RELATE Report 2: Meta-Analysis of Institutional Learning and Teaching Plans 2021

CHE
COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Preface

The higher education (HE) system in South Africa faces interrelated challenges of socio-economic development, the contextual relevance of knowledge production and dissemination, rapid advances in technology, the continuing need for systematic, societal and economic transformation, and the increasing fragility of the planetary ecosystem due to environmental degradation. The third industrial revolution had already precipitated a marked shift by some higher education institutions (HEIs) towards technology-enhanced online and blended forms of education provisioning and the advent of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) has accelerated this, including through rapid advances in technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, blockchain, the internet of things and big data analytics. This is driving a more comprehensive approach to responding to both the opportunities and the challenges posed by technological advances across the system. The COVID-19 Pandemic accelerated the shift towards online and blended learning.

Higher education institutions are unlikely to revert fully to traditional and/or former ways of providing for learning and teaching now that the crisis caused by the pandemic is largely over. Important advances have been made, and important lessons have and continue to be learned. New technologies continue to emerge and new futures for learning, teaching and assessment are being envisaged. These need to be researched and documented to draw together a consolidated and growing knowledge base that can inform equitable policy and practice going forward. Importantly, for the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the implications of the rapidly evolving learning, teaching and assessment environment for both external and internal quality assurance (QA) needs to be understood.

The REconceptualising LeArning and TEaching (RELATE) Project is an umbrella project that is being implemented by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in collaboration with the higher education sector to understand and to contribute to sector responsiveness to some of the challenges and developments outlined above. The RELATE Project has the broad purpose of reimagining learning and teaching futures in higher education, post-pandemic, post-disaster and post-disruption, and to develop some of the quality assurance artefacts that are required for these futures.

The RELATE Project is a meta-project consisting of a number of sub-projects focussed on specific aspects. As part of managing the pandemic, the Department of Higher Education (DHET) and the CHE requested both public and private higher education institutions to submit Teaching and Learning Plans on a prescribed template at the start of 2021. Apart from the immediate planning benefit, it was felt that a thorough analysis of these plans will

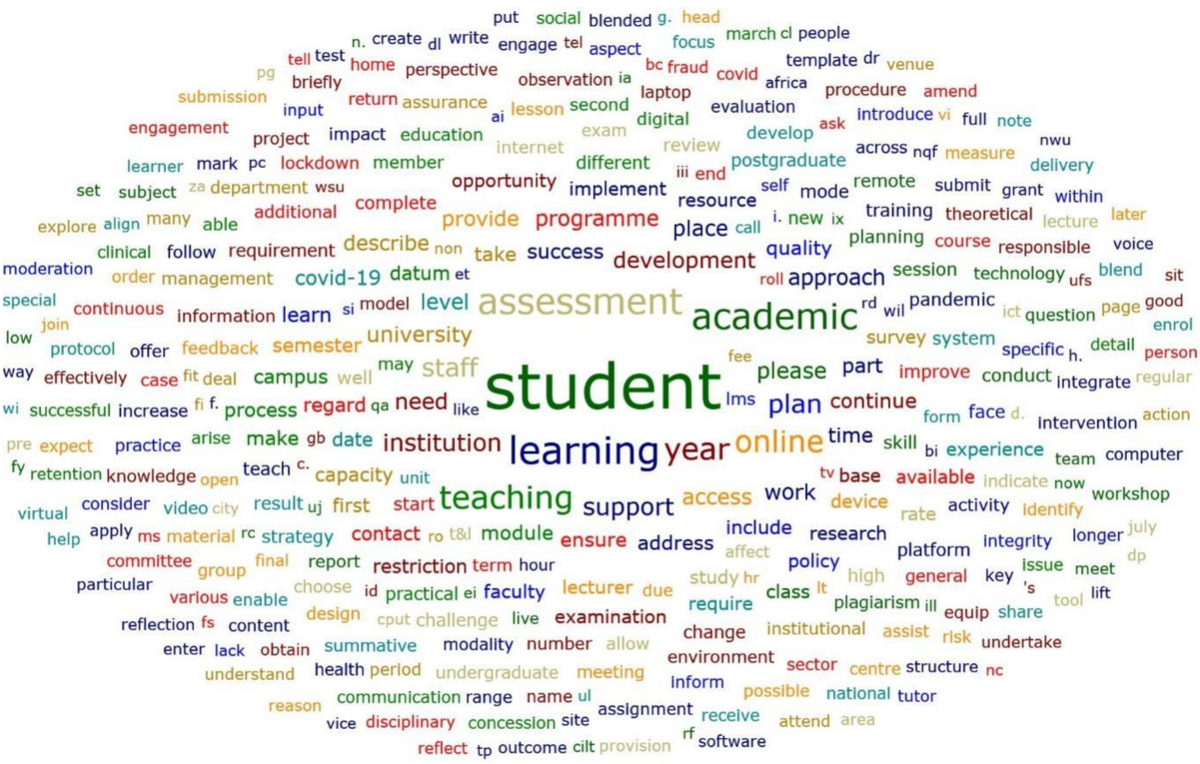
further illuminate the challenges that institutions faced during the first year of the pandemic in 2020, and the plans and scenarios that institutions created to manage the switch to emergency remote teaching and learning in 2021. RELATE Report Number 2 reports on a qualitative analysis of the 2021 Teaching and Learning Plans submitted by institutions. The CHE would like to thank Dr Ingrid Marais and Dr Angelo Fynn from UNISA, who did the analysis and prepared the report and recommendations. It is envisaged that the reports on the sub-projects will culminate into a synthesis report on the South African higher education experience during the pandemic, which in turn will form the basis for further work on understanding the emerging futures for higher education.

Dr Whitfield Green
Chief Executive Officer
Council on Higher Education

RELATE Meta-Project

Research brief 3

Meta-analysis of institutional learning and teaching plans



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Acronyms

DE	distance education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ERTL	emergency remote teaching and learning
FYE	first year experience
HEMIS	Higher Education Information Management System
HEQCIS	Higher Education Quality Committee Information System
LMS	learning management system
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PHEI	private higher education institution
WiL	Work Integrated Learning

Glossary

Urban universities – public universities were defined by their location in relation to urban centres and the rurality of the province the institution is situated in. Universities in the large metropolitan areas (such as City of Johannesburg, Tshwane, Nelson Mandela, Cape Town, Manguang etc) were classified as urban, as well as smaller cities that has well established infrastructure. Urban centres generally have better infrastructure, and is bettered covered by for example cellular networks, even if this is not equally distributed within the entire urban area. The City of Tshwane is a good example – consisting of well-developed infrastructure as well as peri-urban areas. Even where universities are in urban areas, students might still come from rural areas with inadequate infrastructure.

Success rate: In this report success rate refers to self-reported, unaudited success rates for the year 2020. It was compared with reported HEMIS and HEQIS data in the survey.

Size: Size refers to the number of students enrolled in an institution. Size data for private institutions were obtained from the Council for Higher Education as extracted from HEQIS. Size data from public universities were obtained from publicly available data. The data was used for categorisation purposes only.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report analyses South African higher education institutions' institutional teaching and learning plans as part of the larger RELATE project. The plans included reflections on the 2020 experience and lessons learnt, plans for 2021, learning, teaching and assessment modalities, the postgraduate experience, resource allocation plans, and capacity development plans.

Twenty-five (of the 26) public universities completed and returned the questionnaires (a response rate of 96%), and 57 of the 149 private higher institutions (PHEI) completed and returned the questionnaires (a response rate of 38%). In general, public universities' responses were much more in-depth than PHEIS.

Method

In drafting this report, I do not write the data up question-by-question but by common themes that had emerged from the data. For some of the analysis, extra data was obtained from indicated sources to achieve some texture. The report then presents both a general view of what happened as well as spotlighting specific themes of what happened during the year 2020 up to mid-year 2021.

I start this report with the end, considering the student success rate through the years 2019 and preliminary for 2020. The questionnaire asked institutions to "please indicate the 2019 and 2020 student success rate at the university / institution" for 2020 and 2019 per HEMIS or HEQIS. We start this report here because if we understand reported student success rates we can evaluate efforts against the reported student success rate to form an idea of how successful or not certain efforts were.

The report starts by looking at success rates reported for 2019 and 2020. Having set a frame with which to consider what follows, it explores teaching choices made in during 2020. Next I turn to assessments and assessment related issues, flowing from assessments the issue of academic integrity is explored, then academic concessions. Next quality assurance broadly conceptualised is discussed. This is followed by student support and student capacity building, as well as what student retention practices institutions put in place in 2020 as well as planning for 2021 (and the future). I end the focus on the student experience by exploring issues related to postgraduate studies during the pandemic. I then move away from a

student focus towards focusing on staff capacity development. The last section focuses on teaching and learning modalities for 2021. The repot ends with recommendations to consider for the higher education sector.

Recommendations

i. Assessment flexibility

One of the unintended consequences of COVID is the rise of institutional flexibility both in education and other sectors. Findings from this study show that flexibility has an impact on students' abilities to perform under pandemic conditions. Now that students have experienced this flexibility, they may come to expect it as a norm. One of the shifts that allows flexibility is the shift to continuous assessment which allows instructors to design assessments that are more authentic, paced to the students abilities and circumstances while giving them opportunities to reflect and learn from past experiences. In particular the opportunity to submit multiple times and receive feedback, which is part of assessment good practice, greatly aided student learning. Too often formative assessments are treated as summative.

There was also an emphasis on application and problem solving in the assessments which aligns with demands from employers who want graduates who can apply their knowledge and think critically.

ii. Hybrid teaching as best practice

Hybrid learning emerged as the most common mode of learning and this shift should be encouraged by providing clear guidelines and best practices for ensuring quality hybrid teaching. There are a variety of hybrid models, with twelve fairly prominent ones which allows institutions and course leaders to tailor the model of their choice to the context of the course and their students. One example is the flipped classroom model which has been used by institutions in this study even prior to the pandemic and it has a number of benefits such as encouraging independent learning, focusing classroom time on difficult to understand concepts and facilitates tailoring the tuition to where students are at. It also ensures that students are not left behind as the core material that the lecturer provides is always available to revise or access should a class be missed. Therefore, there are multiple benefits to be reaped by maintaining the shift to hybrid teaching.

Connectivity is a key concern for hybrid learning and rightly so. However, this can be overcome with intelligent curriculum design, using best practice guidelines on how to minimize data consumption, WCAG guidelines, zero rating websites within data ecology, a supportive policy framework and the political will to improve access.

iii. Academic integrity

One of the ways to approach academic integrity is through effective curriculum design and academic integrity emerged as one of the key concerns for institutions around online assessments with the authenticity of the student and the authenticity of the work being the two main concerns raised. Effective and, more importantly, imaginative curriculum design can address some of these concerns. Integrating students' lived experiences into the curriculum not only enhances the curriculum but also engages the student. Combined with practices such as application based problem solving assessments, this makes it more difficult for students to duplicate each other's work.

Conversations with students on what constitutes academic dishonesty are a necessary orientation to university as it cannot be assumed that students innately know or understand the technicalities that apply within higher education. A similar conversation is necessary with lecturers to develop a shared understanding and a unified approach to academic integrity within the institution.

iv. Work integrated learning

Should be viewed as a precursor to in vivo WIL and make use of more virtual and simulated practice prior to exposing students to in vivo WIL. The benefits of this approach is that it provides prolonged exposure and offsets the cost on both institution and student of engaging in onsite WIL.

v. Data and device provisioning

Research by STATISTA show that 78.6% if all internet traffic in South Africa was from mobile devices in 2022. The State of ICT report 2020 showed that smartphone penetration in the country was 91% compared to less than 10% of households that have fixed internet. The 2020 STATSSA General Household Survey showed that more than 70% of households had internet access. Smartphones play a key role in providing internet access in rural areas. However, we must bear in mind that South Africa ranks 136th in the world in terms of the cost of data. So, while students may have access to devices to access the internet, the cost of

this data is prohibitive. What this all also means is that we should be designing with mobile in mind rather than laptops as more students are likely to have access to a mobile device than a computer. This would entail providing information in smaller, bite sized packets and more frequent, focused assessments as opposed to hours long video proctoring.

From a broader sectoral approach university-private partnerships should be established to utilise the economies of scale to bring down the cost of devices. However, this should be done in with the 2021 STATSSA General Household Survey in mind which showed that 51% of households relied on grants to survive.

vi.Training needs

Online training for academics tends to focus on the technical aspects and their tools. While these are important, they are part of the larger package that make an educator effective online. The International Society for Technology in Education (https://www.iste.org/iste-standards) provide excellent guidelines for what it means to be an effective educator online. They structure their guidelines around 7 standards, namely, the learner, the leader, the citizen, the collaborator, the designer, the facilitator and the analyst. This is one model among many with substantial research into this area which means there is no need to be prescriptive.

vii. Quality assurance

There has been substantial research into quality assurance but this has predominantly been in the Global North where online learning is more prominent and internet is more ubiquitous lend themselves to learning theories that assume permanent connection to the internet. These theories shift away from content provision and focus more on helping students navigating information sources around their particular area of learning. Unfortunately, that would be complex to implement in our context as a result of the infrastructure issues mentioned earlier but we can adapt these theories, take away what we need and mould them to suit our context. This will require substantive sectoral engagement to facilitate a shared understanding of these approaches and their implications within our context. There are also standards that are available. An example is the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, their tertiary quality assurance agency, have developed a quality assurance toolkit that is freely available to institutions but I also believe that the existing CHE quality assurance framework already provides a very strong QA mechanism that could easily accommodate standards around online learning that reflects our context. My only caveat is

that these standards are widely consulted on prior to implementation to accommodate the differential resource access faced by HDIs.

viii. Mental health

This has been a concern for researchers with some estimating the rate of mental illness among academics at twice the national norm in a number of countries where this research has been conducted. The shift online and work from home has had many benefits like increased time with family, flexibility and less time spent commuting but it has blurred the lines between work and home resulting in longer working hours, increased workload and increased number of meetings. It also increases work-family conflict where work and family are competing for limited time and attention. While academic workloads had been increasing prior to the pandemic, during the pandemic there was a substantial spike as academics rushed to ensure that the academic year was salvaged and maintained that pace in subsequent years. Research conducted by Microsoft showed a 252% increase in weekly meetings per Teams user per week and a 28% increase in work after hours across all of their users since the start of the pandemic. Many of the recommendations we make will require substantial time and energy from already tired academics as they develop and reformat materials, engage with students and manage administrative workloads. Workload allocation models vary widely and a prescriptive model is not only undesirable but impossible to implement it is necessary to develop broad guidelines to ensure equitable distribution of workload within institutions to ensure that quality teaching takes place by preserving crucial human resources. It is important to emphasise transparency in this process to protect marginalised groups, particularly female academics, which research shows, carry a higher administrative workload than their male counterparts.

Chapter 1

1. Introduction

This report analyses South African higher education institutions' institutional teaching and learning plans as part of the larger RELATE project. The plans included reflections on the 2020 experience and lessons learnt, plans for 2021, learning, teaching and assessment modalities, the postgraduate experience, resource allocation plans, and capacity development plans. Information was submitted to the Department of Higher Education (DHET) on a template containing 36 questions (attached as Appendix A).

i. Descriptions of institutions that submitted

Twenty-five (of the 26) public universities completed and returned the questionnaires (a response rate of 96%), and 57 of the 149 private higher institutions (PHEI) completed and returned the questionnaires (a response rate of 38%). In general, public universities' responses were much more in-depth than PHEIS.

As Table 1 shows, most public universities that submitted can be classified as large, while 75% of PHEIs that submitted have less than 1 000 students. This should be kept in mind when reading the analysis because, no doubt, size matters in what institutions can do, what relationships can be formed, what resources are available, and how agile an institution and its students can react to sudden changes.

Table 1: Size of submitting institutions

Size	Public	Private
Tiny (<100 students)	-	23 (40%[1])
Micro (101- 999 students)	-	20 (35%)
Small (1000 -4999 students)	2 (8%)	2 (4%)
Medium (5000 – 9 999 students)	2 (8%)	1 (2%)
Large (10 000 – 100 000 students)	20 (80%)	1 (2%)
Mega (> 100 001 students)	1 (4%)	-
No data	-	10 (18%)

[1] Percentages here refers to the percentage of public or private institutions that submitted. The percentages in brackets refer to percentage of either the total number of PHEIs or public universities.

Of the submissions, 61 were from traditionally face-to-face[2] universities (24 public and 37 PHEIs), five PHEIs described themselves as being blended – fully offering programs in both the distance and face-to-face mode – and 16 were distance education institutions (one public and 15 PHEIs).

ii. Methodology for analysis

The completed questionnaires were imported into ATLAS.ti and data analysed by question. A memo writing process was undertaken for each question, and overlapping themes were identified. Data related to a theme was then captured in an Excel spreadsheet so that more fine-grained analysis could be done for sub-themes and to be easily able to compare within and between such sub-themes.

In drafting this report, I do not write the data up question-by-question but by common themes that had emerged from the data. For some of the analysis, extra data was obtained from indicated sources to achieve some texture. The report then presents both a general view of what happened as well as spotlighting specific themes of what happened during the year 2020 up to mid-year 2021.

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[2] Some of the face-to-face institutions might have some distance education programs but their main focus is face-to-face teaching.

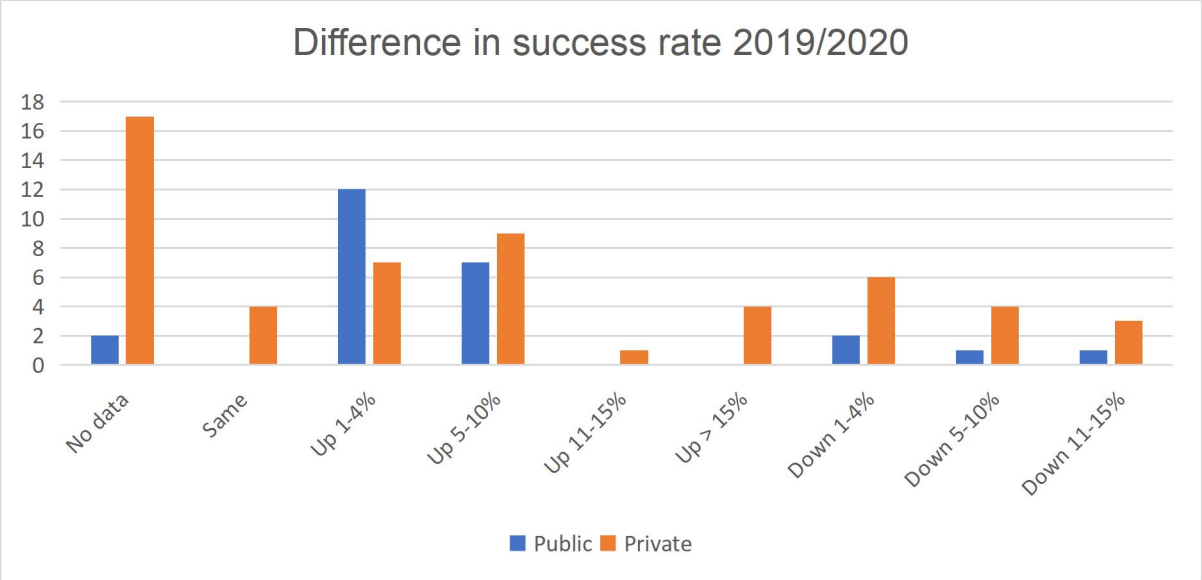
iii. Success rate 2020

The student success rate data reported here is as reported on the completed questionnaires by the public and private institutions. This is not audited data and is used here as given by each institution. The success rate as was asked is analogous to exam sitting figures in that it focuses on a single year rather than throughput which focuses on the result of a degree.

