



Supporting our Community: The University of Northampton's Response to Covid-19

August 2020



University of
Northampton

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Foreword



I am delighted to write this foreword outlining the University of Northampton's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The University's mission is transforming lives + inspiring change and I cannot see better examples showing this than the way in which students and staff have come together to support themselves and the local and regional community during this extraordinary time. The relocation from our two former campuses to Waterside Campus in 2018 and the associated changes to our teaching and learning model, our ways of working and our physical assets have been key to our positive, socially innovative retort to the Covid-19 challenge.

Take for example the way in which our students have selflessly joined the frontline in healthcare settings to support the NHS, effectively adapted to their teaching being delivered online via our virtual learning environment or how we have collaborated with local businesses and other partners to support them with the challenges they have faced. Many of the activities we have supported, and their social impact, will continue to resonate long after the pandemic has subsided and help further cement the University as an anchor institution in Northampton and the wider County.

Professor Nick Petford DSc
Vice Chancellor and CEO

Changing campus

At the University of Northampton, we have used components of the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) model to respond to Covid-19 as quickly and safely as possible. As the Covid-19 situation was complex and volatile, we formed three action teams for keeping our staff and students informed with changes in regulations. Meanwhile, the Critical Incident Team guided action teams for delivering the most effective management response as a function of available resources and time.

Waterside Campus

Our Waterside campus – located at the heart of Northampton town centre – has allowed us to play a central role in helping our communities respond to the impact of Covid-19 while ensuring that staff and students have experienced minimal disruption to working and studying.

We're proud that we've been able to quickly respond to requests from partners such as the NHS, Borough Council and police to provide resources and facilities to help deliver vital services in the centre of the county town.

Built with a focus on transitioning towards a smart campus, our digital and IT facilities at Waterside meant we already had the infrastructure in place to seamlessly respond to remote learning and working.

Our already implemented remote learning tools and multi-award-winning learning technology meant we were able to deliver first-class, off campus learning even before the pandemic.

Combined with our comprehensive Learning and Student Support Services, we experienced a smooth transition to remote learning, examination and working during the pandemic, which which minimised disruption stress for students and staff.

Remote learning and examination

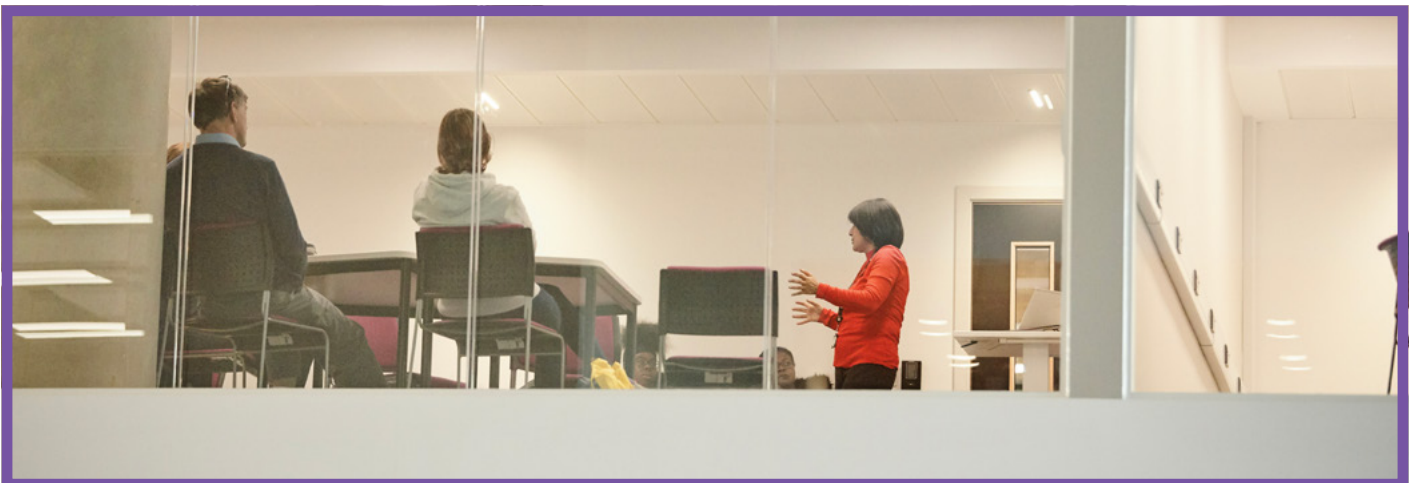
One of the major changes that we experienced due to the lockdown was transferring all face-to-face teaching and examination to an online format.

Aware that this could impact students and their studies, we aimed to be as flexible and super supportive as possible during this unprecedented transition. We proved that – regardless if teaching is in person or online – our commitment to supporting our students learning is absolute.

On 1st April 2020, we announced Emergency Academic and Student Regulations to support students in completing their learning and assessments while mitigating the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

These regulations allow students three opportunities to submit their assignments, a decision which enabled students to better manage their time and other commitments while completing their studies as normal.

