

**NORTH EAST
SCOTLAND
COLLEGE**



APPENDIX 8: NESCOL AT HOME STUDENT SURVEY

**THE EQUALITY MAINSTREAMING AND OUTCOMES
OF NORTH EAST SCOTLAND COLLEGE**

APPENDIX 8: NESCOL AT HOME STUDENT SURVEY

Overview

These are challenging times and NESCol understands that working remotely will be affecting everyone in different way. Throughout this difficult period, the college has sought to ensure the ongoing delivery of teaching and assessment, whilst working with all awarding body partners to identify solutions that will enable all students to complete their course. In order to establish whether communication and support provided is meeting the needs of the students and to better understand students' experience of working remotely, the NESCol at Home Student Survey was created.

The survey was emailed to all full-time and part-time students and a news item was added to MyNescol to encourage participation. In total there were 6 questions, a mix of matrix and open questions and the survey was available from Wednesday 27th May for 2 weeks, closing on Wednesday 10th June.

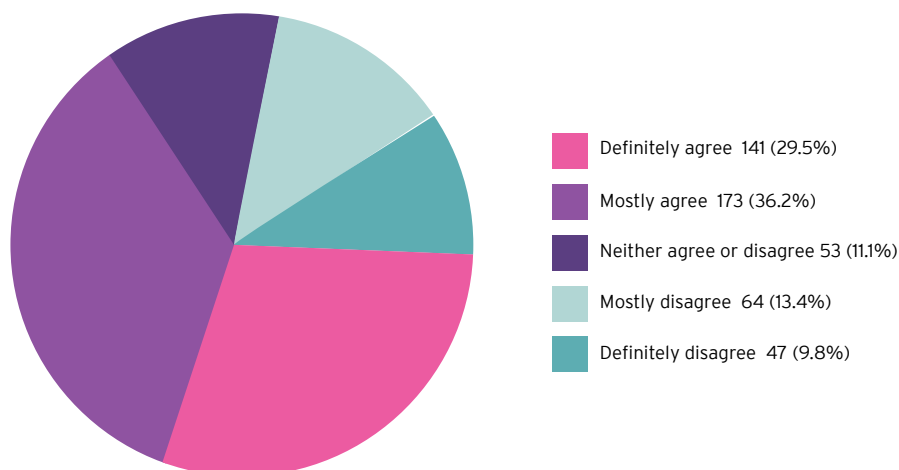
There were a total of 478 responses which is a 4.8% response rate.

Analysis

Below is an analysis of each of the 6 questions from the survey. Some questions have also been cross-referenced.

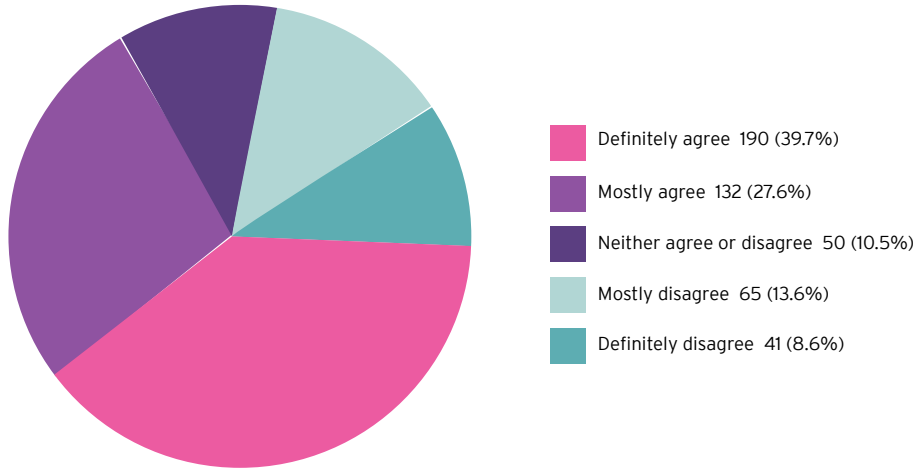
Question 1. Teaching, Learning and Assessment (matrix question)

