COVID-19 - COLLEGE CLOSURE COMMUNICATION PROJECT: SUMMARY

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Background

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in line with Government of Ireland guidelines, Trinity College Dublin closed its doors in March 2020
- For College staff and students, this closure represented a sudden cessation of in-person, face-to-face communication for academic, occupational, and social purposes
- As a result of College closure and the ensuing change in the manner and mode of communication, we devised a survey to profile the communication experiences of all those across the College Community

Research Aims & Rationale

To profile:
I. The changes in the nature and form of communicative interactions and people’s reactions to those changes
II. The tools people used (e.g. online platforms) to communicate and how well these worked for them
III. The facilitators and barriers to adopting new modes and styles of communication

Methodology

- Online survey to explore communication experiences during College closure
- Both closed and open questions were included, which collected measurable outcomes and accounts of participants’ experiences
- Survey opened 21/05/2020, closed 01/07/2020

RESPONSE RATES
1698 valid responses received:
- Male 29%
- Female 70%
- Other 1%
- College Staff 31%
- UG students 49%
- PG Students 20%

Between staff and students, 16% were members of a College club/society/social group that may have been impacted by closure

Findings & Implications: Quick Glance

I. Changes in interaction amount & quality

COMMUNICATION EASE SINCE CLOSURE

- 45% uncomfortable 😞
- 39% comfortable 😊
- 16% neutral 😐

"I feel like I'm being watched without knowing who's watching"  
"My voice became hoarse and strained very quickly"

COMFORT WITH ONLINE COMMUNICATION

II. Communication tools & success

- 70% used video calling much more but this was not without its problems
- 46% more easily distracted while on calls
- 75% more self-conscious about their appearance on video calls
- 67% made effort to make the background more visually appealing

"The online platform was easy to use... but I found I was easily distracted during the lectures"
"I feel like I'm being watched without knowing the reaction"

"My voice became hoarse and strained very quickly"

Implications:
- IT Services to continue to support easy access to video calling and associated software
- College to continue to be mindful of staff and student health, including maintenance of a safe home-working environment

Conclusion

- Action plan needed to support better communication and socialisation during closure(s) to maintain the Trinity experience
- College should continue to support the physical and mental health of the Trinity Community

Thank you to the College Community for co-operating with this research
A more detailed report will be available in due course

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