Overall, there has been an increase in success rates between 2019 and 2020, as illustrated in Figure 1. 76% of public universities reported an increase in success rate. Comparatively, only 25% of PHEIs reported an increase in student success rates.

Figure 1 (the vertical indicates numbers) reveals that overall, for both public and private institutions, five percent of institutions reported success rates that was the same between 2019 and 2020, 44% indicated an increase in success rate, and 21% indicated a decrease in their student success rate. Overall, 76% of public universities stated an increase in student success, with the situation for PHEI more diverse.

Figure 1: Reported success rates – increase from 2019 to 2020 as reported by institutions



This can be broken down to see whether specific types of institutions beyond public / private showed any patterns. Table 2 shows that overall general institutions showed increases, with 66% reporting higher success rates. Art/Design schools also reported an overall rise, while the specialisation reporting the highest decrease rate was in theology, with 57% of institutions reporting a drop in success rates.

Table 2: Success rate by institutional specialisation

Institutional Specialisation	Total	Increase	Decrease	Same	No data
Agriculture	1	-	-	-	1
Art / Design	12	6 (50%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
BA / Education	9	5 (56%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	2 (22%)
Beauty	2	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	-	-
General	35	23 (66%)	6 (17%)	1 (3%)	5 (14%)
IT / Engineering	3	1 (33%)	-	-	2 (66%)
Management	3	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	-	1 (33%)
Nursing	10	3 (30%)	-	1 (10%)	6 (60%)
Theology	7	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	-	1 (14%)

Urban public universities indicated an overall increase in success rate, while 40% of rural universities indicated a decrease in success rate – see Table 3. The differences could be attributed to the ease (or not) rural students would have access to technology and whether they could continue their education remotely.

Table 3: Rural vs Urban public universities success rate

	Total	Increase	Decrease	No data
Rural	10	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)
Urban	15	14 (93%)	-	1 (7%)

From Table 4 we can see that for the larger institutions there were just about uniformly an increase in the success rates – these were in general also the public universities. For small institutions the situation was much more diverse. Of the 24 tiny institutions, 35% reported an increase and 26% a decrease, and for micro-institutions 38% recorded and increase and 29% a decrease. This could be because some of these institutions have so few students that if anything happens to one student it affects the overall success rates significantly, while larger institutions are somewhat inured against what happens to individual students. For example, an institution with four students has a fall in success rate of 25% if one student

drops out but an institution with 100 000 students, one student falling out represents 0,0001%.

Table 4: Size of institution and success rate

Size	Same	Increase	Decrease	No data
Tiny (<100 students)	1 (4%)	8 (35%)	6 (26%)	8 (35%)
Micro (101- 999 students)	2 (10%)	8 (38%)	6 (29%)	5 (24%)
Small (1000 -4999 students)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	-
Medium (5000 – 9 999 students)	-	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	-
Large (10 000 – 100 000 students)	-	18 (86%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
Mega (> 100 001 students)	-	1 (100%)	-	-
No data	-	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	5 (50%)

Reported explanations for increased success rates

How do we explain the overall increased success rates that occurred between 2019 and 2020? The reasons for increased success rates provided by institutions were related to their staff and improved teaching, students and improved student support, and assessments. I also consider negative reasons for the increase and what reasons there were for a decrease in success rates. Note that a few institutions indicated that the upward trajectory of their success rates is not a new development during the pandemic but rather a continuation of what was already happening. In this section, I look at devices and mobile data, teaching mode, staff resilience and improved teaching, student resilience and improved student support, assessment, negative reasons for the increase in success rates, and reasons for the decreases in success rates.

Devices and mobile data

The provision of devices and mobile data is seemingly one reason for increased success rates. A variety of arrangements were made with regard to devices and data. Most public universities have computer laboratories (meaning both devices and data for on-campus use) available for students, which could not be used during COVID-19 strict lockdown, and would

have limited numbers during less strict lockdowns. Twenty-two PHEI also reported having computer labs available for students.

Table 5 shows the variety of arrangements made to support students with devices during the lockdown. Some of these were existing initiatives that were accelerated. At public universities the most common arrangement was for students to use their National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) book / devices allowance to obtain a device. For students that do not qualify for a NSFAS allowance but that might be in need, a variety of arrangements were created / existed, such as supplying students with devices (through either loan devices or assisting to buy).

Table 5: Arrangement for devices for students

Arrangements for devices	**Total**	**Public**	**Private**
NSFAS allowance	4	4	0
NSFAS & assisted students to buy	5	5	0
NSFAS & loan devices	4	4	0
NSFAS & must own at registration	1	1	0
Devices supplied to students	8	3	5
Devices supplied (to 1st years) and others assisted to buy devices	1	1	0
Assisted to buy	4	0	4
Loan devices	8	3	5
Loan-to-own schemes	2	2	0
Must own a device on registration	20	1	19
Question not answered on device arrangements	19	1	18
No devices supplied by institution (but assumed that students have)	9	0	9

Figure 2 and Table 6 show the data arrangements made by higher education institutions for students. Figure 2 shows that when the data for public and private institutions are combined, nearly 50% of institutions did not supply data to their students. However, Table 6 shows, if the data is disaggregated, public universities were more likely to have supplied their students with mobile data at least some of the time. 80% of public universities supplied their students with mobile data, compared with 12% of PHEIs.

Figure 2: Data provision to students

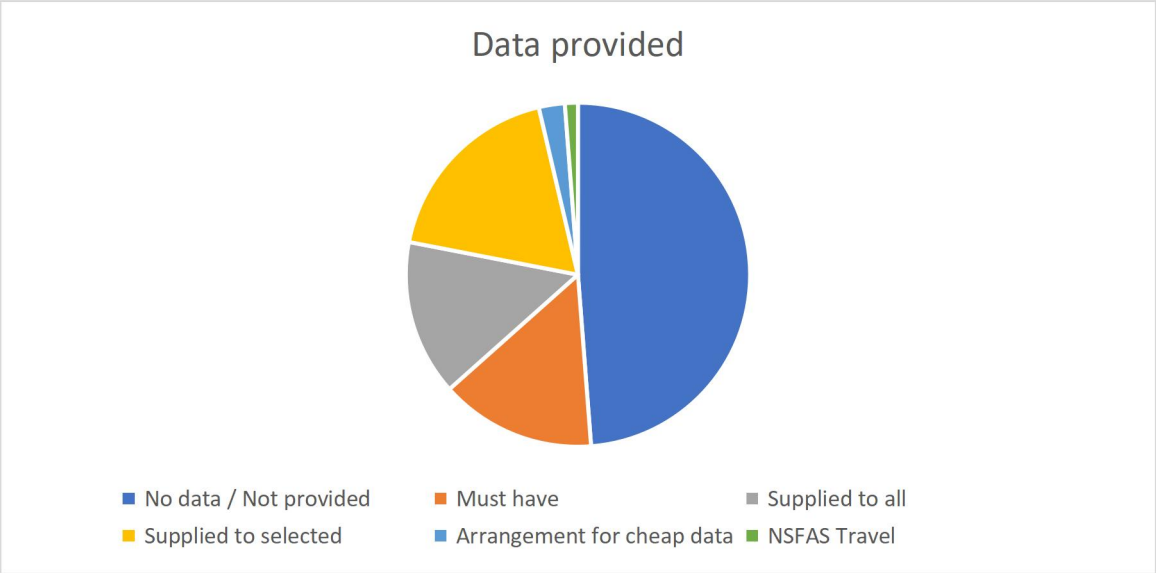


Table 6: Arrangement for mobile data for students

	Total	**Public**	**Private**
Not provided data	37	3	34
Students must have data	13	-	13
Data supplied to all students	13	9	4
Data supplied to some students / some times	16	12	4
Arrangement made for cheaper data	2	-	2
Permission for NSFAS travel allowance to be used for data by students	1	1	0

Seemingly, the provision of data to students co-occurred with increased success rates. As Table 7 shows, there was an increase in success rates in the institutions that provided data for their students. Of the 21 public universities that supplied data, 17 had an increase in success rates while three had a decrease in success rate. Of the PHEIs that supplied mobile data to their students, three recorded an increase in success rate, one had the same success rate and one had a decline in success rates. For the institutions that did not provide mobile data for students, two of the universities had an increase in success rate, and one had a decrease. There is then co-occurrence for public universities when students were provided with data (at least some of the time) and an increase in success rate. For PHEIs there is not a similar occurrence between an increase in success rate when data is supplied.

Table 7: Success rate for institutions providing mobile data

Success rate	**Total**	**Public**	**Private**
Increase in success rate	20	17	3
Decrease in success rate	4	3	1
Same success rate	2	-	2
No data on success rate provided	2	-	2

Teaching mode

Different teaching modes are self-reported by numerous higher education institutions as a reason for increased success rate. Institutions reported that students felt that online learning happened in their own spaces where they felt safe and comfortable, and they therefore had more confidence. New multimode resources were made available to students, from programmes designed to specifically help them transition to online learning, and what is expected of them, to the flipped classroom mode, to a diversity of delivery modes that included asynchronous engagement opportunities, to hard copy study material couriered to students. Because resources were available on the learning management system (LMS) of the universities, students could also return to the resources at their own time and work through them again. Students were also engaging more in online classes through the chat

functionality because they found it less intimidating than speaking in front of their classes. Seemingly from what is reported, student engagement increased with online learning.

Staff and student resilience

Throughout the responses to the CHE questionnaire, the commitment of staff to ensure a successful academic year for students shines through. As one institution phrased it, student success increased due to the resilience and tenacity of staff and students. During the pandemic, there were active opportunities for staff to improve their teaching and become more skilled at online teaching and the use of the institution's LMS. Staff became extremely available and supportive, not just using institutional LMSs and emails but also reaching students where they were, such as using WhatsApp and Telegram for teaching and support.

According to a few institutions, students have shown remarkable resilience through the pandemic and this, combined with increases in student support, led to increased success rate. Almost all the universities indicated that they had extended more support than normal to students, and this had positive results. Other reasons were that there were increased student interaction and participation, increased student motivation to not fall behind, students being closely involved in the decision making process related to COVID-19, and that students had more time to study due to having more time due to COVID-19 lockdowns. Furthermore, students formed online support communities and had better engagement with their classmates during COVID-19 (often because more academics were designing for engagements).

Several institutions mention that the commitment of staff has been exemplary but have led to an increase in staff exhaustion and burn-out.

Improved teaching approach and student support

Increased levels of material support for students through device and data provisioning is part of student success as discussed previously. There were also much more coordinated responses to providing student support, not just at the individual lecturer level but also at college / faculty level and between existing support units. One university also ran a campaign to make staff more aware of student realities. There were also an added emphasis and employment of peer mentors, or tutors, supplemental instructors and assistant lecturers. Once lockdown restrictions were less severe some institutions also offered winter and summer school or other catch-up opportunities for students that missed teaching opportunities.

Staff thus became more adept at using technology to create learning experiences and support students. Staff relooked at their courses for emergency remote teaching and learning (ERTL) and relooked at activities and sequencing of activities. Staff designed more, and more varied, activities and interactions.

Assessments

A large-scale change in assessments is also ascribed to why there were an increase in success rate. This includes a change to continuous assessments, but also changing assessments from knowledge-based questions to applied questions or inquiry-based learning. Some institutions experienced an increase in assignment submission rates. Related to assessments were the fact that students could submit late, submit multiple times, or were granted multiple opportunities to write exams, or sit for supplementary despite not having met 'normal' subminimum requirements.

i. Negative reasons for increases in success rates

In general, most institutions raised positive reasons for an increase in success rates. However, one institution raised two possible negative reasons for the increase in their success rate – one that academics that were unfamiliar with how to set open book exams, set poor assessments, and, secondly, that cheating by students may have played a role in the increased success rates. The institution that highlighted this was one that reported a large increase in cheating and had a four percent increase in their success rate, which was not the largest increase from the public universities[3]. One institution speculated that the examiners set less cognitively demanding exams and that students were passing these exams more easily.

ii. Decrease in success rates

But as indicated above, not all higher education institutions reported higher success rates; others indicated drops in success rates. One public university explained the decrease in success rate that they experienced as due to their students being mostly from rural areas where there is no connectivity, no electricity and unconducive home environments. For this university there was a lot of learning time lost as they only restarted their academic programme as lockdown eased.

[3] Later in this report I will engage about the link between cheating and increased student success.

PHEIs reported that their decreases in success rates were due to new online programmes being added to their existing face-to-face offerings; they do not however, explain why the new online programs led to a lower success rate. Four other reasons given were that weaker students struggle more with ERTL and online learning than with face-to-face learning, inability to complete Work Integrated Learning (WiL), that research students could not complete their work due to not having access to the library[4], and a recurring theme with PHEIs was the financial difficulties that students faced that led to large drop-outs[5].

2. Teaching choices

Different institutions attempted remote learning in a variety of manners. The nature of different institutions and the programmes they offer often influenced the how of offering remote learning. For example, the extent of practical or clinical work that had to be incorporated. Where the focus was on purely academic work, a fully online / multimodal model was followed. Some universities emphasised asynchronous, self-paced learning, while others tried to replicate face-to-face teaching with online classes.

PHEIs are often much smaller and specialised, and this reflect in the approaches to teaching they took. For example, one PHEI started to offer block sessions on specific modules – completing the work for one module first before moving on to the next, instead of offering concurrent work. This proved to be so successful that they are continuing with this approach. Other reports included the flipped classroom approach, daily narrated PowerPoint presentations sent to students (often using Telegram and WhatsApp). Some PHEIs indicated that the pandemic and the necessitated blended / online approach is accelerating their move to offer more online and blended learning, for which they will apply for accreditation.

Good practice:

Especially art and design focused PHEIs have mentioned that remote work is becoming a feature of their industries. They are using the opportunity for blended and online learning to prepare their students for remote working tools in their industries. Teaching online and

[4] Which raises the question whether the PHEI did not have online resources / libraries available to their students.

[5] Presumably students at public universities were also facing financial difficulties but this was not specifically mentioned as a reason for decreased student success rates by public universities. Some PHEIs mentioned students being deregistered if they could not make payment or arrange payment plans, something which no public university mention.

remotely also allowed one PHEI to offer an online student film festival which had a larger reach than previous venue-based film festivals.

In this section I look at responses related to learning management systems, staff and student support, curriculum design, modes of teaching delivery and pedagogies informing teaching choices.

3. Learning management systems during COVID-19

Most public universities were already using an LMS before the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the shift to online teaching led to a more extensive use of the LMS. For some universities, this though has meant that they have found that their existing LMS was not adequate and either a new LMS or an update of the existing LMS was necessary.

Better use of the LMS included uploading of study guides, PowerPoint slides, videos, and readings. When COVID-19 level 5 ended, it became apparent that online learning was here to stay in some form, and new processes for quality control had to be implemented (including for example what is uploaded, and how-to quality assure it). Guidelines for online and blended learning was developed. For respondents' greater use of the LMS meant that more e-technologists had to be appointed, which at least one university found difficult to source.

PHEIs were more likely not to have an LMS and were more likely to use multiple platforms at the same time. However, it does seem that PHEIs were more likely to have set guidelines for what online or remote teaching should look like.

4. Staff and student support

The pandemic showed the importance of providing academic staff support to be able to teach online, some of this was done through dedicated units, others through webinars, and often for PHEIs through outside contractors. Furthermore, tutors were deployed as one way to support staff with workload issues.

Student support was identified as an extremely important matter that received much attention during the pandemic. Extra training, virtual assistants, dedicated support desks, a variety of technologies, devices and data, and psychosocial support were some of the ways that students were supported. Both academic staff and student support are elaborated on in detail later in this report when I discuss student support and staff training and support.

5. Curriculum design / rethinking the curriculum

In some cases, pre- or co-requisites were waived for students to be able to continue their studies. When changes to modules or assessments were considered it was done considering not compromising the outcomes for modules. Consideration was also given in making sure that what was presented online / through remote learning aligns with the overall module design and the stated learning outcomes. Overall not much curriculum changes were reported.

6. Modes of teaching delivery

Institutions offered teaching in different ways. Most institutions offered online teaching or multimodal teaching, with especially theory taught online and practicals offered face to face (or mask to mask). This online-ness is variously called emergency remote teaching, emergency multimodal teaching, and blended learning. Some tried to replicate the campus experience with online lectures following a class-based schedule (PHEIs especially followed this option), while others emphasised asynchronous self-paced learning.

One public university adapted their already wide-spread flipped classroom teaching model online, with preparation work available on the LMS before the class, and online class being a place where students could engage and ask questions, instead of being lectured. A rural university implemented a platoon system during lower lockdown levels where students were rotated to be on campus at different times on a weekly or monthly basis.

Some institutions opened their campuses as soon as they could when lower lockdown levels allowed for it, especially for practical and laboratory training students, with the practical, hands-on training being offered on campus and academic components offered online. One university called this approach a mask-to-mask experiential learning approach.

Distance learning institutions (both public and private) had less concerns about how to teach as learning material was already prepared and available (whether in printed versions or for online consumption). However, summative assessments and how it would proceed online was something that had to be thought about. All the distance education providers moved assessments online, and those that indicated, indicated that this is how they will proceed in future.

One university had an existing flipped classroom model where class time was used for questions and discussions and not lecturing, which worked very well with the switch to online learning. One university used rotational teaching once face-to-face became possible and

had groups of students accessing campus on a weekly, and later monthly basis. Within universities there were also a variety of experiences, depending on the needs of specific programmes. Overall, there seem to have been flexi-arrangements for teaching during the pandemic, after the initial strict lockdown.