1.1. Communication from the college has been clear since campuses closed.



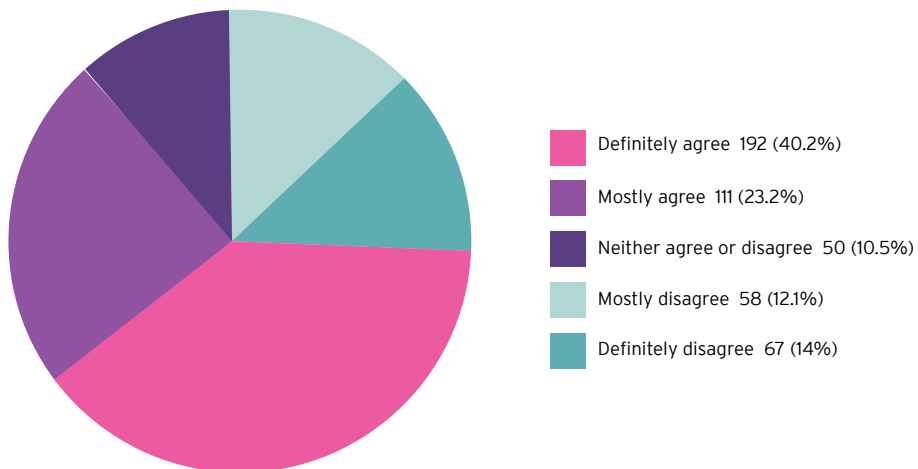
All respondents answered this question and overall 65.7% (314) agreed with the statement. Of the 65.7% (314) who agreed, 80.6% (253) agreed that they had the opportunity to discuss their progress with their Academic Tutor since working from home. Of the 23.2% (111) who disagreed that communication from the college has been clear since campuses closed, 58.6% (65) disagreed they had the opportunity to discuss progress with their Academic Tutor since working from home.

1.2 I know what I need to do to complete my course.



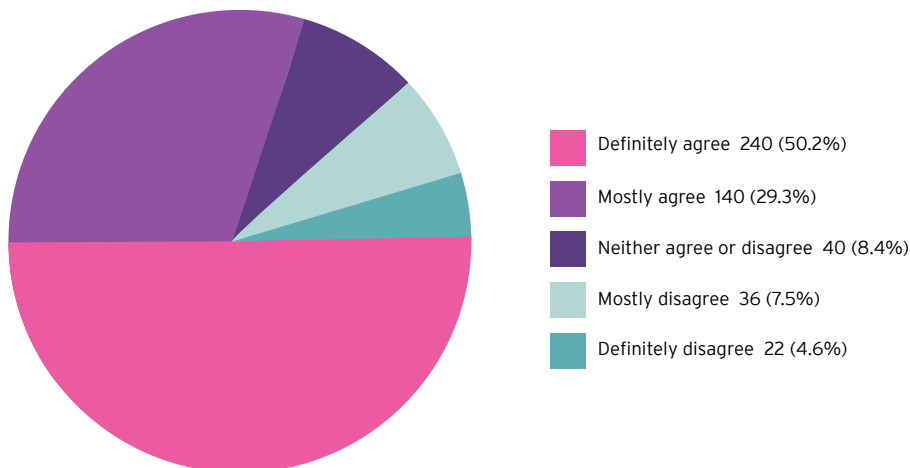
All respondents answered this question and 67.3% (322) agreed that they know what they need to do to complete their course. Of the 22.2% (106) who disagreed, 65.1% (69) disagreed that they had the opportunity to discuss their progress with their Academic Tutor since working from home.

1.3 I have had the opportunity to discuss my progress with my Academic Tutor since working from home.



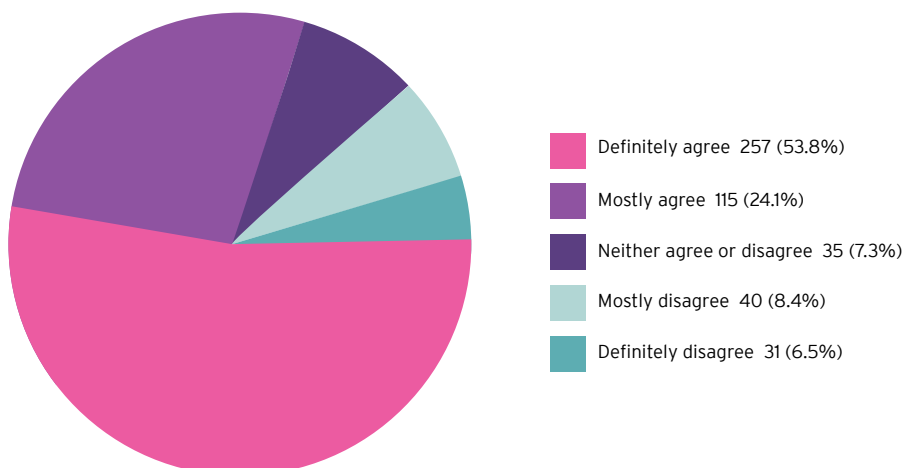
All respondents answered this questions and overall 63.4% (303) agreed with the statement. One hundred and twenty five respondents, 26.1% disagreed.

