



Royal Conservatoire  
of Scotland

**Technology Enhanced Learning Forum (TELF)**  
**2.30-4.30pm on Wednesday 15 April 2020**  
**via MS Teams**

**Present**

Josh Armstrong, Options Manager  
Laura Bissell, Lecturer in Contemporary Performance Practice  
Colin Broom, Jazz Coordinator  
Neal Clark, DDPF Student Representative  
Caroline Cochrane, Head of Information Services  
Steven Dunn, Learning Technologist  
Dr Lois Fitch, Assistant Principal (Convenor)  
Clare Hibberd, Lecturer in Sound  
Hilary Jones, Lecturer, Voice  
Yvonne Kennedy, Programmes Manager (Pre-HE)  
Alistair MacDonald, Lecturer in Creative and Contextual Studies  
Jamie Mackay, Head of PG Learning & Teaching Programmes  
Matthew McAllister, Lecturer in Guitar  
Jesse Paul, Fair Access Manager  
Louisa Ross, Lecturer in Modern Ballet  
Professor Aaron Shorr, Head of Keyboard  
Aidan Teplitzky, SU Vice President and Music Student Representative

**Apologies**

Lydia Demaison, Deputy Director of Human Resources  
Suzanne Daly, Academic Registrar  
Yvonne McLellan, Transitions/WACI Coordinator

**In attendance**

Dee McCrory (Secretary)

Item		Action
1	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b> The Convenor welcomed members to the first TELF meeting held via MS Teams and apologies were recorded as above. It was noted that an invitation had been extended to Senior Management Team colleagues but that other commitments meant that none could attend.	
2	<b>Previous minute and Matters Arising</b> The previous minute was confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting held on 21 January 2020.  The Convenor observed that some of the previous actions had been superseded by current circumstances. Updates to other actions were recorded in Table 2 below.	

It was noted that the Learning Technologist was working with the Recording Studio Engineer to compile a package of iPhone and Android compatible video resources available online that would help students make quality recordings from home.

Members acknowledged that regrettably, given the uncertainty as to when the RCS building will reopen, it would not be practicable or responsible to offer live assessment opportunities to all students. It was noted too that there was likely to be great disparity in terms of available resources in students' homes. The Convenor reported that the institution had received a number of requests from Music students to delay end of session recitals with this in mind and confirmed that students should be reassured that it would be the performance and not the quality of the recording that would be subject to assessment. Members predicted that the guidance and package of online resources outlined above would help to assuage at least some concerns in that regard. The Convenor noted the caveat that engagement under these new arrangements could only be expected where reasonable and highlighted that students could apply to the emergency COVID-19 Hardship Fund for small items of technology if they are able to take delivery at home.

It was agreed that submission deadlines would need to take account of varying broadband speeds for uploading and assessment criteria may also need to be revised. Members were reassured by the Convenor that the Director of Music and Programme Heads would take account of these concerns and more in a response currently being prepared which would provide clear instructions on how music assessment would operate and ensure that all involved are clear about the new arrangement and focus.

Discussion followed on other issues students and staff might face when working remotely from home including

- improving sound recording quality
- multi-occupancy properties and noise bleed issues
- varying signal strengths
- working across different time zones.

It was reported that staff and students were experimenting with different lesson formats to establish what would be most effective. One example involved practicing uploading lessons with a follow up video call which had appeared to work well. It was noted that specialist microphones had been tested but that video chat quality had not been sufficiently enhanced to merit recommended use. Members reported that students were being encouraged to use smart phones and software such as Adobe but that sound would often still be quite variable.

The Learning Technologist promoted the use of Microsoft Stream (part of Office 365) which would allow students to compress videos

