**Level 3 Scaffolding and Support**

**Abstract**

The role of Level 3 Scaffolding and Support lead had been created due to multiple reasons. The main reason is the impact COVID-19 had on education generally and on GCSE and A-level specifically. In addition, the University of Sunderland take pride in having large numbers of wide participants. This unique intake creates a need to a unique support system. It is also important to highlight that having A-level Biology is not compulsory to study medicine which creates a huge gap between non-A-level biology students and the rest of the students who have A-level biology or are postgraduates. Currently 10% of year 1 cohort do not have A-level Biology. Lastly, the steep learning curve between college and medicine puts undergraduates in a disadvantage hence having this support system is vital.

In summary we have four main reasons to why we need this scaffolding system, and I will expand on each one of them:

1. *COVID-19 impact on education*COVID-19 has changed the learning experience for all stages. Some of the adverse impacts are loss of education time, loss of communication and study skills and increased anxiety related to the sudden change which in some cases led to depression. COVID-19 has also led us towards virtual learning and changed the concept of learning environment. This has originated the need for special support and scaffolding measures.
2. *Wide participant intake*

The wide participant intake ensures that everyone regardless of their background has the chance to unlock their full potential. Learners from underrepresented groups might not have all the essential skills to reach their full potential and hence the need to provide the support for these learners is mandatory.

1. *The lack of A-level Biology*It is evident that Biology and medicine go hand in hand. Students who have A-level Biology will access the medical sciences more readily compared to the ones who do not have it. A-level Biology provide the fundamental concepts to understanding the pathophysiology of disease and treatment.
2. *The steep learning curve between college and medicine*There is a wide gap between further education and higher education and the transition is rather challenging. Adding the COVID-19 impact to the equation complicates this hurdle and the necessity for support becomes more evident.

The first question that might come to mind is ‘*’Where did the funding for this role come from?*’’. The answer is from the University Teaching Continuity Group. The University initially funded 12 hours per week Academic tutor (AT) then decided to top it up to salaried AT level at 22 hours per week. The Scaffolding and Support Lead has been appointed as a Lecturer in Physiology on 10/01/2022.

So far, the Scaffolding and Support Lead has offered resources that cover the A-level syllabus with extra depth to level the playing field through ‘Flying Start’ in the summer (via the Visual Learning Environment). He also offered optional face-to-face and online support sessions for large or small groups (requested by students via Padlet/ email). The students have provided positive feedback about the Scaffolding and Support offered to them and they have mentioned that in end of unit feedback.