7. Theoretical frameworks informing teaching choices during the shift to pandemic teaching

A variety of theoretical framework[6] was followed to inform teaching choices during pandemic teaching.

There is a stark difference between how PHEIs and public universities answered the question as illustrated in Table 8 below. Public universities were more likely to have some theoretically informed pedagogical approach towards their teaching, while PHEIs were more likely to give a descriptive answer (e.g., they are using blended, or online learning or teaching remains as it was before the pandemic). Sometimes institutions also drew on more than one pedagogical underpinning when describing their teaching choices. For public universities, blended learning followed by constructivism was the approach or pedagogical approach most described as underpinning their teaching choices. Other approaches mentioned by public universities were 3C model[7], connectivism, DELTA, ethics of care, humanising pedagogy, and universal design for learning. Similarly, a variety of approaches was used by PHEIs, with blended learning described most often, followed by no framework[8].

Table 8: Teaching framework by institution type

Theoretical / teaching approach	**Public HEI**	**PHEI**	**Academic integrity**	**Success rate**	**Other information**
3C model	1	0	No data	Up 1-5%	
ACT	0	1	No data	No data	
Andragogy (adult learning)	0	3	1 no data 1 increase 1 no increase	1 up 5-10% 1 down > 10% 1 down 1-4%	2 explicitly combines with constructivism
Authentic assessment	0	1	No data	No data	
Blended learning	7	15	7 No data	4 1-4% increase	1 SAMR/TPACK

[6] In this section I report how institutions indicated their approaches, whether there is a theoretical framework underlying it or not.
[7] 3C model refers to the course modelling, course development, course implementation (Alhomod, Alsadhan and Shafi 2014)
[8] PHEIs would indicate no framework by indicating that they had no framework or used years of experience.

			3 Large increase 5 Increase 10 no increase	8 5-10% increase 2 same 2 Down 1-5% 3 Down 5-10% 2 Down >10% 1 no data	1 Self-directed 1 every module LMS 1 Community of Inquiry Bichronous online learning 1 Millers pyramid framework for assessment
Community of inquiry	0	1	Large increase	No data	
Connectivism	1	0	Increase	Down 5-10%	Situated learning, ethics of care, self directed learning
Constructivism	4	5	3 No data 6 No increase	4 Up 1-5% 1 Down 1-4% 1 Up >10% 3 No data	1 social justice & ethics of care 1 Humanism 2 virtual instructor lead 2 Community of Inquiry multimodality framework
DELTA	1	0	Large increase	Up 1-5%	Plan once & faculty specific
Ethics of care	1	0	No data	Up 1-4%	Universal design of learning
Faculty specific	1	0	Small increase	Up 5-10%	Variety incl behaviourism, cognitivism, social constructivism
Humanising pedagogy	1	1	1 increase 1 no increase	1 up 5-10% 1 Up 1-4%	1 social justice, decoloniality, 1 blended
Inquiry-based learning	0	1	No increase	Down 1-4%	
Knowing, being, doing	0	2	1 no data 1 no increase	2 Up >10%	2 Capabilities approach
Kolb experiential learning	0	1	No data	No data	VARK
Learner-centred	2	1	1 no increase 2 no data	2 Up 5-10% 1 no data	

None / no approach	1	13	9 No increase 1 no data 1 increase	1 same 2 Down 1-4% 4 no data 2 Up 1-5% 2 Up>10%	1 student centred approach 2 based on years of experience teaching
Online	0	4	1 no data 2 no increase 1 increase	1 Down 5-10% 1 up 1-4 % 2 no data	
Progressivism	0	1	No data	Same	Pragmatism,experientia l learning
Self-directed learning	0	1	No data	No data	
Social justice approach	1	1	2 increase	1 Up 1-4% 1 Up 5-10%	1 social constructivism
TPACK	1		No increase	No data	Constructivism
Transactional distance	1	1	2 no data	1 Down >10% 1 Up >10%	1 constructivism, student centred approach
Universal learning design	2	0	1 no data 1 no increase	2 up 1-4%	1 activity theory, actor network approach. 1 design thinking & project based learning
No answer provided	0	4	1 no data 2 no increase 1 increase	1 no data 1 up>10% 1 up 1-4% 1 down 1-4%	

Table 8 also indicates for those institutions that followed a specific pedagogical approach, what their throughout rates were, and any reported issues with academic integrity. It is clear from this that there were no co-occurrences between any pedagogical approach and either increases in success rate or how institutions experienced academic integrity issues. While there is no clear-cut relationship between pedagogical approach and success rate in this data, it might make a difference in the student experience.

8. Assessments

Given how crucial assessment is for quality of education, and how much attention it is receiving, I discuss assessment practices during 2020 and 2021 in its own section. Institutions frequently commented on the idea that they did their best to ensure that no

student were left behind during pandemic teaching. For many, flexibility became one of the most important accommodations to students during the pandemic, as institutions realised that students had to adapt to sudden changes, as well as living through a pandemic, with unequal access to resources and preparedness.

Several universities increased their use of continuous assessment as well as online assessments. However, in some cases where online assessments were used, it was not necessarily utilising the capacities of online learning for assessments. Rather, in these cases online submissions became a post-office / repository system for handwritten, scanned and electronic assignments. In consideration of changing assessments professional bodies' requirements were taken into consideration. Institutions indicated that they were making sure that the assessments were appropriate for the tools and circumstances. In this section I look at the types of assessments used in 2020/2021, including continuous and summative assessments, as well as work integrated learning and practicals and finally quality assurance of assessments.

i. Types of assessments in 2020/ 2021

This section looks at arrangements regarding assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. I start by discussing the increased use of continuous assessments, followed by approaches to summative assessments, and work integrated learning and practicals.

ii. Continuous and formative assessment

Continuous assessment is a form of assessment where students are given the opportunity to submit work throughout the coursework period, rather than only evaluated at the end of a course or module (Hernández 2012). This was implemented much more widespread than previously, many institutions reported. However, institutions, both public and private higher education institutions struggled with what this meant in practice. Formative assessments continued to be used, with institutions making special arrangements for submissions of assignments – allowing multiple opportunities and multiple submission pathways and allowing students to present answers in multiple ways. Institutions reported that they took care to make sure that assessments matched the outcomes of modules, and do so in authentic ways. Assessments were redesigned to take into consideration possible cognitive overload with the switch to online and considering students' mental well-being. A greater emphasis was placed on self- and peer- assessments, which helped in building communities of support between students. Some design focused PHEIs indicated that critique (crit)

sessions were conducted for students work in progress, with large projects having many smaller deadlines.

The capacities of the LMSs were utilised not just for submissions, but for feedback on assessments. This included creating videos for feedback on assessments as well as working through examples on screen for students, both through videos and through synchronous online sessions.

iii. Summative assessment

In many cases due-process[9] rules were suspended – in other words, students did not have to achieve a certain semester mark in order to qualify for exams. In some cases, students who only submitted one assessment could write the exam and then hand in other assessments after the exams.

One public distance education institution has decided that in future all their assessments will take place online. Face-to-face institutions generally indicated that a mixture of face-to-face and online summative assessments will be used going forward. Authenticity was raised as important – both in what and how something is examined, but also authenticity of students, ensured through proctoring systems. PHEIs indicated that they gave their students a choice; they could either use proctoring for summative assessments or come to venues to write their exams. One institution indicated that they cannot make use of online proctoring systems because students do not have equipment needed or connectivity. For them, if lockdown restrictions make it impossible for venue-based exams, final marks will be calculated based on formative assessments. From the data it seems that universities in a large part kept to the idea of closed-book, limited time exams, rather than exploring new innovative ways of assessments.

Rules around qualifying for supplementary opportunities for summative assessment were also suspended with supplementary opportunities either granted to all students, or a lowering of the threshold for when students qualified for supplementary opportunities. Especially with professional qualifications, formal summative assessments, especially venue-based assessments, were emphasised as crucial to remain in place.

Existing systems of external moderation for exit levels was kept in place, with continued internal moderation for first and second level modules.

[9] This is the word used by institutions that had this type of arrangements – also used as DP.

iv. Work integrated learning and practicals

Work integrated learning (WiL) and practicals were especially affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns. Students enrolled in medicine and sciences (requiring laboratory work) and those doing WiL were most often prioritised for returning to campus. Education faculties seemed to have struggled most with implementing WiL and practicals, with schools being unwilling to host student teachers.

Regarding practicals, special COVID-19 restrictions and protocols were put into place, and smaller groups were accommodated. In some cases, this has meant that practicals had been shortened in order to accommodate more students. Where it was impractical to host laboratory work, a greater use of virtual laboratories, hybrid laboratories or simulations were deployed. In some cases, students were not able to attend to workplaces or attend practicals on campus, and they were allowed the opportunity to create a practical demonstration, and record that. For example, student teachers were then allowed to create and record virtual lessons.

Regarding WiL, the hard lockdown caused initial losses. Some universities report that WiL continued as soon as it was able to during lower lockdown levels, under strict COVID-19 protocols for hosting organisations and students. As shown in Table 9, universities offered three modalities for WiL – work-based WiL, problem-based WiL and project-based WiL. Where students struggled to find work- based WiL, or where WiL could not happen in specific industries (such as hospitality), problem-based and project-based WiL were used as requirement to fulfil WiL for degrees and to demonstrate competencies. For institutions offering nursing qualifications, the use of clinical simulations became extremely important as access to hospitals were restricted.

Table 9: Work integrated learning during 2020/2021

WIL arrangements	**Public HEIs**	**PHEIs**
WIL in place	10	16
WIL in place, with project / problem-based alternative	6	6
WIL in place, with remote work	0	8
WIL in place and supplemented with simulations and recordings	4	4
Simulations and recordings in place of WIL	1	3
WIL waived	0	3

Table 10 shows the various arrangements that institutions offered with regard to practicals. Twenty-five institutions continued offering venue based, face-to-face practicals as soon as the various lockdown levels allowed for it and five institutions offered a combination of face-to-face practicals and virtual or simulation practicals.

Table 10: Arrangements for practicals during 2020/2021

Practical arrangements	**Public HEIs**	**PHEIs**
Simulation and virtual practicals	2	3
Practicals offered face-to-face	15	10
Combination of face-to-face practicals and simulation / virtual practicals	4	1
Practical waived, and thus not offered	0	1

From the above tables it is clear that public universities went to great length to keep both WIL and practicals ongoing as soon as they were able to, however, some institutions did offer alternatives where WiL could not take place through arrangements of project or problem based alternatives. Only PHEIs waived WIL requirements. Interesting is that WiL with remote work became a feature in PHEIs, but is not mentioned in public universities, possibly because some of the industries that PHEIs train has been moving more quickly towards remote work. No WiL were waived in public institutions, and waived only in a small number or private institutions – where either students numbers were very low (one PHEI had six students), or the component of WiL was so small within a module that it could be waived without compromising programme outcomes.

In terms of planning for 2021, institutions indicated prioritising practicals for students to be on campus, thus allowing this learning to continue. And offering alternatives to WiL through, for example, project or problem-based learning.

Good practice: Project studies: Project studies formalised group work in the development, preparation, execution and review of projects. Timetabled sessions and set agendas were created for

project meetings, where the attendance and delivery of weekly tasks are reviewed through formal peer and staff assessments

Reflection studies: With Reflection studies students were given the tools to meaningfully reflect on the term's learning, to identify their strong points as well as areas where their performance and delivery could improve.

9. Quality assurance of assessments in 2020 and 2021

This section looks specifically at quality assurance measures related to assessments, as reported in the survey. There was no noticeable difference here between what public and private HEIs reported. I discuss quality assurance of assessments in relation to policies, assessment types, delivery mode of exams, moderation, technology-focused solution regarding quality assurance, staff training and student-focused quality assurance of assessments.

i. Policies

Universities mention that their policies have had to be relooked at in order to keep up with new online assessments. This is a process that is happening through university Senates, often based on recommendations of working groups.

ii. Assessment types

The type of assessments needed to be relooked at, with more institutions using continuous assessment, and placing an emphasis on authentic assessment. One university placed an emphasis on setting case study exams, and also asking academics to Google exam questions to see what is available, and adjusting the exam questions based on this. For multiple-choice question exams, sufficiently large question pools had to be developed, as well as asking students not just what the correct answer is but to explain why a certain answer is correct.

iii. Delivery mode of exams

Some institutions decided that a return to venue-based exams as soon as possible, as the best way to ensure quality. Others are continuing with the use of online exams. For one the delivery mode of teaching (online or face-to-face) determines the delivery mode of the exam.

iv. Moderation of summative assessment

Some indicated that their existing system of moderation, through either internal or external moderators, is sufficient. In some cases, a head of quality assurance, or the Chair of Department, takes responsibility for ensuring that quality assurance happens. One PHEI mentioned having an exam committee that verifies assessment results and another performs quarterly audits of all summative assessments.

v. Technology-focused solutions

For some institutions the focus of their quality assurance efforts is through focusing on improving the technology used. Some institutions are keeping their exams online, but securing these through proctoring solutions, text-matching software and lockdown browsers. This involves upgrading their LMS or procuring new assessment specific software. One PHEI asked students to submit their geo-locations on Telegram in order to verify that students are not writing together.

vi. Staff training

Staff training is an important quality assurance matter, in order to make sure that assessments align with outcomes, setting of authentic assessments but also be able to use the technical software. I discuss training in depth later in the report and unpack the importance that institutions assign to training.

vii. Student-focused quality assurance of assessments

Some student-focused quality assurance efforts for assessments were mentioned; these include providing an LMS helpdesk for students, teaching students about plagiarism, and online tutor programmes so support students. Another quality assurance intervention mentioned was the development of self-directed learning material, in order to assist students to transition to self-directed learning. One PHEI surveyed students for their opinions of assessment procedures.

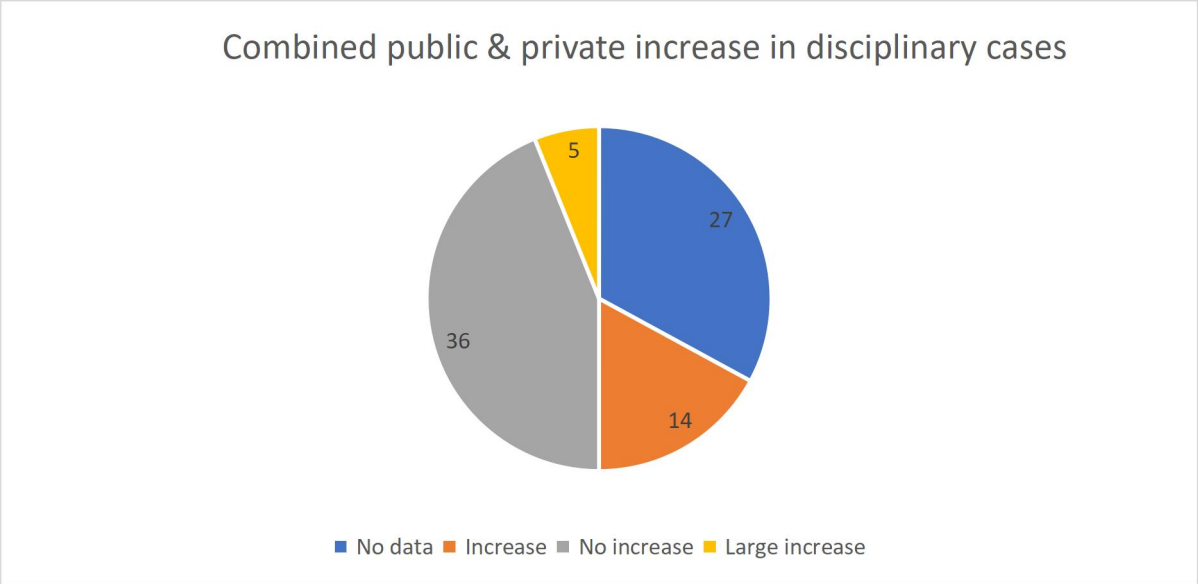
10. Academic integrity

During 2020 and 2021 academic integrity was often an issue mentioned when discussing assessments and quality assurance. Some of the issues raised in this regard was using tools to ensure academic integrity (proctoring and text matching tools), using new learning

platforms, existing platforms to better administer online assessments, and making sure staff knew how to administer online assessments as well as knew how to appropriately set online exams. Institutions had a range of experiences when it came to issues of academic integrity. This section unpacks some of these. Areas of concerns raised by some institutions were specifically for engineering, science and mathematics subjects.

When looking at the combined data[10] for increases in disciplinary cases, as per Figure 4, overall, the sector did not report an increase in disciplinary cases, acknowledging though the large portion of no data. At least some institutions linked an increase in academic dishonesty and increased success rate, yet the data does not show such a clear-cut picture.

Figure 3: Disciplinary cases at HEIs during 2020/2021



Disaggregated data show that of the public universities that reported, 42% of the institutions reported an increase in cases, while only 16% of the PHEIs that reported, reported an increase in cases as shown by Figure 4 and Figure 5 below. if you remove the institutions that did not answer the question, 69% of the institutions indicated that there was no increase in assessment fraud or plagiarism).

[10] As can be seen from the Figures 5 and 6, both public and private institutions gave responses that did not clearly indicate a yes / no answer regarding whether there was an increase in cheating.