	<p>and stream them to tutors. It was noted that Stream worked like YouTube but was more secure and would provide one terabyte of storage per person.</p>	
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Round virtual table sharing of practice</b></p> <p>Members were invited to share their experience of working remotely and comment on initiatives and innovations being applied in their work which could be preserved for future use and highlight what was not currently working well.</p> <p><b>Research and Knowledge Exchange</b> The Forum noted that the Research and Knowledge Exchange talks were now being delivered as online webinars and reported improved attendance.</p> <p><b>DDPF</b> It was reported that the School was sharing practice using MS Teams and Zoom and, for the CPP programme in particular, students were being encouraged to think about their home environment as a performance space and considering filming options for negotiated work. Staff were having to make allowances for students in terms of disparity of resources and what level of engagement is possible. Everyone is learning as they go along. It was noted that the move to online learning had been more challenging for Years 1 and 4 and this has been reflected in the feedback received so far about the programme's response to the lockdown. Concern that a number of students on the programme were already struggling with mental health issues was highlighted. It was noted that the Propel Festival was likely to move to a digital format and the Prisons module would take on a different context in the current circumstances. By and large students were appreciative that the institution was trying to continue as best as it could.</p> <p>The Forum noted that the Modern Ballet team had had reservations about running classes from home initially but that those fears had been overcome, following experimentation with others during the Spring break. Students had requested smaller classes which had made the sessions more manageable and teachers were using the waiting room security feature. Issues with sound quality and timetabling classes for overseas students had proved most challenging. The workaround has been to conduct live classes for some between 9-12 and provide recorded classes for others and to alternate this arrangement to give everyone the best opportunity to engage. Teachers and students are in constant contact via live chats and feedback on the programme's response has been good. Other initiatives being used have included wearing white socks for dance demonstrations and helping students to access and purchase dance flooring offcuts. The Convenor asked to be kept informed about these purchases. The Forum noted that, though it did not replace a studio environment and work so far had been more about practice</p>	

and conditioning than progressing skills development, the team had been pleasantly surprised by how well everyone had adapted.

Some production work has been able to continue with rehearsals taking place on Zoom. From a sound perspective, it was noted that a good number of production students have editing facilities at home and highlighted that the production departments have been using MS Teams for a few years so collaborative work with Directors was continuing in this format. Classes are being recorded to work around different time zones and the team have devised additional project work to ensure that all learning outcomes can be addressed.

The Voice department echoed what had been already reported and commented that the working day had been extended to take account of overseas time zones and teaching now typically happens from 8am to 8pm. Discussions have taken place about starting Term 1 two weeks earlier to accommodate content not suitable for online delivery and it was noted that this proposal would be dependent on the postponement of the Learning and Teaching Conference and other programme plans. Generally, it was reported that the programme is using all resources available with mix of Teams and Zoom for meetings and teaching and student feedback has been overwhelming positive about attempts to keep everything on track.

Members were advised to use the chat function on the TELF team page to keep sharing ideas and developing learning and teaching strategies out with the meeting.

#### **Transitions and Fair Access**

It was noted that an [online safeguarding policy](#) for Pre-HE has been developed which is due to be approved soon. The Fair Access Manager reported that the current circumstances had escalated the development of online resources and materials and was helping the team to futureproof the provision. It was noted that the team has had to prioritise its work to ensure that it provides targeted help where needed. Highlighting that the limited gallery in Teams meant that staff can only engage with four students at a time and that this cohort was more likely to have a phone than a laptop with a camera, it was reported that the team was focussing on creating and circulating how to guides to try to maximise engagement. It was also noted that the team would normally be involved in reimbursing travel expenses and was now exploring how to provide additional data package support instead. The team was also drafting plain English instructions to accompany and aid understanding of the safeguarding policy mentioned earlier. The department reported that deliver appeared to be going well so far and noted that levels of connectivity and engagement had increased.

The pre-HR update on contingency planning also referenced the online safeguarding policy mentioned above. It was noted that the guidance issued recently advising colleagues not to use Zoom meant

that Ballet delivery plans would need to be revisited. Members were also advised that Juniors and pre-Junior students do not have RCS email accounts so the department was dealing with privacy and security issues related to moving teaching and resources online. The Forum noted that Junior Ballet auditions have been postponed until the building reopens. The Convenor reported that the Head of Business Development was planning to deliver some short courses online which would be confirmed soon.

### **Music**

The Composition department representative reported that lessons were moved online before the Spring break and department talks were taking place on Teams and working well. It was reported that students are being asked to upload their work in advance and 90 minute lessons have been split into two 45 minutes sessions to aid concentration and avoid headphone fatigue.

The Jazz representative commented that contingency planning represented a large shift in terms of the final assessment for Years 3 and 4. It was noted that students are uploading lesson materials in advance and doing playalongs. Since so much of Jazz is ensemble-based, which was a difficult experience to replicate within social distancing rules, some students will need to multi-track their own work. Otherwise, Jazz lessons are working well using a mix of Teams and Zoom.