1.4 I feel confident using Blackboard and other relevant digital/online resources.



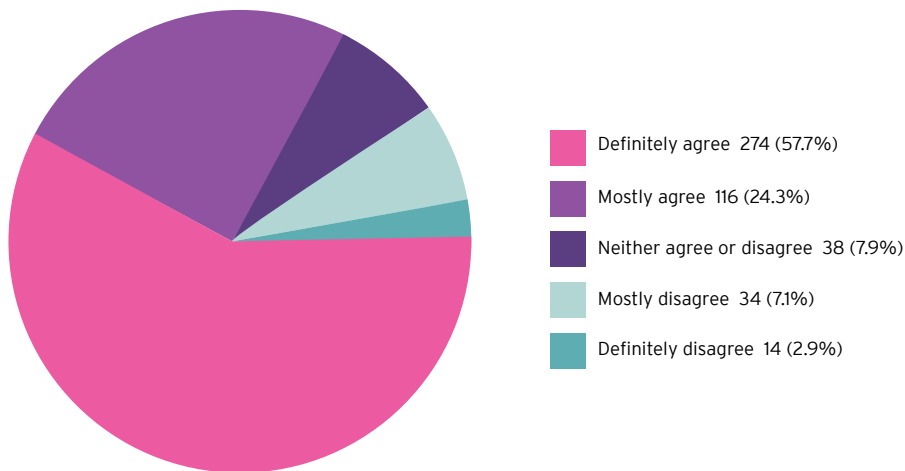
All respondents answered this question and 79.5% (380) agreed they felt confident using Blackboard and other relevant digital/online resources. Only 12.1% (58) disagreed with the statement.

1.5 I have access to all the IT equipment at home that I require to complete coursework and assessments.



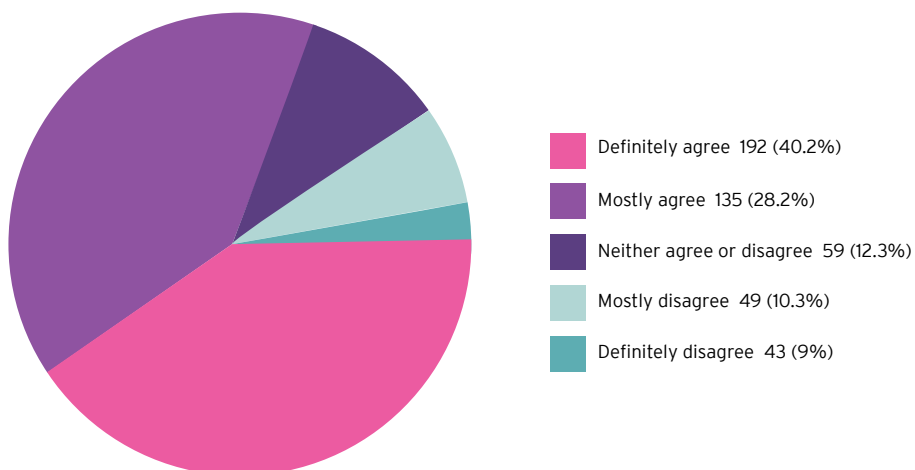
All respondents answered this question and overall 77.9% (372) agreed with the statement. Only 14.9% (71) disagreed. Of the 14.9% (71) who disagreed, 29.6% (21) also disagreed that they had suitable access to the Internet and enough data allowance.

1.6 I have suitable access to the Internet and enough data allowance.



All respondents answered this question and overall 82% (392) agreed. Only 10% (48) disagreed.

1.7 I have an appropriate place to work at home (quiet, suitable furniture etc.)



All respondents answered this question and overall 68.4% (327) agreed they have an appropriate place to work at home and 19.3% (92) disagreed with the statement.

