Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis meant that IntoUniversity had to close our centres from March to September, pausing all face-to-face support for our young people. However, our teams immediately offered bespoke remote support to our Academic Support students, many of whom have been attending our centres regularly over a period of years.

Thanks to strong relationships with our young people, IntoUniversity teams not only understood students’ academic needs but also their situation at home. This placed IntoUniversity staff in a unique position to be able to offer individual support to these students during the school closure period. We were also able to continue to support older students with careers-related opportunities and university applications, which proved particularly important following the confusion this year around how grades were awarded.

We realise that the longer-term impact of COVID-19 will fall unduly heavily on our students - whether it be the consequences of an extended period of lost school learning or the inability to take advantage of new digital provisions, which their better-off peers have at their fingertips. Learning from our own lockdown experiences, IntoUniversity will be here for them throughout the challenges ahead.

How did the pandemic affect our usual outputs?

We paused all face-to-face support for students in March. Inevitably, we have supported fewer young people than in a normal year; we had already supported tens of thousands of students before the national lockdown.

Despite the centre closures, we were determined to continue providing support to our students remotely. The remainder of this report details this support and its impact.

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Words have been colour-coded: Negative Neutral Positive

Word cloud summarises student responses when asked for 3 words that described COVID/lockdown for them1. Larger words were chosen by more students.

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1. IntoUniversity student survey August 2020. 118 students were surveyed.
How did we tackle these needs?

27,000 phone conversations with over 3,300 students

Over 900 students taking part via our online platform

Remote Academic Support Curriculum

Curriculum themed around Politics, Philosophy and Economics, and designed to cover the learning aims specified in the national curriculum.

Available through interactive online platform, video content to introduce each session, with resources to support and facilitate effective mentoring meetings.

Existing relationships moved online allowing students to continue to receive 1-2-1 academic and pastoral support from a mentor.

Email communication and online calls facilitated by IntuUniversity staff.

Newsletters with resources to support and facilitate effective mentoring meetings.

Over 2,000 students supported through phone 1:1s

351 students had 1,700 meetings with their mentors

Over 2,000 students received careers support

497 students received careers support

University Applications

Guidance for students going through clearing and adjustment / fields of study switch, impartial and reliable support for students dealing with the fallout from use of teacher-assessed grades, support for students dealing with the calculation of calculated grades and subsequent appeal.

3-week ‘Big City Bright Future’ online internship

Seasoned Entrepreneurs from a variety of industries offering online internship opportunities.

5 day ‘AcademEconomies’ and designed to cover the learning aims specified in the national curriculum.

Montecore and study skills for independent learning.

Applications, including guidance on university / student finance and a variety of industries.

3-week ‘Big City Bright Future’ online internship

Support for students dealing with the fallout from use of teacher-assessed grades.

5 day ‘Academ

Seasoned Entrepreneurs from a variety of industries.

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What was the impact of our support?

Academic Support Calls & Remote Curriculum
As a result of IntoUniversity’s support during lockdown...

- 74% of students felt more confident about having to work independently
- 69% of students felt more positive about returning to school
- 73% of students felt more connected to other people because of the calls

“I like that the IntoUniversity team gives excellent feedback. The feedback is constructive and follows a format which first identifies what was good and then challenges me to do better.”
Southampton student

“My daughter especially knows that you will call. Anything she is struggling with, she puts on the side and waits for your support, which is truly amazing.”
Parent of London students

“The calls encourage them to do their work so they can talk about it on the phone. It's good to know someone cares.”
Parent of London students

Online Mentoring
Of students who took part in e-mentoring during lockdown...

- 69% felt e-mentoring had helped them with their schoolwork during lockdown
- 72% felt e-mentoring had helped keep them motivated during lockdown

University Applications Phone Support
Given school closures, the use of calculated grades, then the subsequent switch to centre-assessed grades, we think the short-term support we were able to provide before, during and after results day may have had a particular impact on students’ university applications this year. Achieving a university place is the result of years of hard work by students. We provide them with support throughout this process and the data we collect suggests our support is effective.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>% of students progressing to University</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IntoUniversity 2020 alumni</td>
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<td>71%</td>
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“I was so lost before IntoUniversity started helping me. I now have my university place and student finance sorted and I couldn’t have done it without you.”
London Year 13 student

“Thank you for the call and email. You made me feel a lot better about this whole situation.”
London Year 13 student

Careers Support
153 students took part in the 2020 Big City Bright Future internship, which was delivered online for the first time as a result of lockdown.

