost a range of online learning resources including free access to Linkedin Learning, which has developed a range of topical courses including Working Remotely and Managing People Remotely, as well as a series of short courses on the use of online tools (such as Zoom, Slack, Trello, Microsoft Teams etc.)

In conjunction with the Learning and Teaching team, HR have recently designed a digital skills gap analysis tool, aimed at teaching staff, which initially took the form of a survey issued in May. It is intended that the gap analysis will inform a dedicated and focussed programme of activity available during June and July (to align with the furlough period for some academic staff) to support preparations for the move to online learning in Semester three.

Furlough
Guidance from the Scottish Funding Council (May 2020) made clear that institutions with a mixed funding model are expected to consider fully making an application to the UK Government’s Furlough scheme to “maximise the contribution to their mitigation strategies”. An estimated 87% of employers in the sector stated they were intending to apply to the scheme. The GSA continues to liaise with Universities Human Resources, UCEA, BUFDG, and all HEIs across Scotland on the use of the scheme and related factors.

In April 2020, the GSA, in consultation with the recognised trade unions, worked to ensure that the School was in a position to submit an application to the UK Government Furlough scheme when the eligibility position was clarified.

Academic and Professional Support staff participated in the Furlough scheme which operated between April and June 2020. The GSA is now considering its position on further use of the scheme as we commence planning and operations for Academic Year 2020/2021.

Estates
Since 17th March 2020 the GSA’s campus has been closed with only core-staff remaining on site to ensure security, residential and essential IT services. As our focus shifts to preparations for a return to campus, high level guiding align with Scottish Government Guidance for Universities.

Essential student-facing departments (such as Technical and Library Services) have already begun to explore a common approach to maintaining physical distance and hygiene standards in their areas post-lockdown, which can inform the overall institutional plan.

It is recognised that key to maintaining staff wellbeing will be continuing to communicate clearly and regularly with all staff to ensure that they are informed about contingency and return-to-work plans well in advance. It will also be essential to ensure that staff continue to be made aware of support mechanisms available, to support the inevitable anxieties associated with returning to the workplace.

To make sure the GSA campus is ready for occupation in September 2020, (or before subject to Scottish and UK Government instruction), the Estates Department has been working in line with sector principles and guidance.

Building layout and infrastructure
• H&S team developed guidance for social distancing measures and risk assessments in line with HSE guidance, for Glasgow and Altyre;
• Arrangements in place for areas occupied by key workers and also for students who remain in GSA halls of residence;
• Estates safe re-start protocols planned and resourced, buildings maintenance carried out prior to phased re-occupation of areas of the estate currently unoccupied;
• Consultants have been appointed to design the layout for social distancing measures including signage, floor markings, foot traffic flow, hygiene stations. A contractor will be appointed to supply and install the physical interventions. Implemented in phases in line with potential phasing of occupation for example entrance/corridors, communal areas, staff areas, student facing facilities, student occupied areas;
• Consultants have been appointed to carry out a detailed space plan to assess occupancy levels, taking cognisance of HSE and Public Health guidance such as the use and impact of mechanical ventilation on occupancy levels. This is informing further refinement of the work of the Academic Continuity Group and departments in respect of planning for reduced occupancy and the management of maintaining social distancing in practice;
• GSA halls of residences social distancing continue to be implemented and updated as UK Government and UUK guidance is updated;
• Plans for students returning to collect belongings from GSA halls of residences are in line with emerging guidance, and work is underway with Academic Continuity Group to develop plans for students collecting belongings from studios, in a controlled safe way.

Hygiene and cleaning
Hygiene stations are already in place at the entrance to premises which are occupied regularly by key workers. These facilities will be extended in line with the outputs of the work of the consultants as noted above. Estates are working on plans for enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols, including an implementation resource plan for both consumables and staffing, and training as appropriate. In terms of practicalities, the plan will also include signage regarding the consumables which are provided so that staff and students will clean some items they will be/have been in direct contact with. Arrangements will be made for barriers or PPE as appropriate and in line with the outputs of the work of the consultants as noted above.

Digital Infrastructure

8 June 2020 the GSA established a Digital Steering Group chaired by Professor Paul Chapman, Head of School of Simulation and Visualisation. The Group will make recommendations on the resourcing of IT developments across the GSA reflecting the importance of digital tools, resources and platforms to our future academic delivery.

Academic Year 2020 2021

The GSA confirmed on 11 June 2020 that Academic Year 2020/2021 would commence as planned on 14th September 2020 with a revised Hybrid-Flex model of delivery. This would be in place at the start of Semester 1, with some activity on campus, some across the city and some delivered digitally.

Hybrid is a blend of studio, technical workshop, practical activities, field work and digital delivery that allows us to be flexible and meaning that an ease in restrictions can allow for greater access to and use of the GSA’s facilities. We remain committed to small group teaching, and the relationship between tutors and students. Hybrid-Flex also allows us to ensure that, in an event of a return to lockdown, we can deliver all necessary teaching via digital means. However, digital delivery is only a baseline which is intended to be augmented by use of studio facilities, technical workshops and computer labs (in line with social distancing measures in operation at that time).
Over the next few weeks the GSA will be able to explain what this means in more detail as plans develop in line with the phased approach of the Scottish and UK Governments to the relaxation of restrictions.

For students unable to return to Glasgow or Forres for the start of the academic year, our approach means students will continue their studies, initially remotely, in-line with their timetable and alongside their friends and fellow students. We are developing an on-line enrolment and induction process to facilitate this, and to speed up the return to campus utilization as social distancing guidelines relax and allow for greater in-situ involvement.

The Glasgow School of Art
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