In terms of the delivery of Integrated Music Studies and general musicianship skills such aural testing, the Forum noted that this is proving quite challenging and staff are trying to find the most appropriate ways to engage students as a group. Orchestration lessons are being conducted using shared screens which is working well

The Guitar and Harp representative reported that the department realised early that it was difficult to maintain concentration online for 90 minutes. The Forum noted that tutors had broken up the lesson format to deliver 45 minutes of teaching and 45 minutes for sharing files and video chats. It was highlighted that students, grappling with a number of complexities related to working from home such as varying broadband speeds, must be afforded as much flexibility as possible to take account of individual capabilities.

The Head of Keyboard echoed what already been said and confirmed that Keyboard lessons are following a similar format. It was noted that tutors and students spend the first 45 minutes reviewing previously uploaded material and then have a 45 minute one to one lesson. The Head of Keyboard commented that the change of practice involves a lot more admin and following up but appears to be working. It was noted that the Keyboard team are also trialling a number of different streaming options to identify the best fit for the department. It was highlighted that meeting the needs of the Piano

Accompaniment students had proved most challenging since this discipline is intrinsically collaborative and cannot be meaningfully assessed online. It was noted that accompaniment assessment would be deferred until the building reopened and that the School of Music had also agreed to a large number of deferrals for students using instruments which are suitable for rehearsal purposes but not of an appropriate quality for performance at senior level.

It was suggested that the move to online working could mean a change in terms of intellectual property rules. The Head of Information Services referred members to the IPR statement ([section 9 in the Rules & Regs](#)) and confirmed that everything produced in the course of a student's learning and teaching is licensed for use by the Conservatoire, including online material.

### **Options**

For the Options portfolio, it was reported that the Alexander Technique tutor had experience of using MS Teams and would be giving students one to one rather than group lessons. It was noted that Music Technology and Sound Recording modules have had to be cancelled because students do not have access to the specialist equipment at home. Students involved have subsequently been moved to other modules. In general, Options modules have moved online and there were only a few modules left to complete.

The Head of Information Services reported on her involvement in the compilation of the online teaching safeguarding policy statement for pre-HE mentioned earlier and agreed to produce a single document of guiding principles for this group to comment on before wider circulation.

The Music Student representative noted the confirmation regarding ownership of online content and copyright and suggested RCS consider an Artist for Online Practitioner type module to help students plan for what needs to be compiled for next year and for future employment prospects. It was also highlighted that the institution must be careful to protect and support the student experience and ensure that mental health support continues to be provided. It was reported that students are currently buying equipment such as microphones to facilitate learning and assessments online. The Forum agreed that students, many of whom are now denied the opportunity to work part-time to help support their studies, should not have to fund such purchases and should be encouraged to apply for hardship funding to meet these needs. The Convenor confirmed that these applications would be considered on a case by case basis. It was further agreed that, in light of a likelihood of increased applications, cases stemming from current Covid-19 circumstances and other particular needs should be recorded separately.

The Convenor commented that the Arts would be living with the consequences of the pandemic for some time and it was important

	<p>that the institution carried forward its current thinking as a toolkit for students and considered opportunities for blended learning provision.</p> <p>The DDPF student representative commented that current circumstances have been difficult from a student perspective, especially in relation to collaborative activities. It was noted that the Production departments are quite experienced in using Teams and students had taken on tutoring roles to help other programmes. This offer of help was extended to Forum members. It was noted that the Production teams had set up discussion groups with industry professionals which have been really helpful.</p> <p>Members were encouraged to join the sound and editing software classes run by Clare Hibberd or to take up the production students' invitation for additional help.</p> <p>It was reiterated that the Conservatoire would not be assessing audio quality and members commented that if the institution is serious about preparing students to be online artists, there would be resource implications to be considered and it should look at offering good advice to make sure that, where students need to invest, they get best value for money.</p>	
4	<p><a href="#"><u>Planet E-stream</u></a></p> <p>Members were invited to comment on the Planet E-Stream platform, a link to which had been provided in advance of the meeting. The Head of Information Services reported that the package would be easily integrated into the systems presently used and it was not hugely expensive. The main observations of the discussion which followed were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy-in across the institution would be required to justify purchase</li> <li>• Ideal for current circumstances and if colleagues continue to develop digital resources when things return to normal but not worth expense if it's not going to be used</li> <li>• It was agreed that there is considerable crossover with resources already available such as MS Stream and noted that the particular driver to use Planet E-Stream related to copyright and licensing.</li> <li>• This product would address content management needs and harness current RCS content</li> <li>• Photo library would be a useful marketing feature</li> <li>• Some concern expressed in relation to cloud storage and how easily it would be to reverse if not successful</li> <li>• More time needed to experiment and consider reviews from other users, e.g. Glasgow School of Art</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that it was not the correct time to proceed with this</p>	