Additionally, face-to-face assessments and exams were replaced with alternative forms that did not require in-person interactions.



Case study:

Faculty of Business and Law

When the lockdown was announced in March, the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) rapidly implemented a plan to support international students who had returned to their home countries.

To minimise the impact of remote teaching and studying from multiple countries, we:

- immediately taught students how to access and use the virtual classrooms
- allowed students to flexibly join a virtual classroom session that suited their schedule and time-zone
- changed three-hour in-person lectures to comprise two-hour online sessions

- implemented a two-tutor set-up for each session, with tutors taking turns to deliver/facilitate activities or to reply to students' questions on the chat facility of the virtual classroom
- used the polling facility in the virtual classroom to ask simple questions at intervals to monitor active engagement. As a result, we observed that students participated more and asked additional questions.

This approach saw student attendance rates increase from an average of 64% in face-to-face sessions to 83% in online sessions.

Case study:

Faculty of Health, Education and Society

Face-to-face engagement is one of the key teaching methods that the Faculty of Health, Education and Society (FHES) uses, especially for clinical modules. As all modules are now delivered using ABL (Active Blended Learning).

For example, in the module Essentials of Midwifery, first-year students would traditionally have undertaken an examination that assesses two core skills essential to midwifery care in normal situations.

Now, students are assessed through an online examination by articulating step-by-step how they would perform clinical skills in reality. The assessment takes place using the online Blackboard Collaborate classroom with the examiner able to both see and hear the student at all times during the assessment. Where appropriate, examiners are also able to record the sessions for quality control purposes and to ensure fair and equal treatment across the cohort.

In making these changes, the University has been able to ensure study continuity for a key student demographic, allowing them to complete their studies and join the UK's health services. This throughput of newly qualified healthcare professionals demonstrates the role that the University has played in supporting the NHS and local health and social care providers.

Staff working from home

The University has worked hard to ensure that staff have stayed connected remotely and has actively supported home working since the pandemic surfaced.

Prior to the pandemic, staff have been encouraged to actively use technology as part of pro-active smart working and various virtual meeting room tools have been available, such as Collaborate, Webex and Microsoft Teams.

Today, all staff use virtual meeting tools for everyday work activities, including 1:1s, team meetings, validation, review events, and committee meetings. With a comprehensive support package to enable staff to adapt to different IT platforms, staff expanded their knowledge and the capabilities of using IT platforms without stress. At the University of Northampton, staff have successfully adapted to the use of virtual teaching and meeting tools and appreciate their flexibility.

This has been invaluable during the Covid-19 pandemic, as it has meant that many have only had to make minor adjustments to their everyday working practices, helping us to ensure staff welfare and business continuity.

Case study:

Institute for Social Innovation & Impact

The University of Northampton supported staff members in a comprehensive way. Below is an example that reflects the wider University support for staff.

The Institute for Social Innovation and Impact (ISII) implemented a working from home policy prior to the Government lockdown, with access to the office in the University's Innovation Centre suspended on Wednesday 11th March.

This decision was taken to ensure staff safety and welfare, and to prevent unnecessary commuting (particularly on public transport). Staff were also supported through flexible working arrangements once the lockdown began, to account for the closures of schools, pre-school nurseries and childcare facilities.

To ensure enhanced communication and reduce feelings of isolation, virtual weekly team meetings were held through Microsoft Teams so that the group could share their work, discuss future bids and most importantly, maintain

contact and discuss any concerns throughout the pandemic.

Given the Institute's work in supporting external public and third sector partners with research, evaluation and social impact measurement, there was a need to ensure that business continuity was maintained.

This transition was aided through previous digital archiving of all key Institute documentation, and team familiarity with off-site working. Communication plans were established with key clients to enable remote working and where possible, remote data gathering (online surveys, telephone interviews) was utilised to enable projects to continue during lockdown.

These measures have ensured that the ISII has continued to meet its deadlines and commitments to all current partner organisations, whilst also contributing to several university research bids focused on the social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic itself. Perhaps more tellingly, the changes have been largely positive for staff and partners, with decisions already made to ensure that even in a post-lockdown world, the strategies adopted around remote working and client support are maintained as a new and innovative method of supporting our research partners.

Supporting our community

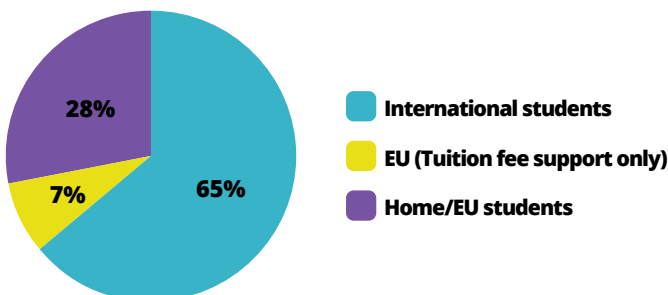
Finance support for students

To support our students, the University waived the rent for University accommodation for the third term at a cost of approximately £2.5 million.

This money has had a significant impact on the income of the University, but we felt strongly that this was the right thing to do to protect and support our students during the pandemic.

