



University of the  
Highlands and Islands  
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd  
agus nan Eilean

# Post – pandemic low student engagement

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# Session overview

- Changes in society
- Student engagement across the higher education sector
- Indicators of student engagement within UHI
- Sectoral responses to low student engagement
- Conclusions
- Possible remedies
- Discussion

# Long term impacts of the pandemic (1)

- The impacts of the pandemic are familiar to all.
- The long term impacts are not clear.
- However the impact of the pandemic may have a long-lasting effect on individuals outlook and views on life.
- Despite reopening, 52% of adults are reporting they are still concerned about COVID itself.
- Yet recent statistics (OfNS) suggest a return to near normality in life satisfaction.

# Long term impacts of the pandemic (2)

- Young people have a greater risk of long term negative impacts resulting from the pandemic.
- There are also long lasting benefits. Opening of opportunities for some people with disabilities, reduced commuting / travel (climate change), less print and physical goods, efficient working arrangements.

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# Student engagement in the sector

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- Widespread lack of student engagement with academic studies in the sector.
- Often poor quality online learning experience.
- Yet, even in most challenging subjects, engagement with academic and social activities often did not change.



## Student engagement at UHI (1)

- A number of indicators may be used to estimate the level of engagement within the university.

**Student services team.** Have noted that students want to retain personal connections, increased demand for one to one sessions, however, much lower attendance at events.



# Student engagement at UHI (2)

Data from the **library service** would appear to suggest that there was no general disengagement with the learning experience at UHI because of the pandemic.

Journal usage: In the year from August 2019 to July 2020 a total of 349,179 articles were accessed. In comparison August 2020 to July 2021 had a total of 442,027 articles accessed.

EBook usage: In the year from August 2019 to July 2021 a total of 251,049 eBook 'chapters' were accessed. Between August 2020 and July 2021 a total of 332,426 ebook chapters were accessed.

# Student engagement at UHI (3)

## MyDay

- Around 3500 unique users each day. Use of around 6000 services each day through portal.
- Use has remained steady.
- The type of topics of interest has not changed.
- Students are spending more time on MyDay (17 mins to 230 mins)



# Student engagement at UHI (4)

## National Student Survey

2019	2020	2021	2022 (first three weeks)
80%	72%	76%	74%

## Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

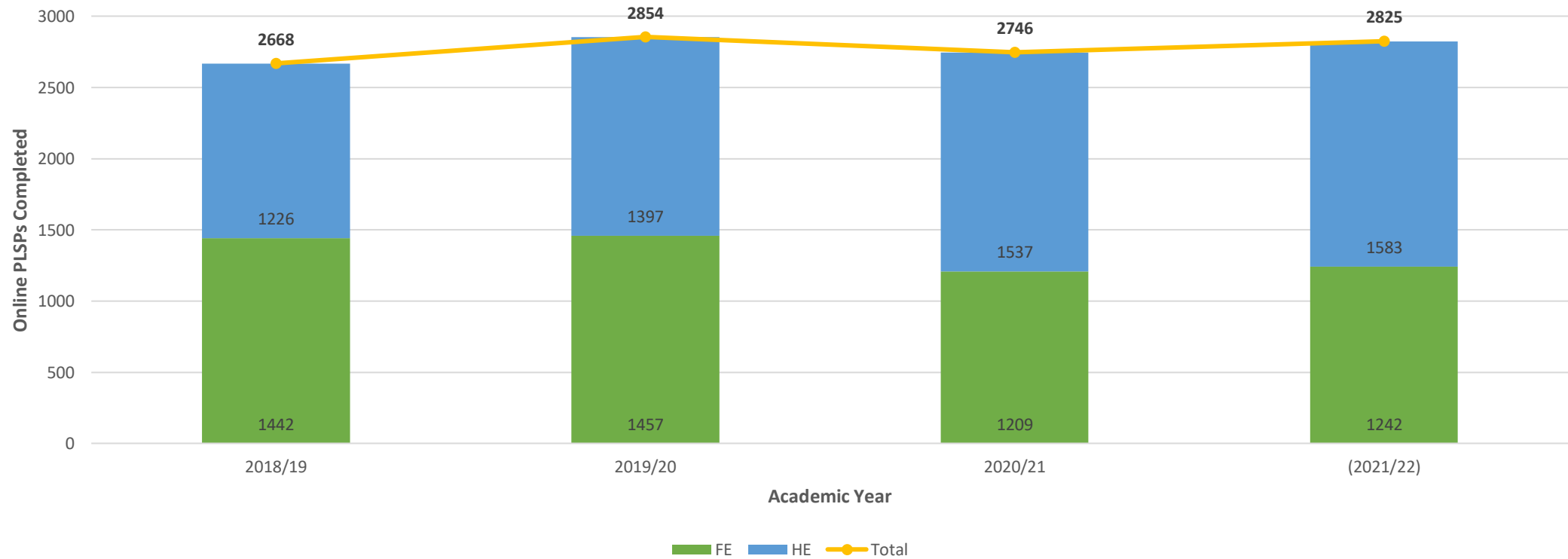
2019 UHI	2019 Sector	2020 UHI	2020 Sector	2021 UHI	2021 Sector
31%	31.5%	14%	19.6%	32%	23%

# Student engagement at UHI (5)

## Red button student feedback system

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Quarter 1 – August to October	20	75	45	57	82	80	73	109
Quarter 2 – November to January	42	44	74	53	79	51	70	46
Total (S1)	62	119	119	110	161	131	143	155

# Student engagement at UHI (7)



# Sectoral suggestions for future engagement

- Good communication, especially student to student, and student to lecturer is vital to good engagement.
- Hybrid methods of delivery should include opportunities for students to interact with each other.
- Peer supported learning (study groups, seminars, class discussion, break out rooms, question times may be used.
- Social support systems need not be entirely within the university.
- Students can be supported to build adaptability within their own lives.

# Reflections on post - pandemic UHI student engagement

- People are generally more interested in making the most of their time, and this is likely reflected in our student community.
- Academic engagement remains strong within UHI.
- However, academic performance and retention remain issues of concern.
- Engagement with most support services remain high.
- Engagement with events and social activities appears to be lower than in the past.

# Conclusions and possible remedies (1)

- Student engagement with academic opportunities remains strong at UHI.
- Greater consideration of social networks and extra-curricular activities within classes may assist with student engagement.
- Academic staff could be supported to run events to assist students in getting to know each other.
- Student communication is fragmented and spread thin. Greater clarity could be helpful.

# Conclusions and possible remedies (2)

- Students appear to be placing a higher value on social networks outside of university.
- Understanding of what students now want to participate in, and how they wish to participate.
- Students appear to be placing a higher value on social networks outside of university – family and friends.
- Digital or hybrid working and events can ‘level the playing field’ for people with some disabilities.