Figure 4: Increases in academic disciplinary cases at public universities

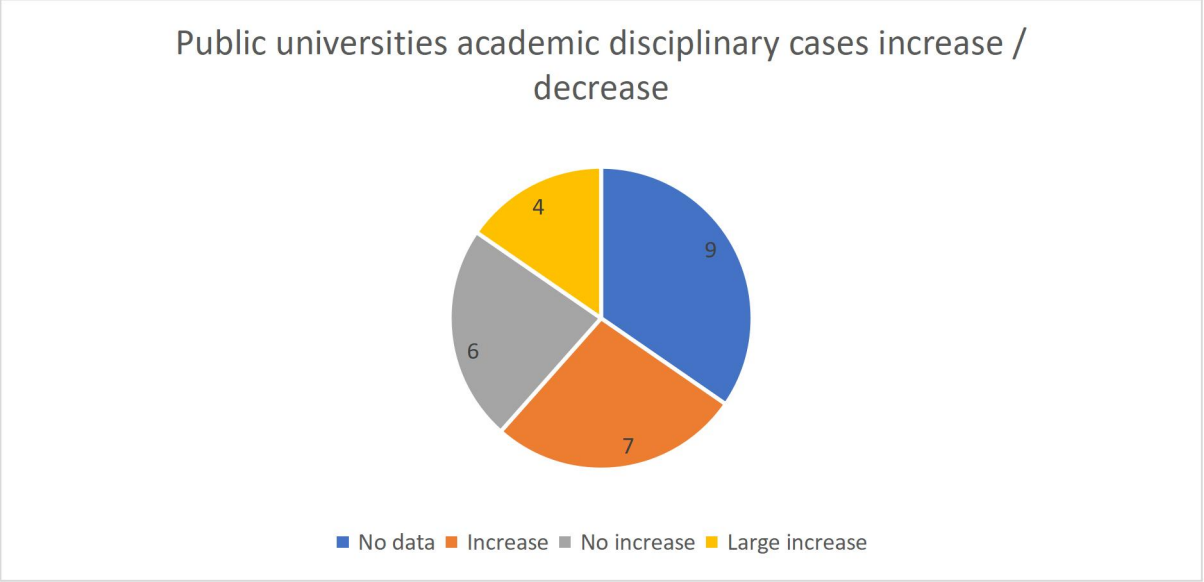
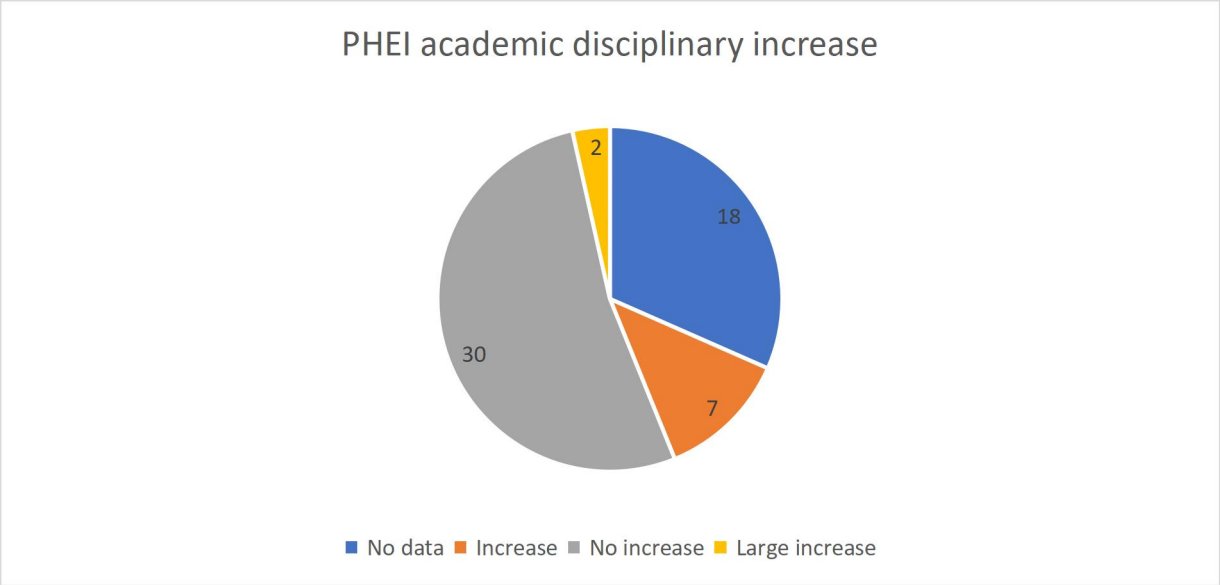


Figure 5: Increases in academic disciplinary cases at PHEIs



In this section I look at the challenges with academic integrity, discuss the link between an increase in academic integrity and success rate, as well as considering what solutions were offered to combat cheating.

i. Experiences regarding academic integrity

In general, when institutions reported academic integrity infringements it was focused on plagiarism. Some institutions reported that there were collusions between students during online exams – the collusion included sharing answers through WhatsApp or Telegram, or working together as a group to answer exams (sometimes in physical spaces and sometimes using online means) or assessments. One institution specifically mentioned the problem of Chegg and other homework completion sites. This is not a specifically South African problem – internationally concerns about availability of pre-worked out answers to assessments has increased (Lancaster & Cotarlan 2021; Streseman & Millican 2020).

One institution explain that the increase in their success rate was as a result of more, and more varied, assessment opportunities available to students (as a result of continuous assessment), another institution was unsure whether increased pass rates were due to better teaching (and students being able to access teaching resources and videos on the LMS multiple times), or whether there was collusion between students. This institution decided to treat students where modules had a higher than normal pass rate as at risk in the following module to make sure that the students receive necessary support.

There could be a few possible reasons why PHEIs reported less cheating than public universities. The table below (Table 11) shows the specialities of the PHEIs that reported on cheating, with the largest percentage for no cheating from arts and design PHEIs. These PHEIs reported that their assessments are often very practical and applied and much more difficult to cheat in. In general, art and design PHEIs also structured their assessments in such ways that there are constant feedback on work-in-progress. Management PHEIs also reported no increase, although one of the management PHEIs is a micro-institution with less than 200 students (for the other two I had no data on their size). Another reason could be that PHEIs are not perhaps as attuned to picking up academic cheating, or that they choose not to report it.

Table 11: PHEIs reporting on an increase in cheating

Institutional specialisation	Number of institutions	No data	Increase	No increase
Agriculture	1	1	0	0
Art & Design	12	2	2	8 (67%)

BA / Education	9	3	1	4 (44%)
Beauty	2	1	0	1 (50%)
General	10	4	2 (both large)	4 (40%)
IT / Engineering	3	1	1	1 (33%)
Management	3	0	0	3 (100%)
Nursing	10	4	1	5 (50%)
Theology	7	2	1	4 (57%)

Institutions indicated that they followed their normal disciplinary processes where necessary, with only two institutions (both public) indicated that they had a new process. For one the number of cases meant that instead of holding hearings for each student they would issue a warning letter to the accused students and a zero percent for the summative assessment, and if students disputed the charge, they could appeal at a disciplinary hearing. The same institution found that groups of students 'clubbed' together to employ a lawyer to represent them at these subsequent hearings. Students issued with more than one warning letter could face a one-year suspension. Another institution had a special committee to investigate suspected online exam fraud by looking at the learning management records, and interviewing students and lecturers. However, they did not report what the outcomes were of such investigations.

ii. Link between academic integrity and increased success rate?

When institutions were asked about an increase in success rate, some institutions indicated that the increase in their success rate might be related to an increase in cheating by students. Table 12 shares data that can help us explore this issue. It draws on data for those nineteen institutions whom reported in the CHE survey an increase or large increase in cheating. I took their reported self-reported success rates and categorised it to indicate increase, decrease, no change or no data. There seems to be at least some co-occurrence between an increase in cheating and an increase in success rates for about 63% of institutions that reported an increase in cheating. For a further 21% of institutions whom indicated an increase in cheating, there were a decrease in student success rates. When we consider only the self-reported *large* increases in cheating, by three public universities, two

reported a modest increase in success rate of between 1-4%. Only one public university reported a large increase in cheating and a large increase in success rate. Of the two PHEIs that reported a large increase in cheating, one had a similar success rate as previously and one did not report their student success rate.

Table 12: Increase in disciplinary cases and increased student success rate

Success rate data	**Total institutions experiencing an increase in cheating (% of institutions indicating an increase in cheating)**	**Public HEIs**	**PHEIs**
Decrease	4 (19%)	2	2
Increase	9 (43%)	5	4
Large increase	5 (24%)	3	2
No data	2 (10%)	0	2
No change	1 (5%)	0	1

Because the data on cheating is not quantified as a percentage of students, or a percentage increase, it is quite difficult to compare because what one institution consider a large increase might not be a large increase to another. Many cases may also be only a small number of students because the base is small to start with. What is indicative rather than the number of cases or whether there is an increase in success rate due to cheating, is that South African institutions, like their international counterparts are trying to find solutions to academic cheating, and that there is a need for a sector wide meaning making about what cheating means in higher education, and how to deal with this in meaningful ways, preferably before students commit such acts.

11. Solutions tried

Institutions approached cheating in either a punitive manner, or as an opportunity for reflection and to teaching. In this section I show how different institutions have approached dealing with academic integrity matters. I start by exploring what technology enabled solutions was used, the LMS and new assessment platforms, variations in assessment types, a return to venue-based exams, and training off / communication with (staff and students).

i. Technology-enabled solution

Institutions often used technological solutions to deal with assessment fraud, whether for summative exams or for formative assessments. These technological solutions include proctoring solutions, lockdown browsers, and similarity checking software. Of the 82 reporting institutions, fifteen institutions reported that they used some form of proctoring (sometimes this would include asking students to write exams using an online meeting platform such as Zoom or MS Teams), 22 institutions had used (or was already using but extended their use) of similarity checking software, and one institution made students share their geo-locations at the start of an exam to check that students are not working together to answer questions.

For institutions using proctoring (15), nine is private institutions (16% of PHEIs) and six public (24% of public universities). Some institutions used formal proctoring programs (such as Proctoria, Examity or the Invigilator App), but some used informal proctoring – using, for example, Zoom or MS Teams to monitor students and to verify that the person writing the exam is indeed the student. Four institutions of the fifteen reported no data on academic integrity, five had reported an increase in academic dishonesty, four reported no increase, and two reported a large increase (one public and one private). The relationship between use of proctoring and increases in academic dishonesty is not clear, in other words did institutions start using proctoring because there was an increase in academic integrity, or was more transgressions found after the use of proctoring software. At least one PHEI indicated that when they started using proctoring there was an increase in discovery of infractions of academic integrity. However, this was related to students not using the proctoring solution, or not using it properly. Only one institution reported how students experienced a shift towards using proctoring for online assessments. The PHEI reported that their students objected to the use of proctoring on two grounds – invasion of privacy, and lack of correct equipment. The institution changed most of the assessments after engagements with students to shift assessment types towards portfolios and more practical tasks. Where exams remained, they became open book exams.

Another approach to ensuring academic integrity was for students to photograph their student card on top of their written work before scanning and handing in. Two PHEIs had venues for students, who did not have the correct equipment for proctoring (fast enough internet connection and a webcam), to write exams on campus. One public university had clearly identified that proctoring was an equity issue to them, with their students not having access to necessary equipment (laptops, webcams, data, and connectivity), and they thus could not implement such a solution. The cost associated with proctoring was also offered as a reason why some institutions did not turn to proctoring solutions.

Cause of concern regarding proctoring:

Some universities and PHEIs have embraced the use of some form of proctoring. However, a few institutions are struggling with what this means in terms of access for students with material and connectivity disadvantages. Internationally, concerns have been raised with regards to build-in artificial intelligence features, such as facial recognition which has shown to discriminate against darker skin people, as well as gender non-conforming and disabled students.

One public university has outright rejected the use of proctoring because of the material and connectivity issues of most of their students.

ii. LMS use / new type of assessment systems

Other forms of technology used for ensuring academic integrity were trying to leverage the capacities of LMSs. Strategies include presenting multiple-choice questions one by one, setting it so that students couldn't return to previous questions (in other words, students needs to answer questions as presented without being able to go back), having large question pools, setting time limits so that students don't have time to consult with one another, and setting passwords so that if students lost connectivity they would have to get a new password from their lecturer. Another functionality was using lockdown browsers, which is a function in some LMSs that closes all other documents and browsers on the computer when activated.

Some institutions found that their existing LMSs were not suitable for large scale assessments and procured specialist software and hosting solutions for online exams.

iii. Assessment changes

The most common way that all institutions dealt with issues of academic integrity was to change the ways that they assess. This included, for example, switching to continuous assessment but also rethinking what summative assessments could look like, including switching to open book assessments. Some strategies included having multiple versions of the same assessments, including having large databases of multiple-choice questions for randomised questions, and having multiple versions of exam papers.

A crucial change was rethinking what type of questions are asked – instead of asking solely knowledge-based (which can easily be Googled), there were a reported increase in more

application-type questions, and asking students to explain how they came to an answer, and having multiple-step problem-solving questions.

One way staff dealt with concerns of academic integrity was to offer oral examinations; however, this is only feasible with small student numbers.

iv. Return to venues

Some institutions preferred a return to venue-based exams, either fully or partially, as soon as it was allowed and under strict COVID-19 restrictions. Some institutions returned to venue-based exams, when they could under lower lockdown levels, for exit-level exams, and for exams associated with statutory bodies. One used venue-based exams for students with supplementary exams after students were found guilty of plagiarism and two PHEIs had venues for students who did not have correct equipment for proctoring. One institution never scheduled online exams as it was not feasible for them as a rural university, and extended the academic year with three months to make up for time lost time. For this university venue-based learning is an equity issue, as most of the students are NSFAS recipients, and when not on campus, stay in rural areas not well served with connectivity.

Whether returning to venue-based exams addressed issues of academic integrity transgressions is not clear – of the 16 institutions that returned to venue-based exams, seven (43%) reported no data on increase or decrease in academic integrity, four (25%) reported an increase in cheating, four (25%) reported no increase in cheating, and one (six percent) a very large increase in academic dishonesty. The one institution that reported a large increase in academic dishonesty explained their return to venue-based exams as a result of the large increase in academic dishonesty in online exams (other institutions did not indicate whether the increase / decrease was linked to decisions to return to venues).

v. Training of and communication with staff and students

Some institutions decided to emphasise training of and communication with their students on academic integrity and its various components (these included avoiding plagiarism, referencing skills, and why originality and honest engagement is a core value of academia). In total, 13 institutions (three public and ten private) followed this approach. Two of the PHEIs did this in conjunction with using a software matching solution, and one public and one private institution combined it with returning fully or partially to venue-based exams.

There was also a focus on training academics in developing good assessment practices, and improved course design, as well as teaching support staff to identify plagiarism and collusion between students.

Most of the training was offered online through workshops or asynchronous learning activities. One PHEI however. felt that teaching academic integrity online was not successful and will in future offer this training face-to-face.

Good practice:

One PHEI is teaching skills related to academic integrity using gamification.

Some institutions indicated that they asked students to sign an honour pledge or authenticity declarations before submitting assessments, and one university emphasised to students that they are responsible for their learning experience at university. Work-in-progress was also used to alert students to possible infringements, including having students review similarity reports before final submissions.

Good practice:

One institution adopted the following three principles to promote academic integrity:

- Establish relationships with students based on mutual respect and trust;
- Emphasise the value of integrity to students; and
- Organise orientation sessions and workshop on academic integrity.

vi. Post-assessment procedures

Post-assessment procedures were employed in a few cases in a specific response to transgressions in academic integrity. One PHEI phoned a small percentage of students randomly after the exam in order to discuss the assessment. However, they did not report what the conclusion was of this – in other words did it show any cheating, or not.

Assessment moderation was further used as an opportunity to identify possible cheating. One university indicated that if there were suspicions of cheating, they would investigate further, including using LMS data to look for patterns of cheating. However, the university did not indicate what the outcome of such investigations were.

12. Academic concessions

Academic concessions were understood and approached in a variety of ways. I discuss academic concessions under three themes, concessions related to co or pre-requisites, concessions related to assessments, and concessions related to academic or financial exclusions for PHEIs. Only two institutions (one public, one private) referred to students with disabilities – one mentioned scribes for students with disabilities and another to special arrangements for students with hearing impairments.

Five institutions did not give data on how they approached concessions. I identified six types of concession categories – none or using existing policies to approach concessions, extending the academic year to allow for more learning time, adjusting financial or academic exclusions, assessment related concessions (which included changing the mode of assessments, allowing extra assessment opportunities, as well as changing subminimum rules related to supplementary opportunities). Looking at Table 13 below it is apparent that assessment related concessions was the most used with 45 institutions choosing to implement them.

Table 13: Number of concessions per category

Concession types	**Public**	**Private**
None or existing policies	2	10
Extended academic year	1	3
Exclusions adjusted (academic & financial)	8	1
Assessment related	10	35
Extended academic year & assessment related	0	2
Exclusions & assessments	2	3
No data on concessions	2	3

While I cannot show causality with any particular type of concession and success rate, there are some general co-occurrences, and seemingly concessions related to assessments correlates somewhat to an increased student success rate. Table 14 below shows some of the arrangements followed related to concessions and the co-occurrences with student success rate.

Table 14: Concession and effect on student success

Concessions	Success rate same	Success increase	Success down	No data on success rate
None or existing policies	0	5	3	4
Extended academic year	0	2	0	2
Exclusions adjusted (academic & financial)	0	5	4	0
Assessment related	4	22	10	9
Extended academic year & assessment related	0	2	0	0
Exclusions & assessments	0	3	0	2
No data on concessions	0	3	0	2

a. Concessions related to co/pre-requisites

In some cases, co or pre-requisites for modules were waived so that students were not held back from completing their degrees due to COVID-19. In such cases students could register for the co or pre-requisites concurrently. One institution made an arrangement where if the student failed the pre-requisite but passed the subsequent module, they would be passed for the failed module because they showed knowledge was in place by passing the subsequent unit.

b. Concessions related to assessments

There were several different ways that concessions related to assessments worked, both for formative and summative assessments. Work integrated learning were either waived if it was not credit bearing or the period for completing WIL was extended.

For formative assessments the most common concessions were made around deadlines, with a great amount of flexibility allowed without facing penalties. During the early part of the pandemic academics were encouraged to be lenient, but as the pandemic became 'normal'

less leniency was extended to students, especially in light of the fact that students were being allowed onto campus if they had connectivity problems. Institutions also saw the greater move towards continuous assessment as an academic concession.

For summative assessments some institutions waived due performance measures (due performance would either refer to attending a certain number of classes or achieving a certain semester mark to qualify for sitting exams). This allowed students that may have missed formative assessments or online classes to still sit for exams. One university also waived the formative assessment mark (semester mark) from the final mark calculation if it did not advantage the student. Similarly, a few other institutions allowed students to hand in formative assessments after summative assessments to increase their semester marks, or redo formative assessments in order to allow them to achieve a pass mark. In some cases, students were allowed supplementary opportunities even when they did not qualify according to institutional policies. In other cases, additional summative assessment opportunities were provided.

c. Concessions related to academic and financial exclusions

Academic exclusion rules were either waived or very leniently applied. In some cases, academic exclusions were completely suspended (seven of the 25 universities waived or leniently applied academic exclusion policies, one university had a new policy that came into effect in 2020 and proved to be beneficial for pandemic affected students). One university automatically added an extra year for students to the maximum time allowed for qualifications. One university mentioned that they found their more lenient exclusion policy used during the pandemic is closer to what they want their 'normal' exclusion policy look like, and includes extra support through peer mentors, success coaches and academic advisors for students that may face academic exclusions.

PHEIs mention especially needing to deal with financial exclusions as the pandemic negatively affected the ability of students or their parents and sponsors to continue paying fees. Where students may have faced exclusion due to non-payment of fees, arrangements were made for payment plans, or students could 'freeze' their studies without penalty for a year until they were able to continue paying.