	development and further consideration of the pros and cons should continue for now. The Head of Information Services thanked members for the comments received and invited further feedback directly.	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>AOCB</b></p> <p>There was no further business raised.</p> <p>The Convenor thanked the Head of Information Studies and her team for the remarkable work undertaken to prepare the institution to work remotely and their continuing support to all since. It was noted that students and staff had risen to the challenge magnificently which was much appreciated. The student representatives were asked to rely this appreciation to the student body for the real community efforts being made to keep everything on track.</p> <p>Members were encouraged to use the TELF Teams page to share information on other initiatives and innovative practice they thought colleagues would find useful.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Date of next meeting:</b> Wednesday 10 June 2020, 2-4pm	



**Table 1 – ACTIONS ARISING FROM APRIL MEETING**

Item No.	Person(s)	Action	By when
3	All	to use the chat function on the TELF team page to keep sharing ideas and developing learning and teaching strategies	immediately
3	Head of Information Services	To produce a guiding principles document drawn from the online safeguarding teaching policy statement	asap
3	All	To explore opportunities for blended learning provision and the resources implications of preparing students to be online practitioners	asap
3	TBC	Hardship fund applications stemming from current circumstances and other particular needs should be recorded separately.	asap
4	All	To provide further thoughts and feedback on Planet E-Stream	asap

**Table 2 – ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING(S)**

Meeting	Item no.	Person (s)	Action	By when	Update (15/4/20)
21/1/20	2	Lecturer in Guitar	To explore the potential for CE student presentations to future meetings	In progress	3 students (1 harp/2 guitar) confirmed to present. The June meeting would hear from students about their view of online learning
21/1/20	2	All	To encourage student engagement in the Digital Insights Survey	Following its relaunch	Cancelled for now
21/1/20	3	Forum Secretary	To reschedule Strategic Vision discussion to next meeting in April	Immediately	Deferred to June meeting
		All	To forward comments on the Strategic Vision paper and ideas on the subject to the Convenor to inform the rescheduled discussion	Immediately	
21/1/20	3	Head of Information Services	To look into the availability of funding to run JISC training and explore the potential for customisation	Immediately	Cost confirmed. Not to be progressed just now but should consider how to do as CPD for staff if the lockdown

					continues much longer
21/1/20	3	All	To find ways to create a level playing field by addressing barriers to technology experienced by students from a widening access background	As part of the development of the IT strategic plan	Fair Access Manager provided an update on progress to date
21/1/20	3	All	To make recommendations to inform decision making regarding the most suitable digital platforms for discussion groups and guidance	Immediately	Deferred to June meeting
21/1/20	3	Learning Technologist	To find the best methodology to collate technology usage data	By April meeting	Deferred to June meeting
21/1/20	4	All	To make recommendations to inform decision making with a view to streamlining access to learning technologies and unifying systems	As part of the development of the IT strategic plan	Deferred to June meeting
21/1/20	5	Secretary	To invite the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange to speak to the June Forum	Immediately	confirmed
20/2/19	2	All	Ideas for best practice sharing presentations to be directed to the Head of Information Services or the Quality Assurance Manager	ongoing	Keep on agenda
2/10/19	2	SU Vice President	to promote student presentations to the Forum	Immediately and ongoing	ongoing
2/10/19	3	Assistant Principal	To progress work to use responses to the survey to enhance recruitment and appointment processes in consultation with HR department	Immediately	Not yet progressed. Keep on the agenda
2/10/19	3	SU Vice President	To promote the JISC Digital Insights Survey for students and encourage responses	Following survey launch in November	Further promotion following relaunch required
2/10/19	4	Assistant Principal	To address LTC19 feedback on the digital estate and relationship between RCS systems in consultation with the Director of Finance and Estates	immediately	Being address as part of LTC follow-up
2/10/19	4	Digital Film and Television Tutor	To explore other possible leasing arrangements to equip smaller spaces such as ballet studios in consultation with the	immediately	Keep on agenda

			Principal and Director of Finance and Estates		
2/10/19	4	All	To establish key areas for further discussion at future meetings	immediately	Members invited to forward suggestions to AP, HoIS or S
2/10/19	4/6	Assistant Principal	to invite the Principal and members of the Board of Governors to attend the next meeting	immediately	To be progressed