Question 2. Please tell us more about why you chose the answers above. (open question)

Of the 478 responses, 65.3% (312) answered this question. Just over a quarter of responses were positive regarding communication received from the college since working from home. Examples of comments can be found below:

'My lecturer has been very helpful in keeping the class updated and making sure that everyone has access to adequate help and support.'

'My AT has been in constant contact.'

'Communication with college and tutors was clear under such difficult circumstances. Tutors were helpful and responded to queries and emails fast as well as Student Advice. The guidance was clear about what we need to do to complete tasks and course.'

'I am really happy with the way online teaching went. All my tutors have been great at keeping us updated and engaged in all the learning at this difficult time.'

Undertaking a thematic analysis of the qualitative data resulted in the following categories which will need to be considered in future planning activities:

Communication with teaching staff

Almost a third of responses, approximately 100 responses, related to a negative experience of the communication with teaching staff since working from home. Recurring comments within this theme included:

- **Lack of clarity of communication**
- **Lack of assessment feedback**
- **Long delays in responding to emails**
- **Last minute information regarding deadlines**
- **Inconsistency in amount of contact with lecturers**
- **Lack of contact from Academic Tutor**

Structure to teaching weeks

Around 7% of responses related to the structure of teaching since working from home. Recurring comments included:

- **Materials and instructions not robust enough for online learning**
- **Staff not turning up for scheduled sessions**
- **Video or collaborate sessions more effective than just posting materials**

Home setup for studying

A lack of time and quiet to study due to family circumstances such as looking after children or sharing space with other family members accounted for 7% of responses.

Preference to study on campus

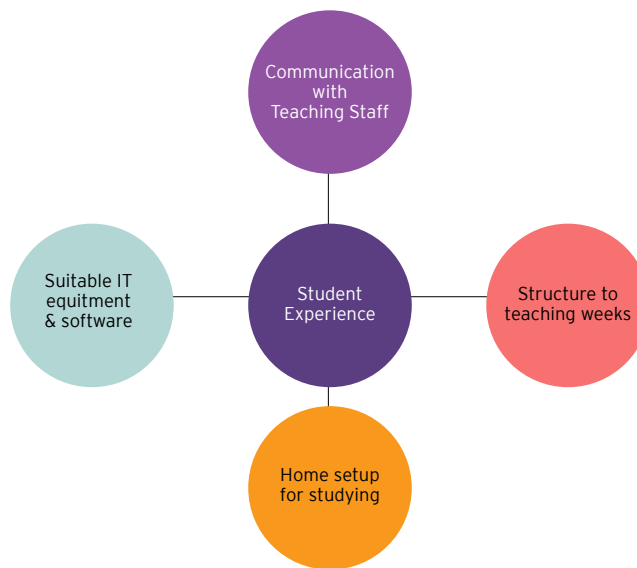
Two percent cited a preference to study on campus as it was a more suitable environment. This was mainly due to dealing with distractions at home which impacted ability to concentrate on the task at hand. Only a few respondents, 1.6% stated they preferred to study at home.

Suitable IT equipment & Software

Approximately 4.5% made a specific comment regarding the suitability of their IT equipment or software. The most common responses were:

- **No access to software required for course**
- **Older equipment which slows down efficiency**

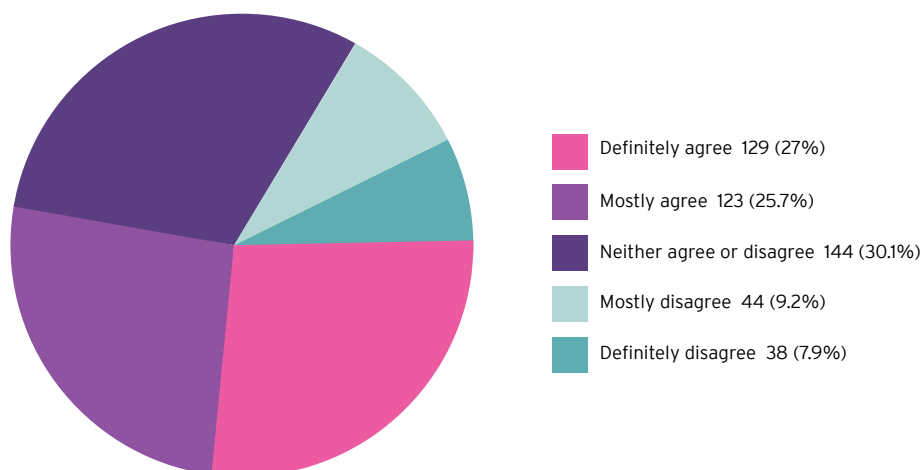
A further 3.5% were frustrated by a slow internet connection at home and only two respondents cited issues getting help from the IT Helpdesk.