While teaching mode, staff and student resilience, improved teaching practices and additional support all played a critical role in the general increase in student success rate observed, it appears that concessions, particularly assessment concessions had a large impact. The flexibility of assessment policies allowed students multiple opportunities to submit assessments allowing them to learn from mistakes with feedback (although some

authors refer to this as feed forward). With the return to campus hopefully the lessons of flexible assessment practices such as continuous assessment follow.

13. Quality assurance

Under the heading for quality assurance broadly understood a number of dimensions will be discussed. It will start by looking at issues of governance under Covid-19, both as an emergency, but also as a new normal into year two. Then issues of quality related to several teaching dimensions will be discussed: how teaching was offered and what informed the choices made, assessments: summative, continuous and formative. And relating to this issue is the issue of academic integrity. Post assessment processes followed will be discussed.

Institutions mentioned assessment as an important part of quality assurance but also training of staff. For assessment the actual assessment and student answer scripts, as well as academic integrity of assessments were considered important issues for QA. I discuss both issues separately below.

Other interesting issues mentioned in relation with quality assurance is identification of at-risk or in trouble students, students having access to devices as well as needing appropriate platforms for learning.

A wicked quality assurance problem

Electricity and connectivity are unevenly distributed in South Africa and breaks in, or lack off, connectivity and electricity mean that learning is unevenly distributed, and exam opportunities are affected. This presents a quality assurance problem where students do not equally have access to learning opportunities and materials, or exam and assessment opportunities.

i. Governance of quality assurance

Public universities in general has very structured governance processes, that has at least some lead time associated with the, the COVID-19 pandemic required an unusual agility for process changes, especially as many universities adapted and changed assessment practices in a short time.

There were three routes for approval for changes amongst public universities:

- Primarily changes were initiated and approved at the departmental or faculty level, and then sent to Senate for ratification (which for most universities would be the considered the usual route for changes to teaching),
- Approval of changes by a special committee of Senate (usually the executive committee) rather than full Senate
- A special committee was created to make decisions about online teaching and learning process, these were generally seated at either management level or within existing teaching and learning centres,

Some public universities indicated that the pandemic had accelerated an existing move towards more online offerings / or a greater use of technology in their teaching through for example greater use of the learning management systems. Some concerns were raised about how-to quality assure online classes as there were no systems in place to do this.

ii. Existing systems for quality assurance

Some universities indicated that their existing systems were robust and were sufficient in dealing with pandemic teaching. These existing systems included for example peer and student review of modules, as well as exit level modules' moderation by external reviewers. Another example is that tools (unspecified) to review modules is being used. During the pandemic for some QA audits was happening as normal with for example professional bodies visiting and auditing programmes. Quality assurance in some cases are conducted by Chairs of Departments, with reporting to deans as the custodians of all qualifications. In PHEI managers and programme coordinators are mentioned as being tasked with quality assurance, both of material but also of online classes.

iii. New systems for quality assurance

While existing systems may have been enough in some cases new systems and processes had to be developed in other cases. For example, new guidelines had to be developed for online assessments, there was a need for a new e-learning committee and the greater (or new) use of data analytics to see whether students and lecturers were attending class. Data analytics is used to try and understand who is at risk students, who does or does not access the LMS, and participates, and in some cases how effective the teaching and assessments are from both a student point of view and in terms of whether teaching was successful. However, there was no indication of data mining of content for example to understand the

quality of engagement. Data analytics included for example geo-mapping student homes, looking at identity markers as proxy for disadvantage.

A question that came up a few times is how to quality assure effective online teaching and material development for online. This also include setting minimum standards for example for what needs to be included on the LMS.

iv. Quality assurance of assessments

The quality assurance of assessments was an overarching theme. The creation and implementation of authentic assessments, a move toward portfolios and open book assessments, and continued submissions of online assessments. A new emphasis on communicating what academic integrity is to students, coupled with the use of systems that could ensure integrity such as plagiarism detection systems, and proctoring solutions. I discuss post-assessment procedures elsewhere.

14. Student support and student capacity development

Both public and private universities were at pains to emphasise the motto of 'no student left behind'. In all cases institutions emphasised flexibility for students and especially taking student circumstances into account. Some institutions found that their enrolments were better than previous years, with fewer module cancellations and based on this did not offer student support beyond what was already existing. Some institutions did find they had lower enrolments and more postgraduate cancellations, which was due to student debt or financial pressures.

Some student support measures that I do not discuss here because it was addressed elsewhere for example academic exclusions as well as assessments and staff training. In all instances multiple approaches to student support was followed. It is impossible to show causal relationships with any of the initiatives and improved student retention but there are definitive co-occurrences as shown below that would be worth exploring further.

In this section I discuss the provision of data and devices, training, peer mentors, psycho-social support and measures for at-risk and vulnerable students.

i. Data and devices

I discuss arrangements for provision of data and devices when discussing reasons for increased success rate. It seems that providing data and devices to students in public universities is an important part of student support.

ii. Training / digital literacies and induction workshops

With the abrupt change towards online learning universities made special arrangements in order to assist students with the change towards online learning. Resources were developed to assist students with the transition to online learning – these included guides to use the LMS, how to write online exams (and the platforms used for this). For 2021 these were strengthened and formalised. Workshops and courses on basic computer training, using the LMS, academic and digital literacies, and basic academic writing were developed and presented. One institution set their residencies as digital learning spaces for students to collaborate, learn and socialise. While some induction workshops, and first year experience programmes were university wide, some faculties either took the responsibility or augmented it with faculty specific events.

iii. Peer tutors / mentoring / e-mentors

In public universities senior tutors, tutors, and assistant lecturers were employed for two reasons – to assist students but also to relieve the workload on academics. When participation in online learning was low tutors or faculty advisers would contact students to offer support. With one PHEI students were encouraged to keep in contact with one another in order to develop a peer support network. The registrar and head of academy met with students in small groups to explain new assessment processes to students and answer any questions that they had.

iv. Using technology to support students

COVID-19 has led to innovative uses of technology by universities and academics in supporting students. The provision of devices and data is discussed above, and seven of the public universities also had their websites zero-rated so that access to learning resources did not cost students money (PHEIs had diverse experiences with zero rating, five PHEIs reported that they had zero-rated websites however a number of other PHEIs reported that they could not arrange this with service providers). Special help desks were created to assist students with problems they may have experienced with technology.

The use of virtual assistants as well as the using embedded communication tools within learning management systems was used to assist and support students. Furthermore, tools such as Telegram, WhatsApp and MS Office tools (such as MS Teams) were used by academics to support students. In some cases, the technology used was distinctly old-fashioned – printing and couriering learning materials to students with inadequate internet access. Often multiple platforms were used at the same time, loading resources on the LMS and the alerting students through Telegram, WhatsApp, or Facebook. Some academics developed resources specifically for distribution through Telegram or WhatsApp, which raised issues with regards to intellectual property and the fact that these resources often escaped the closed group of students.

A variety of open courses and MOOCs were developed for students to help them transition to online learning. One institution developed a pre-orientation module for students that was specifically designed for smartphone usage. Online asynchronous, multilingual resources were developed, and central websites made available to students that contained learning resources. Resources on being a lifelong learner, and digital literacy topics were developed. PHEIs placed emphasis on developing resources around work readiness, and one encouraged students to complete online certification programmes through AWS, Cisco, Microsoft and IBM that the students has access to as part of their enrolment.

Both public and private institutions reported using data analytics to support students by seeing which students accessed the LMS, and contacting students who were not active. The data analytics also informed which students would be allowed to return to campus first, or in one case identify students with the most difficult circumstances for return to campus. PHEI indicated that extra staff was appointed to assist students with using the LMS and troubleshooting when problems occurred.

Cause for concern:

Academics became especially available during the pandemic, making use of not just the learning management system but also what could be classified as personal tools such as Telegram and WhatsApp. This led to greater availability of academics, and a concern that has been raised is that this greater availability has increased burn-out in academics, and students holding unreasonable demands for access to academics at all hours (and unhappiness if this is not met).

Opportunity awaiting:

The sector developed resources for assisting students as well as developing course content – one university raised specific concerns about resources developed being circulated beyond students into the public domain. However, institutions should consider licencing and sharing resources as open educational resources. Open educational resources available often have a Western / European bias, and making African resources available would contribute in the quest for decolonisation education that started with #RhodesMustFall.

15. At-risk and vulnerable students

For at-risk students and especially vulnerable students, special arrangements were made once there was access to campus. Often at-risk and vulnerable students (in this context vulnerable students were defined as students that did not have access to good connectivity, and students who had not been accessing the learning management system regularly). In the case of one PHEI, they prioritised returning students with disabilities to campus first. Some PHEI phoned students on a weekly basis if they had not accessed the LMS. For both PHEI and public universities remedial or extra classes were offered when students were identified as being behind.

16. Psycho-social support during unusual times

Institutions in general were at pains to provide psycho-social support to students. Some examples include a mental health hotline, and a digital well-being course as well as referring students to psychologists, success coaches and academic advisors. Vulnerable nursing students were moved away from high risk / high pressure areas to quieter, less risky areas in order to help them cope, and remain in the programme.

17. Financial support

PHEI mention specifically financial issues as a risk factor for students dropping out. In some cases, sponsors were sought to assist students to not drop out, some students were terminated due to being unable to make payments for studies, and account managers were part of student retention efforts. Extended payment options were also offered to allow students to complete their studies. Some PHEI mention that they had extra costs in order to assist students and they cannot afford this as they do not receive DHET support.

18. Student retention in 2020

Institutions indicated a variety of student retention efforts in 2020 during the pandemic. Much of these have already been discussed in the above-mentioned sections.

One public university listed a comprehensive amount of support programmes that either already existed or were newly implemented, and they showed an increase in student success rate. Seven institutions indicated primarily focusing on assessment concessions of some sort (four showed an improved student success, two a decrease). Five universities indicated no exclusions as their primary means of retention, which when considered with student success, four universities reported an increase in student success rates, and one a decrease.

Twelve institutions indicated that they in some way contacted students individually when their participation was less than ideal, or extended programs that already had students linked based on individual contact. Based on success rates this approach was highly successful as 11 of these institutions showed an increase in student success rates. Six of these were public universities that is classified as large, and six were PHEIs (three of which are tiny, one medium and two not classified). Six institutions listed their student retention efforts as communication, all of these were tiny or micro PHEIs, and it had mixed results with two institutions showing an increase and two a decrease in success rates, one without a success rate and one the same success rate as previously.

Four institutions mentioned data or devices as their primary retention response (this topic is covered elsewhere in depth). Three public institutions mention sending students printed study material as either a primary response, or as a secondary measure of retention. Two of these institutions had an increase in success rate and one had not reported their student success rate.

Seven PHEIs implemented financial concessions as a primary means of student retention, with mixed results (two institutions had lower student success rates and three had a higher success rate), all of these institutions were smaller than 1000 students.

Data analytics was used to identify vulnerable or at-risk students, one university used geo-location to see where their students were and what their access to connectivity was but mostly data analytics were used to see how often students logged into the LMS or attended online classes. These analytics was used to then contact students or arrange for a return of students that were identified as vulnerable or at risk.

19. Teaching and learning modalities for 2021

While 2020 was can perhaps be described as building the plane while flying it – decisions had to be made quickly, perhaps with unintended implications. And while 2021 still held many uncertainties, institutions now had a year of experience in planning, and understanding the consequences of choices. I end this report by looking at what institutions had planned, and started to implement in 2021 by looking at multimodality, a return to face to face instruction, plans for quality assurance, planning for students, and data plans.

i. Using multimodal learning better

For the immediate future, some universities are planning for multiple modalities in order to move easily between different modalities depending on what level of restrictions is applied. The focus shifts from ERTL towards more carefully planned use of blended learning, and better use of the LMS. A move from ERTL towards Augmented Remote Teaching, Learning and Assessment is being envisioned, with more contact time as allowed by restrictions and face to face assessments. For some institutions the hard-dividing line between distance / online education and face to face education is starting to dissolve.

ii. A return to face-to-face

A greater use of block teaching or rotational teaching schedules were envisioned. WIL, and clinical practical work was particularly difficult to implement in 2020, and special attention is being paid in planning in dealing with this and it will be prioritised for a return to face to face. Theory will be prioritised for online learning, and practical work for face to face. First years will also be prioritised for a return to campus. Another institution will use a refined platoon system where groups of students' access campus for a month for face to face classes. But a return to classes has implications for use of venues in order to accommodate spatial restriction – which in turn has implication for lecturer workload. For one institution, even with a return to face to face lectures, recordings will be made and uploaded onto the LMS in order for students to rewatch as they need it.

iii. Putting quality assurance systems in place

As institutions move away from ERTL systems for more appropriate quality assurance is being put in place to deal with online and blended learning. One area is ensuring the integrity of assessments, as well as systems to ensure what is made available, quality of

online classes and material available in online spaces as well as what would count as a minimum presence on the LMS.

iv. Planning for students

2020 showed the need for comprehensive orientation programmes for First year experience (FYE) students. Plans are being developed on how to reach students that are not active on the LMS, with catch-up plans. The role of tutors has shown to be essential in supporting students, including for psycho-social support.

v. Data

The provisioning of data is discussed elsewhere, but one issue that institutions are struggling with is whether to provide students with a set amount, or take into consideration course requirements, where certain courses may be more data intensive. And whether and how long to continue supplying students with data.

20. The postgraduate student experiences

In most part this report has focused on arrangements for undergraduate teaching and learning. I now pay attention to the postgraduate experience by looking at delays experienced and planned contingencies, financial resources made available to students, the role of campus, and becoming agile in the online environment.

i. Delays & contingencies

Some students experienced delays due to COVID-19, in either being able to collect data (both in field and in labs). Students were assisted in various ways in order to deal with this – for some ethical clearance were extended in order to allow students to complete their fieldwork, for others it means that non-South African students were allowed to register without proof of medical aid (they were viewed as distance education students). Extra meetings for ethical clearance were also arranged. In one case graduations were delayed to accommodate students that submitted late. In one case a special postgraduate online task team was established and met every two weeks in order respond as issues affecting postgraduate students became apparent.

ii. Financial resources

One area that was identified as students needing support was in material resources and financial assistance. Financial assistance was provided in a number of different ways – offering students extra money from existing bursaries to deal with increased expenses brought on by COVID-19, letting students register without paying a registration fee, or waiving fees entirely for the research component, positions as research assistants or tutors, providing data to postgrad students and making funding available (either at university or faculty level) for students that were delayed due to Covid-19. Students also had access to zero rated data university sites. Handing in dates were also extended without having students pay late registration or penalty fees.

iii. Campus

In most cases post-graduate students were prioritised for a return to campus, especially students that needed access to laboratories for experiments or needed the Internet. In some cases postgraduate teaching (including Honours and taught Masters) were returned to campus for 'mask-to-mask' teaching while others preferred to keep their postgraduate teaching online through the LMS. Some universities held, or continued to hold, face to face workshop sessions to assist students.

iv. Becoming agile online

For most institutions there was a profound shift in how postgraduate students were supported. Programs that used to be offered face to face shifted quickly to online spaces – with virtual workshops aimed at anything from proposal development, research methodology, developing online surveys and questionnaire for qualitative research, publications, and leadership development. Interesting initiatives such as virtual shut-up-and-write sessions were created and increased in order to assist postgraduate students in the writing process, as well as organising sessions where fellow students could engage in knowledge sharing. Some universities did this by example having discussion boards.

One university developed a dashboard where all student progress could be monitored from, including uploading research activities, feedback and other interactions. Another university mentioned that students were closely monitored for progress but does not indicate how.

Workshops and training that was offered online was housed in some cases in a central depository or website where students could access it asynchronously. There is an important

sectoral wide opportunity to Africanise OERS by making some of this available under Creative Commons licences.

Processes previously office or paper based was moved online – these included proposal defence, online consultations with speciality services (such as data analysis or statistics services), and online registration services, and advising leveraging online services such as MS Teams, Zooms or WhatsApp or even telephonically.

Good practice:

One university hosted virtual coffee mornings with the Dean and faculty to assist postgraduate students in sorting out any problems that arose during Covid-19

21. Staff capacity development

COVID-19 and the need to quickly pivot to online learning highlighted the need for professional development of staff for online and remote learning. A few institutions mentioned creating opportunities for staff, or staff spontaneously, working together closer and sharing more through open engagements with one another. Breaking through silos should be one positive outcome of COVID-19 and institutions should set out to create further opportunities to entrench this.

i. Professional development

Existing teaching and learning units were pivotal in providing training for staff in public universities. Public universities set out to improve the ability of staff to teach online – this happened in a variety of ways through webinars, and the development of static resources hosted on dedicated websites for staff to access in their own time. Furthermore, some universities developed guidelines of what should be included on LMS and how online learning should proceed. Public universities mostly had existing and continuing programs while PHEI, most often small, had more ad-hoc training opportunities or static training materials available. Table 15 identifies the training needs identified by public and private institutions.

For PHEI training on remote learning, and LMS functionality occurred, as well as on assessment and multimodal teaching. Often outside providers were contracted to offer this training. PHEIs mentioned existing and standing initiatives of specific days being dedicated to sharing ideas, challenges and training. PHEI often did not mention having ongoing capacity development.

Table 15: Training needs identified

Training needs	Public	Private
Basic computer needs	4	11
Module development	4	10
Assessments	10	20
Pedagogy	10	13
LMS & Tools	13	25
Engaging students	6	6
Multimodal / blended / online teaching	7	12
Teaching centres	11 (& 1 establishing)	5 (& 5 online platforms available for staff development)

ii. Basic skills

Some universities included the need for basic digital technology training, including digital literacies, and new administrative and communication methodologies available online. Other basic skills identified included basic new technologies such as MS Teams, Zoom, and emails. Some indicated need for refresher training on their LMS and how to do video recordings. Training on the NQF level descriptors were identified as a training need for PHEI.

Four public universities indicated the need for basic computer skills which includes skills such as using MS Teams, all four of these public universities are historically disadvantaged institutions. Two of these are urban and two are rural. The PHEIs that indicated the need for basic skills were three nursing colleges, two art/design colleges, one BA/ Education college, one beauty college and two general.

iii. Data and devices

Institutions indicated that all staff has received devices or laptops, and that old computers were in the process of being replaced. One institution indicated that devices were bought through a HDI grant, another indicated that staff that did not have a device, received an allowance to buy a device, and for another responsibility centres were responsible for supplying devices to staff. Where staff did not have a laptop, they could take desktop computers home to work on. For some PHEIs, part time staff and contractors are expected to provide their own data and devices.