Additionally, the University allocated an additional budget of £500,000 to support students. This has been distributed through the Covid-19 Hardship Fund, which provides grants for any students who found themselves in difficulty due to the Covid-19 situation. As of 30th June 2020, **we have received and assessed 394 applications, 65% of whom were international students, and 35% Home/EU students. Currently, 201 students have been supported through the Covid-19 Hardship Fund.**

Applications for the fund by student status



We have also provided additional support from the fund to students who are identified as being in vulnerable circumstances, in particular care-leavers, estranged students¹ and those with caring responsibilities for family and friends.

¹Estranged students are those who are aged 18 to 24 years and are not communicating with either of their parents.

Number of students in vulnerable circumstances supported by the Covid-19 Hardship Fund

Student groups	Number of students	Amount of fund
Care leavers	21	£10,500
Estranged students ¹	19	£9,500
Carers	18	£9,000
Exceptional circumstances	1	£500
Homeless	1	£500
Total	60	£30,000

In addition, **the University has provided 30 laptops - at a cost of £14,004 - to students who have had difficulty engaging with remote learning due to not having access to a device.** This has helped to ensure that economically disadvantaged students are not unfairly penalised by new remote learning models.

Our partner, Santander, also reallocated £36,000 to support international and EU students who are eligible for tuition fee loans. So far, 129 students have been awarded fee top-ups of £250 to a total combined value of £126,304, and this will continually increase as this fund progresses. The University is grateful to Santander for their support and commitment, which we believe shows why our model of partnership working across the private, public and third sectors delivers consistently high value to our students, staff and wider community.

Overall, our support to students financially has been worth a combined £2.6 million.

Community support

The University of Northampton is committed to driving social impact and supporting the local community in line with the University's strategic aims and Changemaker Challenges.

We've been providing facilities and resources to the NHS and the local community, including our halls of residence, car parks and tannery, so as to support the fight against Covid-19 locally.

Covid-19 testing centre and medical assessment centre

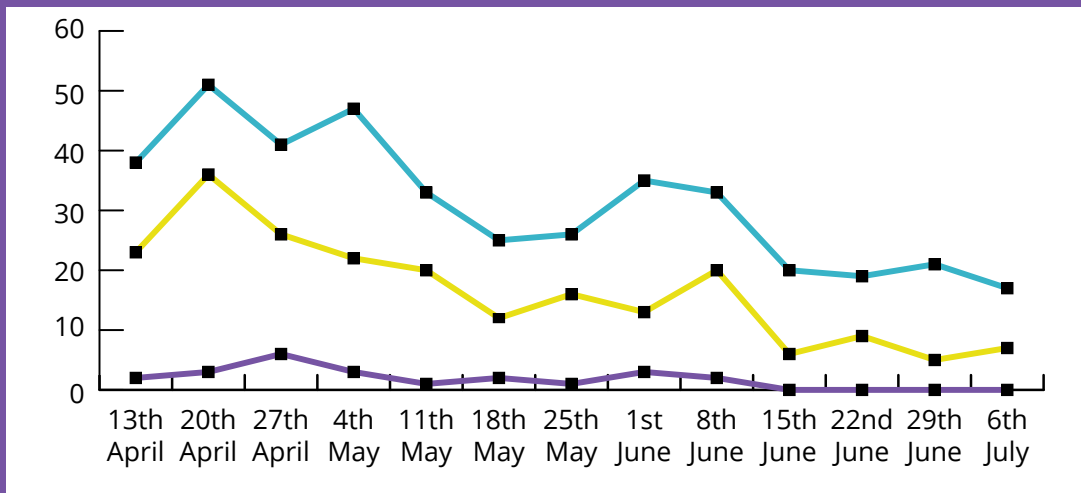
The car park at the Development Hub has been used as a Covid-19 testing centre, and a car park at our Waterside Campus has been used as a drive-through medical assessment centre.

While Covid-19 samples are being analysed at the testing centre, the car park at Waterside Campus also works as a drive-through clinic for patients at high risk from Covid-19.

If people at high risk have symptoms of coronavirus, a GP triages them by telephone or video conferencing at home. Patients are then asked to visit the drive-through medical assessment centre for further assessment by a nurse or health professional if needed.

After the assessment, the patients are referred to Accident and Emergency at Northampton General Hospital or prescribed self-care. Over the past two months, the University of Northampton has provided a safe environment for face-to-face medical examination through the drive-through medical assessment centre as shown below:

The use of Waterside Campus drive-through medical assessment centre



	Total
Video triage by GP at home	406
Drive-through appointment at Waterside Campus	215
Referred to A&E at Northampton General Hospital	23





We also provided halls of residence for patients, NHS staff and rough sleepers, car parks for NHS staff, and resources for Covid-19 testing.

During the pandemic, the University of Northampton contributed over £250,000 to cover the costs of providing 154 bedrooms in student accommodation and Sunley Hotel for the NHS and other emergency service key workers. Additionally, the University's halls of residence have been accommodating 26 rough sleepers within the partnership of the Northampton's Single Homelessness Forum. Other university facilities also have been used as a country food parcel hub and PPE storage.