Thematic response categories

Question 3. Support and Wellbeing (matrix question)

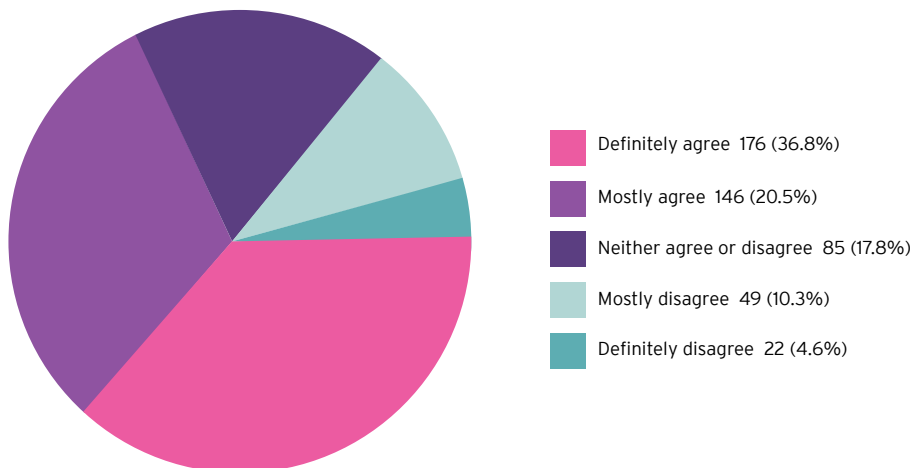
3.1 I have been supported by the College to look after my health and wellbeing.



All respondents answered this question and overall 52.7% (252) agreed that they have been supported by the College to look after their health and wellbeing.

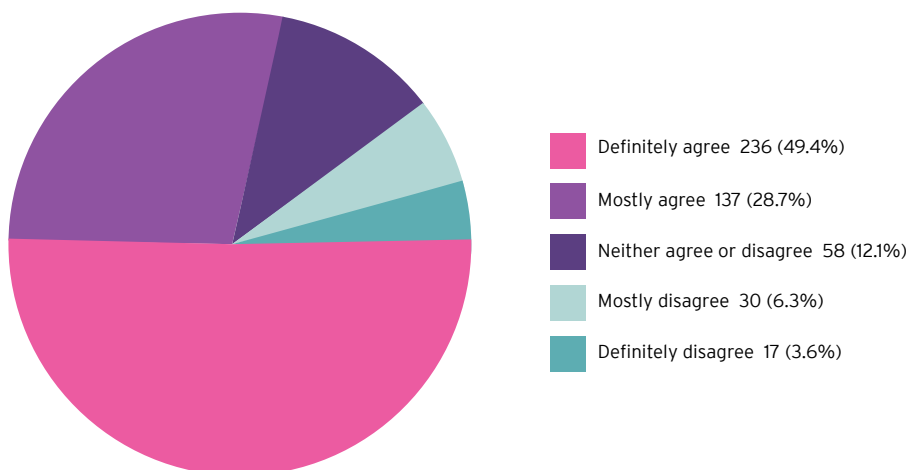
Of the 17.2% (82) who disagreed, only 29.3% (24) agreed that they know how to contact the College's support services for general information, advice and support.

3.2 I know how to contact the College's support services for general information, advice and support e.g. discretionary funding, wellbeing.



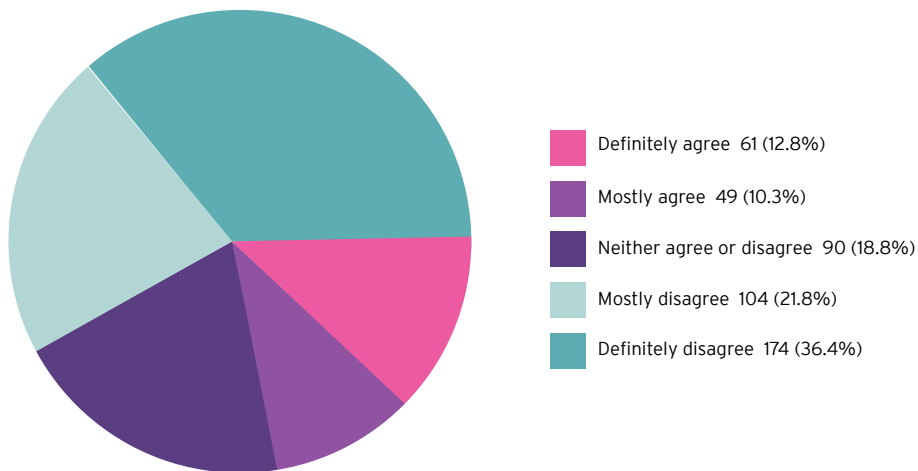
All respondents answered this question and overall 67.3% (322) agreed. Only 14.9% (71) disagreed.