The pre- and post- internship skills questionnaire showed a statistically significant increase in each of the 10 learning areas measured. The biggest increase was seen for ‘In-depth industry knowledge’, with ratings increasing from an average of 5.5 to 7.8 (out of 10).

“I’ve become more confident in myself and my networking skills, I feel more apt to work in a team and communicate after all the breakout sessions we’ve had. This has been a life-changing opportunity.”
Brighton Big City Bright Future Online Internship participant

1. Based on collecting data for 4,972 students out of a cohort of 9,660 – a 51% sample. For a full description of how we calculate our progression rate and further analysis of what it tells us about our impact, please see our 2019 impact report.
Lockdown support: One student’s experience

Funmilola Jempeji

Lola has been working with Into University Brent for six years. Lockdown hit in the crucial months of her Year 12. Lola feels she missed out on learning as a result, and found adjusting to remote schoolwork hard.

“Our teachers set more work than usual to keep us busy. However, it meant there was too much and it piled up, which was stressful. I also found it harder to be taught online, as it’s not as easy to consume information as it is in person.”

In weekly calls, Into University staff helped Lola with her UCAS preparation, held practice interviews for work experience, and checked how she was feeling about revision and online exams. Lola’s mentor, Wardah, kept in touch remotely too.

“Having Into University call each week helped support me a lot during this time. I already found it hard, being at home trying to motivate myself to do online work. Not having people that were a phonecall away would have made it a lot harder.”

Lola appreciated knowing she could turn to the Brent team, personally as well as academically.

“The calls helped me stay positive and reminded me that they are there if we ever need support, which was so important at that time. Not being in physical contact with Into University also didn’t stop us from having help with my applications and personal statement.”

Now in Year 13, Lola feels it’s important not to despair at the uncertain journey ahead.

“It’s something no one has experienced before - hope is what we need to all keep.”
Supporting students’ recovery

A key aspect of our return to face-to-face support is our focus on well-being and helping students to recover and re-engage with learning. During the first half-term of Academic Support, teams prioritised creating a safe environment in both the physical sense - carefully enacting the risk assessments put in place to ensure COVID-safe classrooms - and in the psychological and emotional sense, using trauma-informed practices to nurture and support the young people on their return. These included:

- Creating a team plan to greet young people in a consistent way
- Having a consistent seating plan
- Using displays to show positive messages alongside safety messages

In order to tailor support for each individual, teams Red-Amber-Green (RAG) rated the wellbeing, social skills and academic needs of every Academic Support student. Guidance for this assessment was underpinned by a resilience framework developed by Daniel and Wassell, and an evidence-based oracy framework that has been developed by our oracy lead, Emily Magrath. The new Government guidance issued in November necessitated reducing Academic Support sessions from 15 to 12 students. The RAG rating, along with other information about safeguarding, helped centre staff to triage students and ensure that the most vulnerable students could still access face-to-face support.

How has the pandemic impacted the charity’s growth plans?

IntoUniversity’s growth plan has, so far, not been significantly affected by the pandemic, with five new centres launching in four new cities in 2021. However, lockdown did delay two centre openings: the launch of our Norwich centre was pushed back 6 months from September 2020 to April 2021 and our Maryhill centre, in Glasgow, has been pushed back from April to September 2021.

By the end of 2021 we will have

- 36 centres and extension projects
- 17 towns and cities across England and Scotland
Thank you

Our work supporting young people during the lockdown was only possible with the generous support of our funding partners, donors, volunteers, trustees, advisory panel members and staff. Our sincere thanks extends to all of you. There are far too many to list by name (and some supporters wish to remain anonymous) but we are incredibly grateful for your dedication to helping our young people during this challenging time.

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University of Oxford
Pembroke College, Cambridge
The Peter Cundill Foundation

We also receive support through Uni Connect to support young people in Leeds and DANCOP to support young people in Nottingham. Through the Royal National Children’s Springboard Foundation we support young people to take up boarding school bursaries.
For further information on our impact work please contact

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