List of facilities provided for local organisations including the NHS

Facilities	Recipient	Number	Financial value
Bedrooms in Sunley Hotel	St Andrews Hospital	32	£179,200
Bedrooms in Student Accommodation	Northampton General Hospital	90	£63,000
Bedrooms in student accommodation	Northamptonshire Police	32	£8,400
Total		154	£250,600

To respond to the pandemic collaboratively with our local partners, including the NHS, the University of Northampton also made available our resources for Covid-19 tests. These resources include gloves, lab pipettes, lab plates, falcon tubes, and machines for analysing and testing samples.

Additionally, tanneries at the Institute for Creative Leather Technologies (ICLT) and fashion workshops have been used to produce medical scrubs for the Scrubs Up for Northants NHS project. Currently, our staff and students have volunteered for this project. We're aiming to manufacture approximately 230 sets of scrubs for use by GPs, care homes and Northampton General Hospital. We're proud that these will be used to protect our frontline workers and prevent the further spread of Covid-19.

Environmental contributions

During the pandemic, we've also been making positive environmental contributions by reducing waste and energy consumption on campus. As soon as the lockdown was introduced the Estates and Campus Services Team switched off equipment where practical (TV screens, monitors, printers, water coolers, etc.) and made changes to the building management system settings to reflect the minimal to zero use of spaces.

Reduced waste and energy savings on campus in March and April 2020²



▼ **18%**
Waste



▼ **17%**
Electricity



▼ **10%**
Gas

Reduced gas consumption on campus has also decreased carbon emissions by 55 tCO₂e³ in March and April 2020. The reduced waste and energy consumption on campus shows that the existing infrastructure is able to support staff working from home while saving carbon emissions.

It is vital that we keep to our current target of zero waste to landfill, which we met and continue to have met every academic year since 2013/2014.

After the lockdown, the University of Northampton will continuously create positive environmental contribution by implementing new standard operating procedures for the collection and disposal of PPE and single-use packaging and cups on campus.

²Compared to March and April 2019

³Tonnes of CO₂ equivalent



Student experience

Student engagement in remote learning/examinations

A Super Supportive student experience is core to what we do. During the pandemic, we ensured that our students continue their study and stay connected with the University using learning technology.

As a result, the use of learning technology, such as Blackboard Collaborate⁴ and Kaltura⁵, has increased at the University throughout the pandemic. The University's Critical Incident Team strongly recommended Collaborate sessions for replacing the normal face-to-face sessions from the beginning of lockdown. Most synchronous sessions were recorded and these recordings were made available in the appropriate NILE online learning site.

The number of Collaborate sessions hugely increased during the lockdown (+120x), which indicates that we have successfully moved to remote learning and teaching.

Furthermore, Kaltura engagement also increased by 800%. Students also commented that they are far happier to participate in virtual classrooms and felt more confident asking questions. Feedback indicated that they are enjoying the flexibility and accessibility in terms of space and time that online learning provides.

Increased number of Collaborate sessions

9	1,083	796	570	467
1st March	24th March	20th April	5th May	17th June

Increased minutes of content viewed on Kaltura

1,310	9,091	10,525	5,345
1st March	24th March	11th May	23rd June

Increased number of Webex meetings

14	317	250	222
2nd March	1st April	20th May	10th June

⁴Blackboard Collaborate – An all-in-one online platform for virtual classroom and communication.

⁵Kaltura – A video platform for virtual teaching and learning.

Student engagement in remote learning/examinations

Case study:

The Graduate School

The Graduate School has provided support for the postgraduate research (PGR) community by organising 18 research webinars and nine graduate school drop-in sessions since the beginning of the pandemic.

In total, 21 more students participated in the webinars Structuring and Writing Your Thesis, Getting Started Workshop, Basic Guide to Qualitative Methods, and Preparing for a Successful Transfer compared to the pre-lockdown period. Additionally, student engagement with compulsory Epigeum⁶ online courses Research Integrity and Becoming an Ethical Researcher has increased from 20 attendees on 20th January to 33 attendees on 20th May.

The Graduate School also organised the University of Northampton's Annual Research Conference 2020 as an online Festival of Research, which ran on the week of 8-12th June. Throughout this online research conference, 33 oral presentations were delivered, including 12 parallel sessions, a roundtable, two symposia, the Three Minute Theses Competition, and a virtual social event.

Similar to undergraduate courses, the Graduate School also used Collaborate for several online sessions, including an ongoing writing workshop for PGRs and two Mental Health Awareness workshops.

PhD viva-voce examinations and transfer seminars have also been amended to enable remote examination, with new regulations developed by the Graduate School. This has meant that seven PhD theses examinations and 18 transfer seminars have been able to go ahead, reducing the stress of postgraduate researchers at a key time in their research journey.