3.3 I know who to contact for advice and support in relation to my course/subjects.



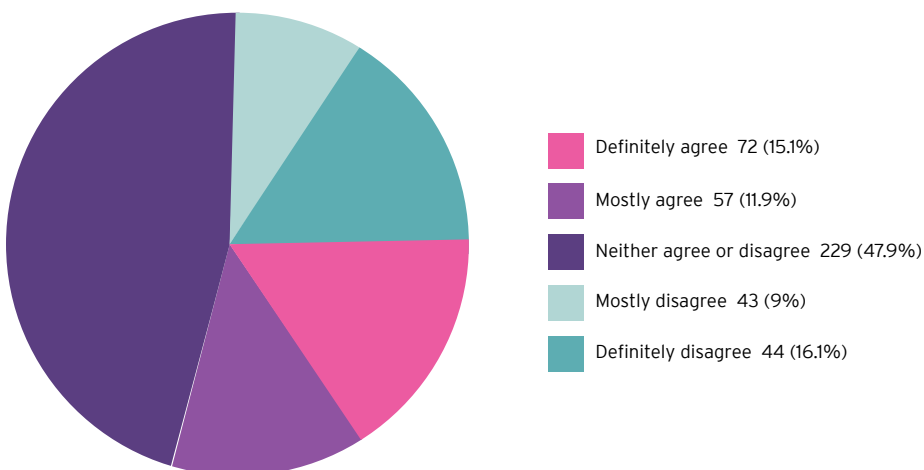
All respondents answered this question and 78.1% (373) agreed and 9.9% (47) disagreed. Of the 9.9% (47) who disagreed, only 6.4% (3) agreed that they have had the opportunity to discuss their progress with their Academic Tutor since home working.

3.4 I require more help/guidance using IT or online tools e.g. Office 365, Blackboard etc.



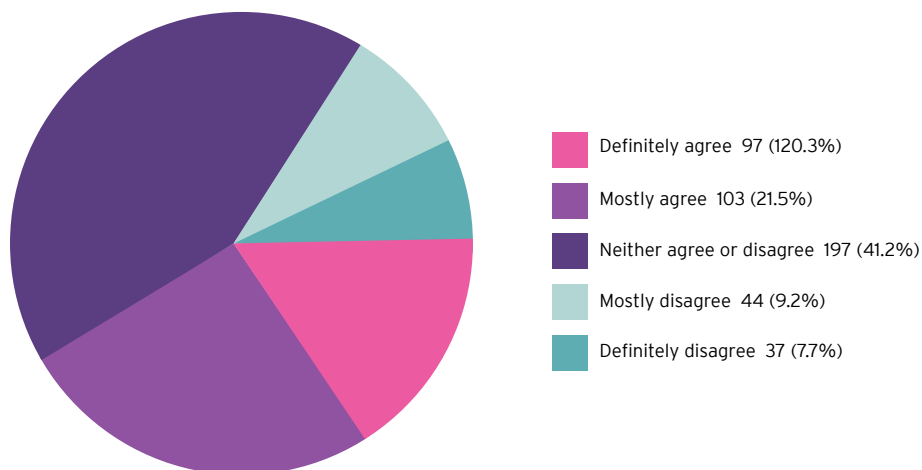
All respondents answered this question and only 23.1% (110) agreed that more help/guidance using IT or online tools was required. Overall 58.2% (278) disagreed with the statement.

3.5 I received guidance and/or support in relation to financial hardship at the right time.



All respondents answered this question and overall 27% (129) agreed and 25.1% (120) disagreed. The majority, 47.9% (229) selected neither agree not disagree.

