Guidance on updating Course Handbooks for 2020-21

The course handbook for 2020-21 depicts the intended course experience for students starting their studies in the coming academic year. Thus, we need to ensure that the handbook provided (online) to new students in September presents, as accurately as is possible, the intended experience those students will receive. Currently we do not anticipate making changes to the expected experience of these students beyond the next academic year, although this may yet be required. Thus, the experience portrayed in the handbook should reflect the changes approved for the coming year and make clear the uncertainty over how the public health situation may further impact course provision in the future.

i. The ‘Welcome’ section at the start of the handbook should have the following text added:

**COVID-19 Pandemic**

At the time this handbook was prepared there was still some uncertainty over the impact that the public health situation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic would have on the way that the University would be able to deliver this course. Learning from the experience of the latter part of the last academic year, we have introduced a few modifications to our plans for delivery in 2020-21 to try and minimise the impact of the situation on your experience as a student, and these are captured in the details set out in this handbook. However, the progress of the pandemic is not predictable. While we will endeavour to deliver the course as we have set out here, should the public health situation nationally or locally require further restrictions on how we operate, then we will communicate in a clear and timely manner to ensure you are fully aware of our plans and how these will impact your experience.

ii. The section titled ‘The teaching on my course’ should be reviewed to reflect the greater emphasis on blended learning that will be employed in the coming year.

iii. The ‘Learning opportunities’ section will also need to be reviewed to depict the detail of how learning will be experienced by students in the coming year.

   a. Under the heading ‘Scheduled learning and teaching activities’, the way in which contact time is being delivered, and how the online systems are being used to enable and support learning, should be explored to ensure students understand the role of blended provision within the planned delivery, and the importance of their engagement with it.
b. Under the heading ‘Online Learning Environment (Brightspace)’, the increased and broader use that the OLE is being put to should be reflected in the text.

c. Under ‘Work-based learning’, the text may need to be revised to reflect changes to requirements for students to accommodate the public health situation.

d. Under ‘Planning your learning’, guidance on how to effectively engage with the planned Level 4 learning experience may need to be enhanced to help students adapt to the revised plans.

iv. Within the section titled ‘Organisation and management of the course’, the subsections exploring ‘A typical week’, ‘Timetable’, and ‘Attendance’ are likely to need revising. For courses in the block and blend pilot, the module listing should be amended to show how the module delivery will be ordered through the academic year.

v. The section ‘Assessment and Feedback’ may need to be revised to reflect any approved changes to assessment being brought in for the next year. This may require changes in the assessment summary table, and possibly some further commentary in the early text to explain any types of assessment that have been introduced to the programme. You should also ensure that the section provides accurate information on how students will be able to gain feedback and support in completing assessment tasks.

vi. The section ‘Academic Support’ may need some minor revisions to explore any alterations to how students are able to access academic support whether on campus or working away from campus.

vii. The ‘Learning Resources’ section may need some significant revision to ensure students are informed about how they will be able to access specialist resources in support of their studies, both for scheduled and independent learning activities.

viii. Where changes in module specifications for first year students have been approved for 2020-21, those revised versions should be included in the handbook.