Institutions had various data provisioning mechanisms for staff – in some cases Deans could allocate to staff that needed mobile data, in some cases data was provided to all staff, as well as through a claim basis capped at R200 per month. One PHEI indicated to staff that travel costs saved by not going to offices were used to offset data costs. For other data was provided on campus through wifi, Eduroam or through a VPN arrangement, and staff that did not have connectivity at home were expected to work on campus.

iv. Online teaching skills

Training included pedagogical training for online as well as blended or hybrid models of teaching. Master classes were offered including on teaching strategies for developing curricula as well as a wide exposure towards different technologies that could be used. Online module design, and backward design, was also mentioned as training needs. Training for digital pedagogies, including online and distance learning pedagogies, were also identified. Often the need for technical and pedagogical training were raised together, meaning that there is at least some awareness that learning a specific technology is not enough, it needs to be accompanied by what the implications are of the technology. PHEI mentioned a need for training in how to develop online learning communities, and how to create human connections, humanising online learning and keeping connections with students studying online. One PHEI focused on their teaching staff receiving certification from industry partners such as AWS, CISCO, ISM and Microsoft.

v. Assessment

Training for online assessment emerged as a theme with most institutions, with areas of concern being both issues related to how to ensure you are assessing at the correct NQF level, ensuring academic integrity for online assessments (including detecting plagiarism), and multimodal assessment. For PHEI, especially in the nursing field, simulation was an

important part of rethinking assessments and staff training was identified as an important need.

vi. Training offered during the pandemic

Institutions also indicated that they had offered and arranged participation in several trainings during the pandemic.

Training included were

- assessment related (including how to conduct continuous assessment, conducting online exams, and how to deal with online cheating), rubric design
- USAF university lecturer development programme
- Postgraduate Diplomas in Higher Education (either in part of in full, with some modules reconfigured to deal especially with online teaching)
- Flipped classroom training
- International Computer Driving Licence (in basic computer skills)
- LMS training and training on specific tool
- Static websites that was used as a hub for resources to assist staff
- Brown bag lunches / webinars showcasing good practices
- Training available through LinkedIn, Coursera and other similar platforms
- UCDG Curriculum transformation project
- Tutor training

Interesting enough while the need for training identified was strongly focused on pedagogy, training offered was not as strongly focused on pedagogy and online learning theory. There is clearly some need for sector wide training related to this.

Warning sign:

Both public and private institutions raised challenges related to staff mental health and burnout, the need for academics to have boundaries, but also institutional wide expectations of workload.

Good practice:

Three good practices were identified

- Having days of reflection and academic assemblies focused specifically on

understanding what happened, what worked and what could be improved. Such practices, probably more complicated in large public institutions, could perhaps assist with learning together but also help in alleviating burnout due to sharing experiences.

- Staff must complete / earn staff development points and earns digital badges as part of their performance contracts
- Having a dedicated teaching and learning centre / centres for continuing development was most often associated with continued staff development and the offering of a multitude of training opportunities

vii. National interventions for capacity development

Several interventions for capacity development was identified that could be offered on a national or joint basis, although one university has cautioned that context should be taken into consideration when deploying such training. For public universities, smaller and less well-resourced universities especially, relied on already existing nationally existing initiatives such as USAF development programmes, or training resources made available by LMS companies.

Training for staff

Most institutions that completed this section of the questionnaire, mentioned staff capacity development as the most critical factor. Training needs was identified from basic digital competencies and literacies, to more advance skills. The most often mentioned need was training interventions around online teaching and learning, teaching skills and pedagogical theories and approaches to e-learning or technology enhanced learning. The need for training exists around assessment – including continuous assessment, e-assessment and online exams, and academic integrity in online assessments. Webinars, courses and platforms to share best practices could be created or strengthened for such training initiatives. One university mentioned their Vocational University Teacher Training programme as a programme that could be taken up nationally as a capacity development programme.

A call for regulatory bodies to not only conduct monitoring and evaluation, but also in giving input in institutional mechanism, quality control and review and assessment of processes. And a review of national standards and guidelines for e-assessment and integrity of assessments.

The lack of e-technologists and instructional designers was identified as a critical issue, and the need for a national grant to train more people to be competent in this area. Funding and training for data analysists and institutional researchers in data science is needed. Training for transformational leadership, especially crisis leadership was also mentioned as a need.

Staff psychosocial well-being, and training related to this was identified as being critical, with a call for Higher Health to take up this challenge.

Training for students

Training for students in digital competencies and literacies were identified. And while the need for staff to be involved in national training programmes, it was also identified that there should be opportunities created for students for peer to peer learning and facilitation from different universities to improve the quality of programmes and student skills.

Connectivity

While this is not a training need, the differences in access to connectivity was raised as an issue needing national attention.

22. Planning during a pandemic

While the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns were unprecedented, and a lot of decisions had to be taken while neither the present not future was clear in any way, staff and students retain a stake in the university, and should be taken into consideration with planning. Institutions approached such engagements in different ways and then used these engagements for either immediate planning or for more future forward planning as it became clear the pandemic was here to stay. Several initiatives were taken to understand the staff and student experience including surveys, focus groups, reflective sessions and data analytics.

Two small universities specifically mention not running their own surveys but using the SAULM survey for planning purposes, while two PHEIs indicated that there were no surveys or research conducted.

i. Surveys

Most institutions used surveys to gauge staff and student experiences of teaching and learning and included a wide range of surveys. These include

- Student experience surveys / satisfaction surveys
- Student readiness for remote learning
- Student experiences of remote learning
- A variety of surveys related to access to devices and data (and who provided it)
- First year experience surveys
- Tutor focused survey
- Use of ICT / LMS
- Return to campus survey
- Staff readiness to work from home surveys (including devices, connectivity)
- Staff experience of remote learning
- Staff well-being

Some universities mention participating in surveys undertaken in collaboration with DHET or other universities such as

- Student Access to and use of Learning Survey (SAULM)
- Baseline – readiness for emergency remote online teaching, learning and support
- STAR survey (Student Academic Readiness Survey)

In some cases, lecturer led surveys were also run for lecturers to understand the student experience, these were held in addition to large university wide surveys. Surveys related to data and access to devices has most impact as can be seen by the provision of these discusses elsewhere.

ii. Interviews and focus group discussions

Interviews and focus groups were conducted less frequently than surveys. One university set out to interview staff (academic and support), students and management. While the number of interviews were small but was used to triangulate with more extensive surveys. Focus group discussions were held with students, Vice-Deans and Chairs of Departments.

iii. Reflective sessions

One university described the interviews that they conducted in order to understand pandemic teaching and learning as 'therapeutic and cathartic'. While this university had unintentionally created the space for reflective practice, other institutions more deliberately created such spaces. Two universities held a symposium / seminar on teaching and learning during Covid in order to understand the staff and student experience. One university held an 'after exam' reflection session (after the first exam instance). One PHEI instituted specific Reflection Studies and Learning Circles that was used as feedback for planning.

iv. Module reviews

Universities usually already have existing processes of module reviews. These existing reviews were used to understand the student experience of remote teaching and learning.

v. Formal research project

One university mention specific research-based projects on the experience of staff and students during the pandemic, as well as research articles published on Covid-19.

vi. Solicited feedback / existing structures

One university planned activities for the next academic year through a process of solicited feedback from tuition managers, and student feedback from social media, emails and SRC. Another solicited feedback through Academic Support Services Divisions and Faculty Boards. Call centre calls (created specifically for remote learning) was also used as a space for feedback. One PHEI during lockdown phoned some students weekly and used that as a space for feedback.

vii. Data analytics

Some institutions used data analytics to understand the student experience. One developed a Student Vulnerability Index based on intrinsic identity (race, gender, age, disability) and on socio-economic status to identify especially vulnerable students for support. Furthermore, analysis of LMS activity was used to identify students not engaging.

viii. Knowing whether teaching and learning was effective

Institutions were also asked whether they had obtained input from staff and students whether teaching was effective. The answer to these questions showed a large overlap with whether research was conducted with staff and students about their experiences. There was a larger emphasis on student evaluations of their satisfaction of lecturer performance (sometimes called effectiveness), module evaluations, and LMS data. Furthermore, feedback from Deans on departmental challenges were solicited as well as meetings to assess effectiveness of teaching and learning. Venues such as staff meetings and webinars were also used to discuss effectiveness and experiences of teaching. PHEIs often indicated that they solicited feedback from their SRCs, which was not mentioned specifically by public universities.

Chapter 2

In this chapter, the data for public universities (excluding Unisa[11]) will be analysed. We are not trying to rehash the exact structure of the report, and will only highlight sections that might show differences from the above as well as disaggregating statistical data. This chapter needs to be read in conjunction with Chapter 1. This chapter follows the same lay-out as the previous chapter, and we will refer readers to the previous chapter at times for further discussions. In this chapter we therefore work with data from 24 institutions.

23. Size of public institutions that submitted

All but one public university submitted the questionnaire. Of these, 20 can be considered large (in other words 80% of submitting universities), while 2 were medium and 2 small universities (8% each). All of the universities discussed in this section are face-to-face universities.

Table 16: Size of public institutions that submitted

Size	**Public**
Small (1000 -4999 students)	2 (8%)
Medium (5000 – 9 999 students)	2 (8%)
Large (10 000 – 100 000 students)	20 (83%)
Total	24

24. Success rate of public universities

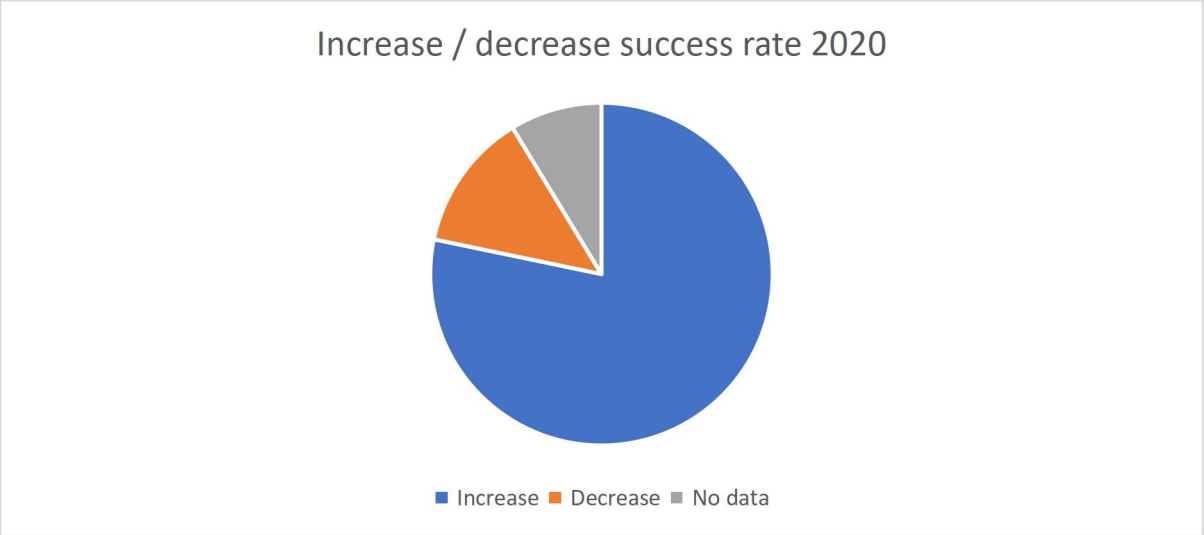
The success rate discussed here is self-reported by institutions and refers to the success rate of 2020. The increase and decrease mentioned here refers to the difference between the success rate for 2019 and 2020, and again refers to self-reported data rather than audited data.

In terms of success rate for the year 2020, as reported by the 24 universities, 18 reported an increase in success rate, while three reported a decrease in success rate (see Figure 6). Two universities did not report success rate as their academic years had not finished at the time of submitting the reports. In general, we can see that based on the universities self-

[11] This is done as per DHET reporting standards in for example key analytics that excludes Unisa due to its size distorting trends in the sector.

reports, 75% of universities reported an increase in their success rate, 12% a decrease and 8% reported no data.

Figure 6: Success rate reported by public universities for 2020



In terms of the universities self-reports, 17 of the large universities (out of 20) reported an increase, while two large universities did not have data to report at the time of completing the questionnaires, the two small universities reported a decrease in success rate, while for the medium universities, one university reported an increase and one a decrease (see Table 17).

Table 17: Size and increase / decrease in success rate and size of institution

Size	**Increase**	**Decrease**	**No data**
Small (1000 - 4999 students)	-	2 (8%)	-
Medium (5000 – 9 999 students)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	-
Large (10 000 – 100 000 students)	17 (71%)	-	2 (8%)

As can be seen in Table 18, 93% of urban universities reported an increase in their success rate, while 50% of rural universities reported an increase in success rate. 40% of rural universities reported a decrease in success rate, while one rural and one urban university each did not have data to report. Rural universities no doubt were negatively affected by the

lack of infrastructure for remote online learning, including electricity and cellular infrastructure.

Table 18: Rural and urban public universities success rate

	Total	**Increase**	**Decrease**	**No data**
Rural	10	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)
Urban	14	13 (93%)	-	1 (7%)

On page 22 of the report we discussed the reasons that universities give for an increase in success rate. I will not rehash the reasons here, but rather will take a closer look only at arrangements for devices and data and what association there is between supplying mobile data and devices.

There was a wide arrangement of ways that universities assisted students at public universities were supplied with devices as can be seen in Table 19. Some of these arrangements were pre-existing to COVID-19. 13 universities arranged for students to acquire devices through the NSFAS scheme, of these nine universities assisted students who did not qualify for NSFAS to acquire devices or had devices students could loan. Five universities supplied loan devices (two through a loan-to-own scheme). 22 universities (92%) supplied, or assisted some students, in accessing devices.

Table 19: Arrangements for device acquisition at public universities

Arrangements for devices	**Public**
NSFAS allowance	3
NSFAS & assisted students to buy	5
NSFAS & loan devices	4
NSFAS & must own at registration	1
Devices supplied to students	3
Devices supplied (to 1st years) and others assisted to buy devices	1
Loan devices	3

Loan-to-own schemes	2
Must own a device on registration	1
Question not answered on device arrangements	1

Most universities (83%) supplied their students with mobile data, either throughout the period or at least some of the time. Only three universities did not supply students with any kind of data at any time. Table 20 below shows the various arrangements in place for data being supplied by public universities to their students.

Table 20: Mobile data supplied to students by public universities

	Public
Not provided with mobile data	3
Data supplied to all students	9
Data supplied to some students / some times	11
Permission for NSFAS travel allowance to be used for data by students	1

Public universities that supplied data to students reported an increase in student success in 2020, while three reported a decrease in success rate. Two universities that supplied data did not indicate whether they had an increase in success rate (see Table 21).

Table 21: Success rate and data supplied

Success rate	**Public**
Increase in success rate	16
Decrease in success rate	3
No data on throughput provided	2

i. Possible cost of increases in throughput rates

While the sector experienced an increase in throughput, this might have come at a cost. One obvious cost for public universities is the decreased time for research outputs due to claimed increased time for teaching-related matters. Other costs would be increases in burnout and work-related stress; several institutions did mention burnout of staff, and there is emerging research on extreme burnout amongst staff at one public university (Unisa 2021).

Public universities are funded mainly through both research outputs and student throughput. With limited resources (especially how staff spend their time), increasing support for students may come at the cost of publications. This section speculatively tries to compare research outputs with increase or decreases of success rates. This is something that may be good to think with but is not arguing for strict correlations between the two categories. It is perhaps the start of a thought experiment on the trade-offs between student support by academic staff and research outputs, if they indeed need to be made.

For the 24 public universities there is a pattern of increased success rates, with 19 of the 24 universities that reported an increase in student success rate (e.g., 76% of the public universities reported an increase in student success in 2020).

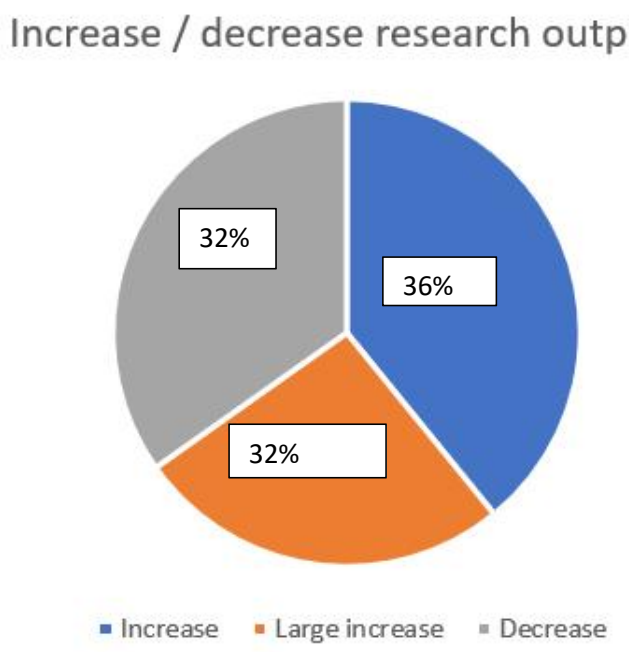
I started by ranking the top ten research universities[12] This ranking is based on 2019 research outputs and includes completion of postgraduate students. Of the universities that reported one reported a decrease in their success rate of less than five percent, one reported an increase of more than five percent, and seven reported an increase of 1-5 %. This is roughly in line with what happened overall in the sector.

I then compared all the research outputs for all public universities. Using as a point of comparison the brute number of research outputs for 2019 (the year before the pandemic), and for 2020, the first year of the pandemic. This is not a perfect measure because it does not normalise according to size of the institution, meaning that institutions with a smaller number of academics looks less productive in this manner because they simply do not have the numbers to produce as much research outputs as higher staffed institutions. This problem is addressed through the normalisation of research outputs. However, because this compares the total number of outputs in 2019 and 2020, we can see at least an emerging pattern that we can cautiously interpret. We have data from 23 universities. The output data was categorised into an increase of less than ten percent in research outputs, an increase of more than ten percent in research outputs, and a decrease in research outputs. Overall,

[12] I identified the top ten research universities based on the DHET ranked list from DHET Table 13: Weighted per capita research output 2019 (DHET 2021:36). This ranking is based on 2019 research outputs and includes completion of postgraduate students. One of the ten universities did not submit their questionnaire.

65% of the sector reported an increase in research outputs from 2019 to 2020[13]. As Figure 7 shows there was a general increase in research outputs for the period in question, with 32% of institutions (eight) showing an increase of more than ten percent, 36% of institutions (nine) showing an increase of between one and nine percent, and 32% of institutions (eight) showing a decrease in outputs. The research outputs were from 2020, and therefore represents work that may have been done before the pandemic struck, as the research cycle from research publications might take more than a year. A more thorough analysis would compare the 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 cycles with the audited throughput rates.