3.6 The support services (careers, wellbeing and study skills etc.) made available and promoted by the College (e.g. Remote Revolution) have been helpful.



All respondents answered this question and overall 41.8% (200) agreed and only 16.9% (81) disagreed.

Question 4. Please tell us more about why you chose the answers above. (open question)

Out of the total responses to the survey, only 43.3% (207) answered this question and 30% (62) of the responses highlighted a positive experience regarding support provided by the College during this period of working from home. Some examples of responses can be found below:

'I really found the study skills like time management and study apps useful.'

'NESCOL has been very communicative and I know where I can find support.'

'The information and guidance were very clear and repeated over the time. I felt I had enough support to deal with problems and study efficiently.'

'There is plenty of online support and tools, we were told straight away that funding would still continue to support us and we can message our tutor directly through Teams.'

Twenty eight respondents, 13.5% mentioned concerns regarding learning and teaching, especially a lack of contact and support from teaching staff. Fifty nine respondents, 28.5% answered the question by stating this was not relevant to them or that they felt their answers reflected how they felt.

Question 5. Feedback - Is there anything else that the College could do/do better to support you during this period of working-from-home (open question)

Of the total responses to the survey, 48.7% (233) answered this question. Approximately 35% provided positive feedback or stated there wasn't anything else that the College could do to support them.

Many of the other comments are repetition of answers to previous questions, however overwhelmingly the two main themes were lack of communication from lecturers and Academic Tutors and a lack of structure to the teaching week. Other general comments included a need to provide more mental health and wellbeing support and concerns over the course completion deadlines. There were only three comments regarding issues with IT.

Question 6. If you would like to be contacted about any of the issues that you raise please leave your name, student number and preferred method of contact here: (open question)

There were 58 responses registered for this question, although some students chose not be contacted or left no details. The Student Advice and Support Team contacted all students who did provide details to provide initial follow up and then passed on the queries to the relevant Curriculum Manager to follow up.

Conclusions

Responses from all of the open questions demonstrated that for some students there was an understanding that the College has tried to deal with the current unprecedented circumstances as promptly and effectively as possible. The majority of students have an appropriate place to work from home and feel communication from the college has been clear. Access to and confidence in the use of IT and digital tools had the highest rates of positive responses. This is very encouraging when scenario planning for a blended delivery model for the start of AY2020-21.

Although the majority of students know what they need to do to complete their course and have had an opportunity to discuss their progress with their Academic Tutor, there were recurring comments citing concerns regarding a lack of communication from teaching staff, and frustration at a lack of structure of the teaching week. Those themes were prominent in both the Teaching, Learning and Assessment as well as the Support and Wellbeing questions.

It is however important to highlight that many teaching teams have been very effective in communicating clearly with their students and going above and beyond to ensure students are supported during this time. There was a lot of appreciation for the teaching teams who have utilised the Blackboard tools and offered 'live classes' through Collaborate as well as one-to-one appointments to provide clear and regular feedback.

When cross-referencing some of the questions, there was a direct link between those who disagreed that communication from the college has been clear and those who had an opportunity to discuss their progress with their Academic Tutor or those who knew who to contact about advice and support about their course or subjects. This reinforces the very important role the Academic Tutor plays in supporting a student throughout their course. It is important to note that part-time students are not allocated an Academic Tutor as such, although they will still have a main point of contact.

Support services have been well received although many didn't feel this applied to them. The majority of students know who to contact should they require support.

Recommendations

Taking into consideration all survey results and the conclusions above, recommendation are as follows:

- 1. NESCol to continue regularly signposting support services available.**
- 2. Current and prospective students must be surveyed to establish access to IT, confidence in digital skills and suitability of their home environment for study.**
- 3. It is imperative that a consistent approach is taken by all teams to provide regular communication to students and the lecturer email response time, as stated in Programme Delivery Guidelines, must be adhered to.**
- 4. As the main point of contact for a student, Academic Tutors must plan regular one-to-one meetings or drop-in sessions to allow students to get feedback on their progress.**
- 5. Teaching teams must create a weekly work plan to share with students, providing a mix of timetabled live online classes and self-directed study.**

The above recommendations will form part of the scenario planning for AY2020-21 and will be addressed via the work streams already set up. The curriculum related recommendations are also addressed in the mandatory Framework for Curriculum Planning and Delivery in AY202-2021 and related guidance which will be shared with staff w/c 22 June 2020.