Student support

We have maintained our same student services as normal throughout lockdown but delivered remotely. The University of Northampton responded quickly to maintain delivery and ensure that all students who were worried or facing difficulties during the lockdown were supported, informed, and their well-being maintained. These include:

Counselling and Mental Health Services

The demand for Counselling and Mental Health services increased during lockdown. The Counselling and Mental Health Team is continually updating team webpages to include information specifically around mental wellbeing during the pandemic.

The Mental Health Adviser service is also trialling the use of Collaborate for video appointments and live chat appointments for students who are unable to speak in confidence within family homes.

These were supported by the launch of the online Counselling and Mental Health Team drop-in services on 20th April 2020. Such support is critical in protecting staff and students during the lockdown, especially given the anxiety that the Covid crisis is causing for so many of the population. Whilst face-to-face contact has stopped, mental health and wellbeing problems have not, meaning that the continued provision of this support is critical.

Between 20th March and 20th May, our Counselling Service and Mental Health Service team delivered more individual sessions compared to the previous year – had direct telephone contact with 305 individual students.

⁶Epigeum provides online courses on teaching and development, research, studying, and support and wellbeing.

Student and Academic Support (SAS) Check-in and Chat Service

Currently, 54 staff volunteers are supporting 74 international/EU students not in halls through our SAS Check-in and Chat service, which sees a staff volunteer call a paired student once or twice a week to check how they are.

“I’ve had a lovely chat with [the student] today. He is doing OK and is safe and continuing with his studies. He was very pleased that someone was phoning him to check on him.”

Additional Student Support & Inclusion Services Team (ASSIST)

The ASSIST team is constantly contacting students with disabilities to support remote learning during the pandemic, providing a full service delivered remotely.

For example, note-taking support has been changed to taking virtual notes, which has enabled students to keep on track with their studies. Virtual notetakers have delivered 538 hours of support to students who needed a reasonable adjustment to be made so that they could keep on track with their studies. The number of students who are engaging and receiving regular weekly support and additional 1:1 support in their online assessment, study skills, autism specialist mentoring, and assistive technology training increased during lockdown.



Number of students supported by ASSIST services

The Practical and Enabling Support Team	
Virtual note-taking	28
Weekly proactive contact (phone, email, video or text)	25
The Specialist Support Team	
1:1 study skills support	105
1:1 autism specialist mentoring	45
Remote dyslexia screening assessment	9
1:1 assistive technology training	12
The Core Team	
Online drop-in sessions	28
Email and phone enquiries	1,250
Assessment appointments	29
Priority accommodation applications	39
Total	1,570

The ASSIST team has also responded to over 1,250 email enquiries, averaging 10-15 emails received per day from students facing problems. Main student enquiries include concerns about having remote academic/ASSIST support, emotional/mental health difficulties, applying for Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs), and applying for halls.

“I’ve had a lovely chat with [the student] today. He is doing OK and is safe and continuing with his studies. He was very pleased that someone was phoning him to check on him.”

Graduate Launchpad

We realise that the post-Covid-19 working world will be completely different for our final year students in the uncertain economic environment.

As a Super Supportive response to student concerns and worries about their future employment prospects, the Changemaker Hub implemented Graduate Launchpad, an intensive employability programme for final year students, to find employment following graduation.

Graduate Launchpad has been designed to offer six-week programs to build students' confidence and employability skills. On completing the program, students will qualify for the Northampton Employment promise, which secures a three-six month internship, or helps place the students into postgraduate study if they haven't found full-time employment 12 months after graduating.

Health students placement within the NHS

Our health students are taking time-out from academic study to provide more hours on the wards, supporting frontline NHS healthcare professionals. As of 11th May, 269 nursing, 40 midwifery, 14 occupational therapy and 60 paramedic students chose to extend their placements. With our health students, there will be extra hands in the workforce supporting and enabling their registered peers to care for more seriously ill patients.

Nursing students who opted in for Clinical Extended Placements will spend 80% of their time in clinical practice and 20% of their time in online academic study. They will be spending more time in clinical practice compared to the normal time when the clinical/academic split for second and third-year nursing students is an equal 50/50.

Our nursing student, Hannah Shaw, who has opted in for Clinical Extended Placements said that "It's an unknown situation as there are healthcare staff who have come down with the virus and staff across the country whom have died from it, so it is a little bit daunting."

"But, as a team, we are well protected, and the staff are all very hot on what PPE you need for different situations."

Opting in or out of placement was not an easy decision for our students in these difficult times. The University and the Faculty of Health and Society will continue to support our health students wherever they are located, and we are proud of their response and commitment to this crisis.

Nearly 400 health students at the University have opted in for Clinical Extended Placements during the pandemic.

Student volunteers

Our students have also been busy volunteering their services and skills within the community. We are proud of our student Changemakers who spotted a social problem and created a real impact within the local community with their skills and passion.



Case study 1: Andy Jay, Final-year Occupational Therapy student

Andy – who previously worked as a communications engineer for 18 years - established an automated Telehealth hotline for the Reach for Health Centre, that directs calls to occupational therapy students, including himself.

Andy came up with the idea to help him and his fellow students continue their placement and ensure the centre could keep providing services.

