2020: A Year Like No Other!
Vice-Chancellor’s Report to University Court
December 4th 2020
Covid-19 – Impact and Response

• Jan-Feb: anticipating Covid’s arrival
• March-June: lockdown, WfH, transition to online, UNCOVER research group, civic response
• July-Sept: opening up, Covid mitigations, prep for blended learning and supports
• Oct-Dec: return, outbreaks, anxiety and exhaustion
• Towards 2021: winter risks, vaccines, recovery
Jan-Feb: anticipating Covid’s arrival

- Bristol’s China presence and intelligence
- Davidson and Matthews coronavirus research
- Lessons from the Antipodes and Italy
- Advance purchase of key supplies
- Recent investment in Bristol Institute of Learning and Teaching (BILT), digital education and IT capability
March-June: lockdown, working from home, transition to online, civic and research response

• Early Easter closure
• Remarkable transition to online within 4 weeks
• Majority of students/staff operating from home
• Rent refunds – first Covid-related financial hit
• Major disruption of research activities
• Furloughing non-essential staff
• Unprecedented engagement with government
March-June: **University Covid-19 Emergency Response** (UNCOVER) – some topics

- Virology and pathobiology of SARS-CoV-2
- Immune response and vaccine design
- Druggable pocket in spike protein
- Wider societal consequences – domestic violence, economic impact
- Key trials of vaccine and corticosteroids
July-Sept: opening up, Covid mitigations, blended learning and working

- Rendering our campus Covid-secure for re-opening (>300 buildings)
- Student surveys and workshops to inform development of blended learning offer
- Partnership with Bristol SU on welcome and induction
- Facilitating international students – e.g. online options and charter flights from China
- Extensions to research contracts, including PhD studentships
Oct-Dec: return, outbreaks, anxiety and exhaustion

- Staggered return, online welcome and induction
- Covid-19 outbreak in Halls of Residence
- Challenge of delivering in-person and online learning simultaneously
- Increased staff workload - capacity constraints and support for self-isolating students
- Supporting student and staff mental health
- Staff and student communications
Following data trends:
student cases

- Red – halls of residence
- Blue – houses of multiple occupancy
- Yellow – not known
Towards 2021: winter risks, vaccines, recovery

• Staggered departure of students for holidays supported by lateral flow device and PCR testing
• Staggered return also supported by testing
• Vaccine results offer hope for a better 2020-21 academic year
• Heightened sense of Bristol’s civic role
• Playing our part in economic and societal recovery – TQ campus, Western Gateway
Ongoing uncertainty....

- Cumulative financial consequences of Covid
- Logistical challenge of vaccine rollout
- Augar review of HE funding
- Impact of Brexit
- Scale of the recession
- Likely cabinet re-shuffle
- Ongoing geopolitical tensions
A heartfelt ‘thank you’ to our alumni, friends and partner organisations for their incredible and much-valued support during these challenging times.