Figure 7: Research output trends



For the eight universities (of the 24 for which we have data) that reported a decrease in publications, 63% reported increased student throughput - see Table 22. However, universities that reported increased research outputs did not report a decrease in throughput. Of the fifteen universities that reported an increase in research outputs, 14 reported an increase in student throughput – Table 23. It therefore does not appear that an increase in throughput negatively affected research output in cases where research output increased. But there does seem to be a small co-occurrence between an increase in throughput and a

[13] This is based on DHET reports which analysed the research outputs for 2019 (DHET 2021) and 2020 (DHET 2022).

decrease in research outputs for a small number of universities. Of the universities that experienced lower research outputs and increased throughput, three are research intensive universities. However, except for one university that experienced a large decrease of more than ten percent in research outputs, the other universities had small decreases of less than five percent that may not overall prove very significant.

Table 22: Institutions with a decrease in research outputs and their success rate

Success rate	**Number of universities**
No data	1 (13%)
Down 1-4%	1 (13%)
Down 11-15%	1 (13%)
Increase 1-4%	4 (63%)

Table 23: Institutions with an increase in research outputs and their student success rate

Success rate	**Increase in research outputs of<10%**	**Increase in research outputs of>10%**
No data	1 (7%)	-
Up 1-4%	5 (33%)	2 (13%)
Up 5-10%	3 (20%	4 (27%)

ii. Theoretical framework

As can be seen from the below table (Table 24), most public universities indicated that they followed a blended model during COVID-19 teaching, followed by a constructivist model. There is no pattern discernible in terms of increase in reported academic integrity infractions associated with pedagogical model for blended learning, while constructivism showed no increase in academic integrity infractions. For success rate and teaching approach, there seems to be some co-occurrence using a blended approach and an increase in success rate – all universities that reported using a blended learning approach, reported an increase in success rate.

Table 24: teaching approach that universities followed for teaching during COVID-19

Theoretical / teaching approach	**Public HEI**	**Academic integrity**	**Success rate**
3C model	1	No data	Up 1-5%
Blended learning	6	3 no data 3 increase	3 increase 1-5% 3 increase >5%
Connectivism	1	Increase	Down >5%
Constructivism	4	1 No data 3 No increase	2 Up 1-5% 1 Down 1-4% 1 No data
DELTA	1	Large increase	Up 1-5%
Ethics of care	1	No data	Up 1-4%
Faculty specific	1	Small increase	Up 5-10%
Humanising pedagogy	1	1 increase	up 5-10%
Learner-centred	1	no data	1 Up 5-10%
None / no approach	1	increase	Down 1-4%
Social justice approach	1	increase	Up 5-10%
TPACK	1	No increase	No data
Transactional distance	1	1 no data	Down >10%
Universal learning design	2	1 no data 1 no increase	2 up 1-4%

iii. Work integrated learning and practicals

Work integrated learning (WiL) and practicals were especially affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns. Students enrolled in medicine and sciences (requiring laboratory work) and those doing WiL were most often prioritised for returning to campus. Education faculties seemed to have struggled most with implementing WiL and practicals, with schools being unwilling to host student teachers.

Regarding practicals, special COVID-19 restrictions and protocols were put into place, and smaller groups were accommodated. In some cases, this has meant that practicals had been shortened in order to accommodate more students. Where it was impractical to host laboratory work, a greater use of virtual laboratories, hybrid laboratories or simulations were deployed. In some cases, students were not able to attend to workplaces or attend practicals on campus, and they were allowed the opportunity to create a practical demonstration, and record that. For example, student teachers were then allowed to create and record virtual lessons.

Regarding WiL, the hard lockdown caused initial losses. Some universities report that WiL continued as soon as it was able to during lower lockdown levels, under strict COVID-19 protocols for hosting organisations and students. As shown in Table 25 shows universities offered three modalities for WiL – work-based WiL, problem-based WiL and project-based WiL. Most universities kept their work integrated learning in place during the pandemic, with a small number of institutions reporting a shift to have project and problem-based alternatives, or supplementing WIL through simulations and recordings.

Table 25: WIL and public universities during COVID-19

WIL arrangements	**Public HEIs**
WIL in place	10
WIL in place, with project / problem-based alternative	6
WIL in place and supplemented with simulations and recordings	3
Simulations and recordings in place of WIL	1

Table 26 shows the various arrangements that institutions offered with regard to practicals. Fifteen universities continued offering venue based, face-to-face practicals as soon as the various lockdown levels allowed for it and five institutions offered a combination of face-to-face practicals and virtual or simulation practicals.

Table 26: Practicals arrangements

Practical arrangements	**Public HEIs**
Simulation and virtual practicals	1
Practicals offered face-to-face	15
Combination of face-to-face practicals and simulation / virtual practicals	4

From the above tables it is clear that public universities went to great length to keep both WIL and practicals ongoing as soon as they were able to, however, some institutions did offer alternatives where WiL could not take place through arrangements of project or problem based alternatives. No public universities reported waiving WiL or practical training, and interesting no public universities reported accepting or promoting remote WiL as an alternative.

In terms of planning for 2021, institutions indicated prioritising practicals for students to be on campus, thus allowing this learning to continue. And offering alternatives to WiL through, for example, project or problem-based learning.

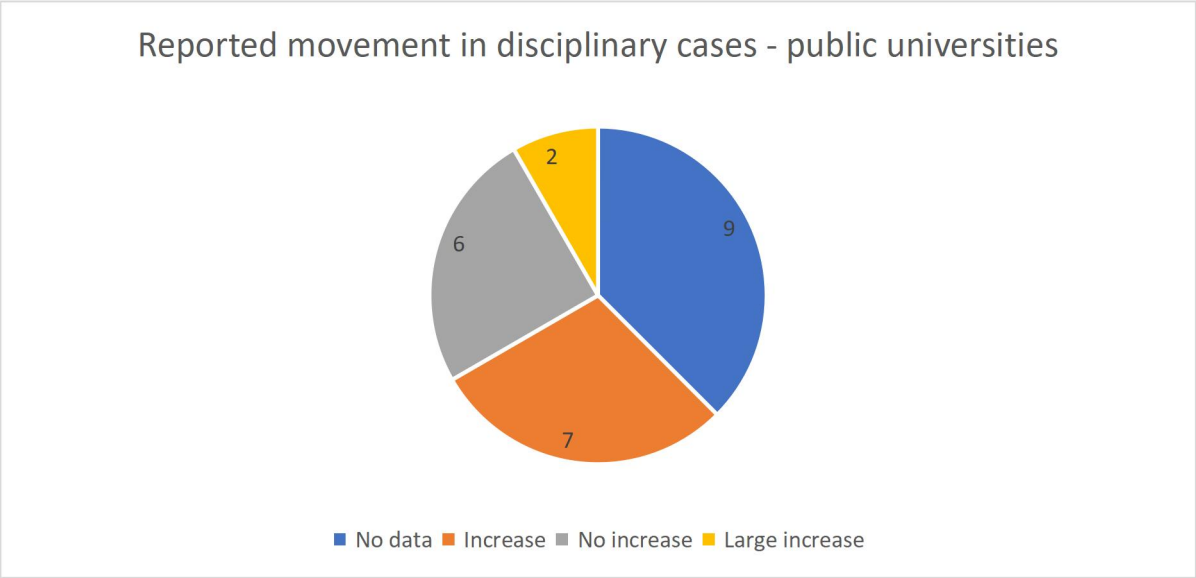
25. Academic integrity

Issues around academic integrity is a huge concern for academic institutions. Universities were asked whether they had seen an increase in disciplinary cases. As can be seen from Table 27 and Figure 8, 38% of universities did not provide specific data on this question (instead discussing measures that they took to ensure integrity). 38% of universities indicated an increase or a large increase in disciplinary cases. This however is a self-assessment, so it does not ask for a base number of cases and compares against that. Instead universities self-indicated whether it was large, small or none – and what for one university counts as large may not count as large for another university.

Table 27: Public universities and increase in disciplinary cases

Public universities and increase in disciplinary cases	
No data	9 (38%)
Increase	7 (29%)
No increase	6 (25%)
Large increase	2 (8%)

Figure 8: Increase or decrease in student disciplinary cases



In general, when institutions reported academic integrity infringements it was focused on plagiarism. Some institutions reported that there were collusions between students during online exams – the collusion included sharing answers through WhatsApp or Telegram, or working together as a group to answer exams (sometimes in physical spaces and sometimes using online means) or assessments. One institution specifically mentioned the problem of Chegg and other homework completion sites. This is not a specifically South African problem – internationally concerns about availability of pre-worked out answers to assessments has increased (Lancaster & Cotarlan 2021; Streseman & Millican 2020).

One university explain that the increase in their success rate was as a result of more, and more varied, assessment opportunities available to students (as a result of continuous assessment), another institution was unsure whether increased pass rates were due to better teaching (and students being able to access teaching resources and videos on the LMS multiple times), or whether there was collusion between students. This university

decided to treat students where modules had a higher than normal pass rate as at risk in the following module to make sure that the students receive necessary support.

Some universities indicated that an increase in their success rate may be linked to an increase in academic dishonesty. The table below Table 28 tries to parse this out. It shows that two universities that reported an increase in disciplinary cases had a decrease in success rate, however eight universities (75%) that had an increase in disciplinary cases also reported an increase in success rate. Tentatively there appeared at least some co-occurrence between success rate and an increase in disciplinary cases.

Table 28: Increase in success rate and increase in disciplinary cases

Success data	**Disciplinary cases increased**
Decrease	2 (25%)
Increase 1-4%	3 (25%)
Large increase 5-10%	5 (50%)

Whether returning to venue-based exams addressed issues of academic integrity transgressions is not clear. Only six public universities partially or fully returned to venue-based assessments. One university, that reported a large increase in disciplinary cases, cited the increase in disciplinary cases as the reason for returning to venue-based exams. No university indicated whether the return to venues led to less disciplinary cases in the next exam period.

26. Academic concessions

Two universities did not answer the question on what academic concessions was implemented. Most academic concessions were assessments related – this included for example either changing assessment practices and types, changing rules on due process (DP) to gain exam entrance, allowing multiple opportunities for exams or changing subminimum rules for supplementary opportunities. Another popular concession type was to change the way academic and financial exclusions was applied, with eleven universities not

applying their normal exclusion policies. The table below (Table 29) shows the various arrangements for academic concessions.

Table 29: Universities and academic concessions

Concession types	**Public**
No concessions or existing policies	2
Extended academic year	1
Exclusions adjusted (academic & financial)	8
Assessment related	9
Exclusions adjusted & assessments	2
No data on concessions	2

In trying to understand the success rate, we compared data of the different kind of concessions that were made to students, and whether there were any co-occurrences with that and success rate, as per Table 30. However, no clear co-occurrences was observed for this.

Table 30: Concessions and reported success rate

Concession types	**Public**	**No data**	**Success rate up**	**Success rate down**
No concessions or existing policies	2	-	2	-
Extended academic year	1	-	1	-
Exclusions adjusted (academic & financial)	8	-	5	3
Assessment related	9	2	6	1
Exclusions adjusted & assessments	2	-	2	-
No data on concessions	2	-	2	-

Chapter 3

27. Unintended consequences in 2020

As can be expected when there is a sudden change there were several unintended consequences. I discuss these under staff, students, assessments and systems pressures. The unintended consequences could be both positives and negative and where negative experiences were mentioned I mention this, however, overall, sentiments expressed by institutions were more positive than negative. Considering the radical and quick changes that happened in a time of uncertainty, the fact that more positive than negative consequences were expressed is perhaps a testament to the resiliency of higher education in South Africa. We may still have a long way to go to be more effective and better serve students, but overall, the sector survived.

i. Staff

A sentiment that was repeated by several institutions was the resiliency and adaptability of staff. While sentiments were expressed in the questionnaires that staff were in some part unprepared for full-scale online learning, it was also clear that staff worked hard at making the academic years successful. Staff adapted to the new normal and showed both agency and innovation. And staff showed collegiality and solidarity with one another as well as tenacity and grit. One university mentioned that they were pleasantly surprised by the big strides they made in a short period of time and with limited staff – something that surely speaks to the dedication of staff.

In some cases, staff struggled with computer literacy and what online or blended learning meant, staff development around online teaching was ramped up especially in public universities. Staff being moved from their comfort zones, and this sparked growth and development.

Work from home became a real benefit for staff, with staff not only now working at homes close to the institutions they teach at, but also choosing to work in other provinces or countries. One university reported that WFH has led to an increase in staff engagement and attendance of meetings. For another university having online meetings saved time and cost of travelling between different campuses. One PHEI is now offering WFH as a staff perk.

However, the dark side of pandemic teaching is an increase in staff burnout and a general lack in work / life balance. The pandemic brought on an increase in workload with academic staff having to respond and create resources in multiple, and different, ways than before.

And for universities that had a return to face to face teaching, especially where there was a rotational system in place to deal with Covid-19 regulations, it often meant repeating lectures multiple time to different groups of students. In one case a mid-year holiday was cancelled in order to allow students to catch-up on lost time, which has meant that staff were exhausted because they had no break.

ii. Students

While the digital divide caused problems for students and led to some students being disengaged with learning due to a lack of connectivity, institutions also found that students adapted to online, blended and multimodal learning. While there was some deregistration of students, students were found to have achieved more, including more distinctions and higher pass rates (success rates are discussed elsewhere).

Some institutions have decided to make laptops compulsory for students with future registrations while for some institutions providing the campus experience for students with disadvantaged students was highlighted (in physical and data access but also in terms of allowing students to form social connections).

However, some institutions found participation in online classes were lower because students could access the classes asynchronously, had connectivity problems or would have cameras off and then did unrelated tasks and did not concentrate. The lack of relationships that develop when people share a space, including between students, staff and employers, was highlighted. However, both public and private institutions highlighted how students were interacting more with one another through chatrooms, and social media. While students seemed to be generally more engaged using a variety of channels, some negative consequences were also found, students expected answers at all time of the day and night and were sometimes disrespectful or inappropriate in online channels.

iii. Assessments

Assessments are a major concern during the pandemic and going forward. Numerous institutions mentioned that some form of national intervention around assessment would be beneficial for the sector. Some institutions had an increase in student submissions of assignments, but a concern was raised about integrity of assessments and how to ensure it (both in the writing but also in securing assessments).

iv. Systems pressures

Some institutions found that their systems were not enough for the new normal and is now fast-tracking automation and digitisation of processes. Ways around current systems had to be found – for example how password resets were done. For some upgrading or using a new LMS became an urgency. Some systems were found to be too inflexible to deal with the pandemic situation and is being rethought.

Public universities found that they must rethink their own teaching and learning strategies and visions for sustainability into the future as they foresee some form of blended learning remaining. This however means that there must be a rethink of rules from DHET around hybridity and notional hours that is synchronous vs asynchronous. In many ways the Covid-19 pandemic showed universities what would be needed for proper blended and online learning – in systems, training and execution. But institutions have recognised that there is a new market that could open for them for part-time, geographically dispersed students.

The pandemic brought with it delays in certain commodities being available, and PHEIs mentioned this specifically as something that negatively affected budgets but also was a threat to their operations.

v. Content and design

Some institutions found that teaching certain types of content and practical experiences such as laboratory work was difficult. For them procedural knowledges and clinical work needs to take place in a face to face environment. However, in some subjects there were much richer application of materials due to diverse contexts. One PHEI found that COVID-19 gave them a chance to teach students important skills for online working, something that is becoming important in their industry.

Because the necessity of being close to a certain physical location was no longer necessary, experts could be brought in from a variety of places to offer for example guest lectures. However, WIL was negatively affected by the pandemic, because students did not get a chance to go to physical workplaces and network, but also because some companies could no longer offer WIL.

It was recognised that certain skills – such as self-directed learning, digital literacy, and student agency, had to be specifically taught to students.

28. Key lessons learnt from 2020 for 2021

Some of the key lessons the key lessons that was learnt in 2021 is reflected in this section. As can be seen, much of what has been discussed is also discussed in other areas and will therefore be brief in this section.

i. Role of campus

Some of the key lessons learnt is about thinking what role of campus is during the pandemic. Some institutions have found that practical and laboratory work needs to be prioritised for campus access. Another found that first years needs to have face to face inductions on campus. Some institutions learnt that students returning to residence was important for students to have access to connectivity. One institution followed a platoon system where rotational groups of students were allowed on campus but found that doing it on a weekly basis did not leave enough time for learning and switched to a monthly rotational system.

ii. Role of technology

How the technology mix will look in the future was often still to be decided on – institutions foresaw the need to have flexibility in provisioning that could easily be switched between face to face, blended and online. However, across the board one key challenge that was identified was the lack of connectivity for students.

For one institution the key lesson of the pandemic was that most students had access to a smartphone. This has implications for planning and designing of learning experiences. The role of social media communication platforms such as WhatsApp was identified as being key to supplementing the LMS (or integrating with the LMS).

Institutions realised the importance of a stable LMS, and some institutions had to upgrade their LMS. A key need was integrating the LMS with other technologies. One lesson was that there needs to be an integrated platform because too many platforms led to students and staff feeling overwhelmed.

One university realised the importance of having an integrated system for student details in order to use this as an analytical tool for understanding their students' locations (and then designing according to that).

iii. Assessment related

In terms of assessment, one theme that occurred was that there is a preference for venue-based assessment, or hybrid assessments where there can be a form of invigilation used. Especially in cases where staff struggled to set innovative assessments, the importance of proctoring software was apparent.

iv. Policies and standards

Some institutions have realised that their policies and procedures does not align smoothly with online learning and need to be rethought. Various approaches were used to deal with this, including expert groups to look at policies and procedures. A further need identified was setting standards for what online learning should look like.

v. Online design of learning

While institutions mention that lecturers were now more aware of what online learning is, there is still a need to have champions / academic experts in online learning in order to make it a success as well as further training. One institution found that using the hybrid flipped learning approach they had started following in the institutions articulated well with meant that students were well prepared for classes, whether this was online or face to face. While some institutions found that they had to increase training for students and staff to understand the LMS, others found that both staff and students had sufficient computer literacy to adapt to online learning. Into the second year the emergency part of ERTL became less prominent and a focus on good course design and pedagogy came into focus. The importance of working more closely with instructional designers was apparent.

vi. Others

One key concern was raised was the lack of relationships between lecturers and students when learning shifted online. There was also the need to think about what the connections were for students and universities beyond the immediate online learning.