Our students assist callers to identify the difficulties they are experiencing and work with them to find the right solutions to improve their wellbeing.



Case study 2: Natasha Murphy and Izzy Rainbow, Second-year International Relations students

Natasha and Izzy are supporting asylum seekers and refugees affected by the pandemic as a part of Student Action for Refugee, a national student charity welcoming refugees to the UK.

Natasha and Izzy realised the pandemic could create stress and isolate youth refugees. By hosting Zoom English conversation groups for refugees, they are not only providing educational opportunities, but also emotional support.

Natasha and Izzy successfully won a grant from the Northamptonshire Community Foundation, which provides 20 £15 Sainsbury vouchers for youth refugees for eight weeks.

Students' Union response

The Students' Union acted as a key organisation to connect students to internal/external support.

The Union closely worked with the University to publish the Emergency Regulation FAQs after multiple enquiries from students. Several student advocacy drop-in sessions were also organised for student advocates and other students to share their concerns about online learning.

The Students' Union also published an open letter to local private landlords and letting agents, about making concessions to support students during the pandemic, while it has supported the National Union of Students (NUS)'s Student Safety Net campaign, asking for Universities to provide the facility for students to re-take the entire academic year at no additional cost, writing-off student debt and/or getting tuition fees reimbursed.

Additionally, the SU supports a Healthcare Fees Campaign calling for fees to be waived for healthcare students who have stepped up on the frontline of Covid-19. The open letter supporting this campaign was sent to Michelle Donelan and Matt Hancock (Minister of State for Universities and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care respectively) to take action.

The SU also organised several online fitness, dance, and quiz sessions to encourage students to stay active and connected.

Staff experience

Active Blended Learning (ABL)

At the University of Northampton, we have always prided ourselves in leading the way in developing new and exciting ways to educate people. We have a global reputation for the system of teaching we have developed here at Northampton, which we call Active Blended Learning (ABL).

ABL means that our students learn through activities that develop their subject knowledge and confidence in applying professional skills. ABL supports student learning, whether on campus or remotely and develops our students' digital fluency and flexibility of time and place of study, building on our years of experience

combining face to face and digital environments.

For delivering successful ABL programs, appropriate online activities were designed and used by lecturers. The virtual learning environment was set for achieving successful learner engagement through online discussion forums, Padlet⁷, shared documents, blogs, and wikis.

These experiences of developing and running ABL programs put staff in a strong position to adapt to the lockdown. Most lecturers were familiar with technologies used for the virtual learning environment, including Blackboard, Collaborate, Webex, and Microsoft Teams.

Our students who were used to the ABL model also recognised the value in our unique blend of face to face learning, supported by digital environments and experienced less disruption.

Case study: Faculty of Arts, Science and Technology (FAST) - Working with a Director

This module for second-year acting students has traditionally been run face-to-face with a professional director for experiencing industry standard technical and dress rehearsals and a short run of performances.

At the end of the year, the performances manifested in an open-air production on the Waterside Campus with a full audience invited from local schools.

However, during the pandemic, all these processes

had to transfer online delivery at short notice.

Students adapted to filming themselves in their homes and via online tools such as WeBex to create a 90-minute, Locked Down Shakespeare film. The rehearsal processes was filmed and released on a weekly basis on **YouTube** by the As You Like It cast.

Having worked on this project for a few weeks, students saw this chance to triumph over adversity, to make something beautiful, give people hope and have something to look back on fondly.

The 90-minute final product of this project is available **here**.

Case study: Faculty of Business and Law: Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA)

FBL is running the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) programme with Northamptonshire Police and in a normal situation, policing apprentices undertake duties at a shopping centre at the end of their initial training.

During the lockdown, a mock courtroom session has

also been transformed into an online experience, with a virtual court featuring two barristers.

Prior to lockdown, apprentices would also attend a mock courtroom to present statements from incidents. This has also been transformed in to an online experience, with a virtual court featuring two barristers.

Both activities received positive feedback from apprentices for their adaptability.

⁷Padlet is a virtual canvas that provides a space for collaborate online projects. <https://padlet.com/>

Support for staff

The University provided multiple support options for staff in response to Covid-19, with several communication channels implemented, such as UON Staff Voice, Staff FAQs, and virtual Cuppa and Chats. These communication channels keep the staff updated with regulations and guidelines, and support staff with engagement and mental health issues.

UON Staff Voice, a new feedback mechanism, was launched to ask questions, raise concerns, share good practice and send thanks to colleagues.

Our HR team reviewed and amended the display screen equipment (DSE) process, to include a temporary home working self-assessment checklist, which helps staff to evaluate if their home working areas meet health and safety requirements. This helped to resolve 54 DSE related issues.

Case study: UNify

UNify is an internal magazine for the University of Northampton staff, which is published twice weekly with a focus on Covid-19. The readership of UNify has increased dramatically during the pandemic (+59%). Furloughed workers were also encouraged to download the Unify App so as to remain continuously connected with the University if they wished.

Number of visits to the UNify Website

1,190

January 2020

1,887

March 2020

Our staff's contribution to the local community and the country

Staff volunteers

Our staff have been joining several national and local volunteering activities. Two staff members – Nick Allen, Executive Officer, Office of the Vice Chancellor, and Becky Bradshaw, Director of Estates and Campus Services – joined the NHS Volunteer Army to pick up food and medicines for people who are shielding and to take hospital patients who are discharged back home.

Within the University, 54 staff members are volunteering for the Student and Academic Support Check-in and Chat Service. Additionally, the Changemaker Hub launched #CMHubAction which connects University staff and students with community groups needing support in Northamptonshire.

Knowledge sharing

As Covid-19 has had a large impact on food security and the food supply chain, the Institute of Logistics Intelligence & Supply Chain Transformation (ILIST) has been busy providing future perspectives and guidance on the food industry. Liam Fassam, the Director of ILIST, has provided insights on how to manage the food supply chain in a sustainable way to reduce negative impacts on the region and country. Liam appeared on the BBC, in the Financial Times, The Grocer and other media and social media channels.



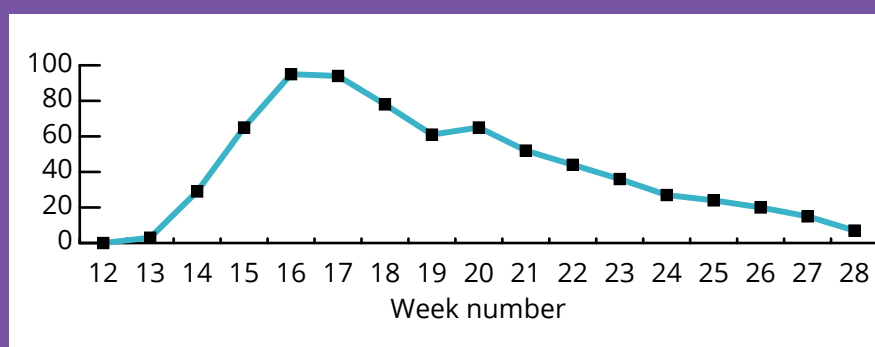
Case study: Centre for Physical Activity and Life Sciences

The centre has contributed with the NHS to Pillar 1 testing in the region, with David Young and Charlotte Brookes (supported by our MSc Molecular Bioscience students) volunteering at Northampton General Hospital (NGH) to develop/implement Covid-19 testing.

Life Sciences graduate Charlotte Crossley is now a supervisor at the flagship Milton Keynes Lighthouse Labs, which is spearheading the Covid-19 testing effort. Mett Smart, our postgraduate researcher and CEO of 20/30 laboratories, supported by University equipment, is providing Covid-19 testing in the community.

Researchers are analysing Northamptonshire's Covid-19 data to identify trends, with their mathematical models predicting the spread of the virus, including the transmission rate/reproduction number.

Mortality rate by week in Northamptonshire due to Covid-19



Furloughing scheme

Furloughed staff have received 100% of their wages as part of the University's commitment to top-up the 80% offered by the government under the scheme.

In April, 21 University of Northampton Enterprise Limited (UNEL) staff and 79 UON employees were furloughed. In May, 24 UNEL staff, 168 Unitemps staff, and 101 UON employees were also furloughed.

Our decision on furloughing Unitemps staff had a positive impact on our student employees as they have a secured form of income during the pandemic. In order to support furloughed staff, FAQs have been developed in relation to furloughed workers. Furthermore, the guidance for line managers supporting furloughed workers, as well as LinkedIn Learning playlists were developed.

This support has meant that all furloughed staff have received one-fifth of the income that they wouldn't have under the government's furlough scheme.

Marketing, external partners & stakeholders

NLive

During the pandemic, NLive – our local community radio station – has been working as a channel for the local community to access Covid-19 related news in the Northamptonshire area, playing government advertising for free every other hour, including up to date public service announcements from Public Health England. The total estimated value of these government campaigns is £1,600.

NLive has also been helping the local community by offering a free on-air messaging service for 20 local businesses and local community groups to record 15 second messages, which contributed an estimated £2,000 to local organisations. These messages ranged from thanking their customers, recruiting volunteers, through to advertising their services.

Alumni

Alumni Community Scheme

In May, we launched the Alumni Community Scheme to connect graduates who started socially innovative initiatives/entrepreneurial schemes to support the local community during the pandemic.

Currently, the University has received several alumni initiatives supporting the local community, and the University promotes these initiatives so as to aid them to find appropriate support from other graduates.

List of Alumni Community Scheme projects

Concept
Wellbeing organisation, supporting businesses and employees preparing to get back to work
Supporting vulnerable families with young children
Making free facemasks to give away
Academic solutions to children with learning difficulties
Offering free psychotherapy online
Offering music to companies
Housing rough sleepers
Providing working from home advice and support
Online alternative to annual open gardens



Suppliers/partners

Goodwill Solutions CIC

Goodwill Solutions CIC, the University's joint venture, has played a vital role in supporting our communities throughout Covid-19.