One university identified that the new normal will stay in some form, and that the new normal will include online learning and greater technology use even in face to face learning. This has implications in terms of funding by DHET for public universities.

vii.Student readiness

Students showed differing levels of readiness for online learning, between universities but also within universities. Some institutions found that students were resilient and easily adapted to the change, others found that students really struggled. A general feeling was that institutions should understand their students better – whether it is through how students are approached, or through some sort of biographical and data analytics lenses. However, the need for students to take agency for their learning online was very apparent.

29. Conclusions

This report has focused on the experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic of both public and private higher education institutions regarding teaching and learning. In this section key points of interest are highlighted for comparison between the sector wide reporting and the public HEI's.

a. Success rates

While there has been an overall increase in success rates between 2019 and 2020, as illustrated in Figure 0-1 76% of public universities reported an increase in success rate. Comparatively, only 25% of PHEIs reported an increase in student success rates. The differences among PHEs appeared to be centred on their size and specialisation. Size, it is assumed, was a factor indicative of relative accesses to resources by institution and, by extension, students. The fact that a large majority of institutions reporting increases were Public HEIs is indicative that institutional resources played a key role in access to technology (another important factor in success rates) and success rates themselves. During the pandemic, the need for student support increased significantly which placed additional strain on already over stretched academics, however, the increased workload does not appear to have negatively affected research outputs in general. In terms of human costs, both staff and students showed resilience and adaptability in the face of the uncertainty created by the conditions under which teaching and learning were taking place. However, the dark side of pandemic teaching is an increase in staff burnout and a general lack in work / life balance. The pandemic brought on an increase in workload with academic staff having to respond and create resources in multiple, and different, ways than before. And for universities that had a return to face to face teaching, especially where there was a rotational system in place to deal with Covid-19 regulations, it often meant repeating lectures multiple time to different groups of students. In one case a mid-year holiday was cancelled in order to allow students to catch-up on lost time, which has meant that staff were exhausted because they had no

break. Burnout is a long-term condition which may only fully manifest years after the acute burnout phase. Should teaching and learning continue at the current pace, the sector will likely face an increasing number of staff falling ill, taking extended periods of time off from work due to exhaustion or facing depression which leads to disengagement from work, lack of compassion and withdrawal in the form of avoidance which may lead to resignation.

b. Pedagogy

Theoretical/teaching approaches proved key in maintaining or increasing successful student outcomes. Pedagogy lies at the heart of teaching and learning and therefore are a fundamental consideration when intervening in any situation, especially in one of the magnitude that institutions faced during the period reported. Across the sector there are a variety of approaches used towards teaching and learning with 24 different pedagogies identified, 17 of which are shared by both public and private HEIs. While diverse, there are commonalities in how both types of institutions approached their teaching and learning. For instance, Blended learning was the main approach for 28% (7) of the Public HEIs and 28% (15) of the PHEIs making it the dominant approach reported in this report. Constructivism was another approach shared by the two sectors with 16% (4) Public HEIs and 9% (5) PHEIs reporting using this approach. While the reported pedagogies by institutions provide a unified picture of how teaching and learning takes place within an institution, the findings here should be interpreted with caution as a variety of pedagogies co-exist within institutions and are influenced by a plethora of factors such as discipline, teaching experience, faculty procedures and lecturer experience. Only one institution acknowledged this diversity by indicating that pedagogy is faculty specific. The purpose of highlighting this concern is to avoid the assumption that unified approaches exist, despite teaching and learning frameworks that may shape the institution.

c. Assessment

While many LMSes and pedagogies afford multiple and novel ways of creating assessments that disincentivise academic dishonesty, these appear not to have been used widely by institutions in this report. The exception to this was the use of Continuous Assessment which was implemented much more widespread than previously, many institutions reported. However, institutions, both public and private higher education institutions struggled with what this meant in practice. Formative assessments continued to be used, with institutions making special arrangements for submissions of assignments – allowing multiple opportunities and multiple submission pathways and allowing students to present answers in

multiple ways. Institutions reported that they took care to make sure that assessments matched the outcomes of modules, and do so in authentic ways. Assessments were redesigned to take into consideration possible cognitive overload with the switch to online and considering students' mental well-being. A greater emphasis was placed on self- and peer- assessments, which helped in building communities of support between students. Summative assessments remained in favour among institutions as an indicator of student learning. Where innovation in teaching and learning was lacking, venue based or proctored assessments remained the favoured approaches to ensuring quality during assessments. Adjusting academic exclusions also played a key role in student success in the data reported by institutions. This suggests that these exclusions are interrogated and underlying assumptions unpacked to determine whether they actually contribute to student, and by extension, institutional success.

d. Academic integrity

The integrity of assessments plays an important reputational and pedagogical role within institutions; therefore, it stands to reason that this was a major concern for institutions when moving into online or hybrid spaces. Looking across the sector, disaggregated data shows that of the public universities that reported, 42% of the institutions reported an increase in disciplinary cases, while only 16% of the PHEIs that reported, reported an increase in cases as shown by Figure 0-4 and Figure 0-5. When institutions reported academic integrity infringements it was focused on plagiarism. Some institutions reported that there were collusions between students during online exams – the collusion included sharing answers through WhatsApp or Telegram, or working together as a group to answer exams. The approach to dealing with academic integrity by institutions was either through technological solutionism (e.g. proctoring) or supervision (e.g. venue based exams) while I argue that academic integrity starts with sound curriculum design. A curriculum that allows students to make mistakes, resubmit assessments, provides multiple opportunities and forms of assessments to demonstrate learning and requires students to apply their lived experience will not only disincentivise students from cheating but make it more difficult to do so as no two lived experiences are the same. Very often the counterargument to this approach is that it cannot apply outside of the humanities which is factually untrue. Management students could work with local, small business to understand the nature of the challenges faced by these entrepreneurs, engineering students could be required to develop plans and calculate resources for improving their communities, etc. This approach would both make the content more relevant to students but also expose the students to critical thinking and problem solving skills.

30. Recommendations

Institutional processes showed interesting patterns with a few key items coming through quite strongly, namely, assessment flexibility, hybrid teaching as best practice, curriculum design as key to improving academic integrity, widening the use of virtual WIL, sector strategies for data and device provisioning, training needs specifically on pedagogy and online learning theory, how to effectively quality assure effective online learning and material development online, a call for regulatory bodies to not only conduct monitoring and evaluation, but also in giving input in institutional mechanism, quality control and review and assessment of processes, a review of national standards and guidelines for e-assessment and integrity of assessments, that good practice guides for ensuring academic integrity is developed and that there is a shared reflection on what academic integrity mean across the sector and both public and private institutions raised challenges related to staff mental health and burnout, the need for academics to have boundaries, but also institutional wide expectations of workload. While not all of these key themes will be discussed in detail, they are interrelated and thus will be discussed in relation to each other.

i. Assessment flexibility

One of the unintended consequences of COVID is the rise of institutional flexibility both in education and other sectors. Findings from this study show that flexibility has an impact on students' abilities to perform under pandemic conditions. Now that students have experienced this flexibility, they may come to expect it as a norm. One of the shifts that allows flexibility is the shift to continuous assessment which allows instructors to design assessments that are more authentic, paced to the students abilities and circumstances while giving them opportunities to reflect and learn from past experiences. In particular the opportunity to submit multiple times and receive feedback, which is part of assessment good practice, greatly aided student learning. Too often formative assessments are treated as summative.

There was also an emphasis on application and problem solving in the assessments which aligns with demands from employers who want graduates who can apply their knowledge and think critically.

ii. Hybrid teaching as best practice

Hybrid learning emerged as the most common mode of learning and this shift should be encouraged by providing clear guidelines and best practices for ensuring quality hybrid

teaching. There are a variety of hybrid models, with twelve fairly prominent ones which allows institutions and course leaders to tailor the model of their choice to the context of the course and their students. One example is the flipped classroom model which has been used by institutions in this study even prior to the pandemic and it has a number of benefits such as encouraging independent learning, focusing classroom time on difficult to understand concepts and facilitates tailoring the tuition to where students are at. It also ensures that students are not left behind as the core material that the lecturer provides is always available to revise or access should a class be missed. Therefore, there are multiple benefits to be reaped by maintaining the shift to hybrid teaching.

Connectivity is a key concern for hybrid learning and rightly so. However, this can be overcome with intelligent curriculum design, using best practice guidelines on how to minimize data consumption, WCAG guidelines, zero rating websites within data ecology, a supportive policy framework and the political will to improve access.

iii. Academic integrity

One of the ways to approach academic integrity is through effective curriculum design and academic integrity emerged as one of the key concerns for institutions around online assessments with the authenticity of the student and the authenticity of the work being the two main concerns raised. Effective and, more importantly, imaginative curriculum design can address some of these concerns. Integrating students' lived experiences into the curriculum not only enhances the curriculum but also engages the student. Combined with practices such as application based problem solving assessments, this makes it more difficult for students to duplicate each other's work.

Conversations with students on what constitutes academic dishonesty are a necessary orientation to university as it cannot be assumed that students innately know or understand the technicalities that apply within higher education. A similar conversation is necessary with lecturers to develop a shared understanding and a unified approach to academic integrity within the institution.

iv. Work integrated learning

Should be viewed as a precursor to in vivo WIL and make use of more virtual and simulated practice prior to exposing students to in vivo WIL. The benefits of this approach is that it provides prolonged exposure and offsets the cost on both institution and student of engaging in onsite WIL.

v. Data and device provisioning

Research by STATISTA show that 78.6% if all internet traffic in South Africa was from mobile devices in 2022. The State of ICT report 2020 showed that smartphone penetration in the country was 91% compared to less than 10% of households that have fixed internet. The 2020 STATSSA General Household Survey showed that more than 70% of households had internet access. Smartphones play a key role in providing internet access in rural areas. However, we must bear in mind that South Africa ranks 136th in the world in terms of the cost of data. So, while students may have access to devices to access the internet, the cost of this data is prohibitive. What this all also means is that we should be designing with mobile in mind rather than laptops as more students are likely to have access to a mobile device than a computer. This would entail providing information in smaller, bite sized packets and more frequent, focused assessments as opposed to hours long videos and proctoring.

From a broader sectoral approach university-private partnerships should be established to utilise the economies of scale to bring down the cost of devices. However, this should be done in with the 2021 STATSSA General Household Survey in mind which showed that 51% of households relied on grants to survive.

vi. Training needs

Online training for academics tends to focus on the technical aspects and their tools. While these are important, they are part of the larger package that make an educator effective online. The International Society for Technology in Education (https://www.iste.org/iste-standards) provide excellent guidelines for what it means to be an effective educator online. They structure their guidelines around 7 standards, namely, the learner, the leader, the citizen, the collaborator, the designer, the facilitator and the analyst. This is one model among many with substantial research into this area which means there is no need to be prescriptive.

vii. Quality assurance

There has been substantial research into quality assurance but this has predominantly been in the Global North where online learning is more prominent and internet is more ubiquitous lend themselves to learning theories that assume permanent connection to the internet. These theories shift away from content provision and focus more on helping students navigating information sources around their particular area of learning. Unfortunately, that would be complex to implement in our context as a result of the infrastructure issues

mentioned earlier but we can adapt these theories, take away what we need and mould them to suit our context. This will require substantive sectoral engagement to facilitate a shared understanding of these approaches and their implications within our context. There are also standards that are available. An example is the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, their tertiary quality assurance agency, have developed a quality assurance toolkit that is freely available to institutions but I also believe that the existing CHE quality assurance framework already provides a very strong QA mechanism that could easily accommodate standards around online learning that reflects our context. My only caveat is that these standards are widely consulted on prior to implementation to accommodate the differential resource access faced by HDIs.

viii. Mental health

This has been a concern for researchers with some estimating the rate of mental illness among academics at twice the national norm in a number of countries where this research has been conducted. The shift online and work from home has had many benefits like increased time with family, flexibility and less time spent commuting but it has blurred the lines between work and home resulting in longer working hours, increased workload and increased number of meetings. It also increases work-family conflict where work and family are competing for limited time and attention. While academic workloads had been increasing prior to the pandemic, during the pandemic there was a substantial spike as academics rushed to ensure that the academic year was salvaged and maintained that pace in subsequent years. Research conducted by Microsoft showed a 252% increase in weekly meetings per Teams user per week and a 28% increase in work after hours across all of their users since the start of the pandemic. Many of the recommendations we make will require substantial time and energy from already tired academics as they develop and reformat materials, engage with students and manage administrative workloads. Workload allocation models vary widely and a prescriptive model is not only undesirable but impossible to implement it is necessary to develop broad guidelines to ensure equitable distribution of workload within institutions to ensure that quality teaching takes place by preserving crucial human resources. It is important to emphasise transparency in this process to protect marginalised groups, particularly female academics, which research shows, carry a higher administrative workload than their male counterparts.

Based on the finding that there was a sector-wide increase in the student success rate, there seem to have been three initiatives that may have played a role in the increase:

- Provision of data and assistance in accessing devices

- Flexibility with assessments (in type, time, and re-assessment opportunities)
- Varied student support initiatives that emphasises building student skill in online environments

Based on training needs identified by institutions that there are sector-wide training resources developed focusing on

- Online teaching and specifically online pedagogies
- Assessments for online delivery
- Designing for academic integrity

Based on findings around quality assurance in online spaces

- That standards are developed for what online teaching should include / minimum standards
- That good practice guides for ensuring academic integrity is developed and that there is a shared reflection on what academic integrity mean across the sector
- That standards for the use of proctoring solutions are set that does not unintentionally discriminate against students

Staff health

Sector wide studies on staff burnout prevalence would assist in developing interventions in retaining experienced staff within the sector.

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Annexure A

University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan for the 2021 Academic Year

The plan below should provide a high-level institutional view. Please do not simply provide a complex collation or enumeration of lower-level plans. Should institutions already / also have separate faculty-level plans (even if they are in a different format or at a different level of planning), please submit them as separate documents, although this is not required. It is not expected that once information is inserted in the template, the total number of pages should go beyond 10-15 pages.

This is a once-off completion of the plan template for this year. Please complete ensuring a high level of quality and accuracy.

Part A: Responsibility and contact Information

1. Name of university	
2. Name and contact details of DVC responsible for oversight of the T&L Plan.	
3. Name and contact details of the teaching and learning staff member responsible for coordinating the compilation of this T&L Plan and reporting on it.	

Part B: Reflections on 2020 academic year: Lessons learnt and processes developed

1. What teaching, learning and assessment policies and processes and strategies were introduced/changed in 2020 to enable responsiveness to the challenges that arose as a result of the pandemic?
2. How did the university deal with academic integrity in 2020? Was there an increase in the need for student disciplinary action in terms of plagiarism and / or assessment fraud? Describe briefly with an evaluation of how this impacted on the 2021 planning.
3. As a result of the pandemic, did the university take a different approach to dealing with academic concessions in 2020? If yes, please describe the approach that was used.

4. Did the university make any specific plans for student retention in 2020? Are they deemed successful?	
5. Please indicate the 2019 and 2020 student success rate at the university:	
a. 2020 success rate (as per HEMIS)	
b. 2019 success rate (as per HEMIS)	
6. A general observation across the sector is that student success in 2020 appears to be improved in comparison to 2019 and earlier. Is this the case at the university, and if so, has the university been able to explore and understand what the reasons for improved success may be? Please describe what improved student success could possibly be attributed to from an institutional perspective, from an academic perspective and from a student perspective, if possible.	

7. Did the university conduct any research, surveys, reflective exercises on the experiences of learning and teaching during the COVID-19 impacted 2020 academic year on students and staff members in order to inform its planning? If yes, please describe the range of activities that were undertaken. Indicate whether and how the student voice was included in the review. If not, please describe what other resources the university drew on to inform its policies, processes and strategies in 2020?
8. What were the key lessons/observations that the reviews highlighted, that have influenced the university's approach for the 2021 academic year?
9. Did the amended learning, teaching and assessment approaches of 2020 yield any unintended consequences and surprises (beneficial as well as detrimental)? Please describe what these were.

10. Reflecting on the lessons from 2020, are there any capacity development needs (people development) that should be addressed through national interventions to support the sector to take forward the new possibilities that have arisen?

Part C: Plans for the 2021 Academic Year

1. First semester start date for 1st year students	
2. First semester start date for continuing students	
3. First semester end date (teaching and assessment)	
4. Second semester start date for 1st year students	
5. Second year semester start date for continuing students	
6. Second semester end date (teaching and assessment)	

Part D: Undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes: Learning, teaching and assessment approaches and modalities

1. Please describe the learning and teaching modalities that the university will implement for the 2021 academic year (i) under COVID-19 restrictions and (ii) if/when there are no longer any restrictions in place?
2. In implementing its chosen approaches, is the university working from any specific theoretical frames regarding remote learning and teaching, multimodal learning and teaching, online and blended learning? If so, please describe briefly.
3. What are the key quality assurance considerations that the university is taking into account to ensure the quality of learning and teaching at module level during the 2021 academic year and how will these be addressed?

4. What will the university's approach be regarding assessment (continuous and summative) during the 2021 academic year (i) under COVID-19 restrictions and (ii) if/when there are no longer any restrictions in place?
5. What plans are being made to address (i) practicals and (ii) work-integrated learning and work-based learning requirements in programmes that require these?
6. What steps is the university taking to ensure the continued quality assurance of its assessment procedures during the 2021 academic year?

7. What learning and teaching student support systems, processes and resources will be in place for the 2021 academic year to support students towards success in their studies?
8. What plans are in place to obtain input from (i) staff and (ii) students on the effectiveness of learning and teaching during the 2021 academic year?

Part E: Postgraduate research – based programmes

1. Are there any special/additional measures being taken to support postgraduate research masters and doctoral students during the period affected by COVID-19 restrictions? Please describe.

Part F: Resource plans

1. What plans are in place for the 2021 academic year regarding access to devices by (i) first time entering students and (ii) continuing students?
2. What plans are in place for the 2021 academic year regarding access to devices by staff?
3. What plans are in place for the 2021 academic year regarding access to data/the internet by students?
4. What plans are in place for the 2021 academic year regarding access to data/the internet by staff?

Part G: Capacity development plans

1. What are the capacity development needs that have to be addressed for academic staff, and what capacity development opportunities will be made available to academics in the 2021 academic year to equip them with the knowledge and skills to implement the chosen teaching, learning and assessment modes effectively? (Please consider the full range of needs, from just-in-time needs on how to capture a video, to more advanced requirements for theoretical models of learning, teaching and assessment in the online environment.)
2. What are the capacity development needs that have to be addressed for students, and what capacity development opportunities will be made available to students in the 2021 academic year to equip them with the knowledge and skills to use the chosen teaching, learning and assessment modes effectively? In particular, how is student digital development being addressed?

Part H: General

1. Are there any other aspects of the university's planning that have not been addressed above? If so, please describe these below.

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