So far, Goodwill has:



Distributed food parcels for vulnerable families



Donated 500 bottles of hand sanitisers to vulnerable households



Distributed food parcels for vulnerable families



Donated 500 bottles of hand sanitisers to vulnerable households

Business Support Team / Inspire2Enterprise

We have also supported local businesses, entrepreneurs, and social enterprises to survive and thrive during and after the pandemic. Our Business Support Team has regularly updated businesses around how to apply for business recovery loans, as well as supply bulletins from the Police to industry-led forums.

Our Business Support Team also:



Distributed food parcels for vulnerable families



Liaised with the County Council, Police, and South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP), to help ensure appropriate information and support for local businesses is being provided.



Working in collaboration with Enterprise East Northants and associated partners to deliver the Recovery Through Enterprise Economic Recovery Programme, which provides packaged business support services to small and medium-sized enterprises in the East Northamptonshire area. This programme will be expanding into other districts of Northamptonshire over the summer.





“I just wanted to congratulate the University of Northampton for its initiative in bringing a series of very well organised and informative webinars that are there for the Businesses of Northamptonshire to join and bring questions forward and to then get the help and information that they have been looking for.

Also from a mental health point of view, they are exceptionally good reaching out and involving people that are struggling for whatever reason in this Coronavirus climate.”

[Mrs Sara Marie Homer, CEO of Brackmills Business Improvement District, Chairman of the Ambassadors for SEMLEP (South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership)]

Inspire2Enterprise (I2E), which supports social entrepreneurs and existing businesses across the UK:

- Contacted more than 200 businesses to provide them with advice and guidance during the pandemic.
- Received 88 enquiries from local social and commercial enterprises about funding opportunities, business survival and recovery.
- Organised weekly online networking sessions to create a space for social and commercial enterprise to discuss their challenges, issues, and solutions.

I2E is closely working with external partners, including Santander, the Open University, and the University of Bedfordshire for exploring and providing funding and growth opportunities for local businesses.

“Thank you so much for all your emails also helpful and lots of information that I will definitely need!”

“Thank you so much, you made my day :) This information and website recommendations are excellent, I really appreciate your email. You are an amazing human being!”

Summary

Transforming lives and inspiring change is the mission of the University of Northampton.

Our focus on creating social impact is always at the core of our decision-making processes, and this has come further to the fore in responding to Covid-19. We have made timely decisions to support our students, staff and the local community quickly and actively. As a University, we have been lucky to have such supportive departments, staff members, and partners to help us deliver impact throughout the pandemic.

We have minimised disruptions for learning and teaching with our established Active Blended Learning strategy, increasing student engagement and academic achievement since lockdown. This has resulted in positive feedback from our students in terms of flexibility and accessibility of teaching.

Our use of online learning and teaching platforms and IT communication systems during the pandemic allowed us to develop innovative teaching techniques and closely communicate with our students. The lessons we have learned from this testing time will lead to the expansion of our use of online technology tools, both for formal and informal communications with the students.

Staff feedback on remote working has been very positive too. Our staff have been working in more effective, shorter, and better focused ways using technology. Therefore, even after the pandemic, we will see increased remote working engagement, whilst meetings

and training will be kept online where appropriate.

The University of Northampton, as a part of Northamptonshire, supports not only students and staff, but also the local community. During the pandemic, our Business Support Team, Inspire2Enterprise, Alumni, and partners developed and delivered several initiatives for supporting the local community and businesses.

Our Business Support Team and Inspire2Enterprise will maintain a series of webinars for providing timely advice for local businesses, social enterprises, and entrepreneurs in an effective way. The Faculty of Business and Law with expertise in HR, management, logistics, marketing, and entrepreneurship will also support local business in its recovery. The Alumni Community Scheme will also continuously expand its activities between Northampton graduates. Lastly, NLive will also keep their daily local news bulletins talking about local news as a legacy element of Covid-19.

Uncertainty is ongoing. In these challenging situations, the University of Northampton will remain flexible and prepared for options for keeping everyone connected, informed, and sustained with positivity. The University will continue supporting students, staff, and the local community to survive and recover during and after the pandemic. We are also hoping that the University can always be used as a venue to help others in national or local events.

Acknowledgements

Going through these difficult times has not been easy for everyone. However, we, the University of Northampton, made a smooth transition to remote learning, teaching and working collectively with every single member's support of our community.

We would like to thank our students who have stayed positive and engaged during the pandemic. Special thanks go to our health students who are working on the frontline of Covid-19 and student volunteers who are creating positive impacts in our community.

We also would like to thank all of our staff who endured long hours, but through excellent teamwork, thoughtfulness and creativity created positive impacts and better models of working. Without your strong support, we would not have been able to provide timely and appropriate support for our students, as well as the community.

Our partners and suppliers also showed a great level of support, especially for the local community and businesses by connecting citizens and resources together. We could not say thank you enough for everything you have done for our Northamptonshire community and the country.

Last, but certainly not least, the University of Northampton would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation for all the NHS workers and carers who are working on the frontline during this Covid-19 pandemic. Their sacrifice and commitment will never be forgotten.



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