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Converting COVID-19 Disruption into Joint Military Education and Training: The Australian Defence Force Academy's Military Education and Training in the Pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 Environments

Peter James Leavy, Shevahn Telfser, and Jeffrey Howard

Abstract: The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has for many years recognised the importance of generating future leaders in an environment that builds an intellectual edge. A coordinated joint-Service education and training strategy is the foundation principle by which the ADF has set about to achieve this outcome. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many aspects of society including the Australian education system, challenging traditional behaviours and assumptions on learning and teaching pedagogy. The education sector has scrambled to create a degree of continuity in the learning pathway during 2020 with rapid adaptation to new technologies and the implementation of practices that were not considered suitable for mainstream education previously. A significant disruption to the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) military and academic education programs was an undeniable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While disruptive, the 2020 pandemic created opportunities to reimagine the military educational and training environment in a way that is future focused and potentially more resilient to volatility. The ADFA Charter requires that Australian Defence Force midshipmen and officer cadets, and other international partners, receive a balanced and liberal university education within a military context. In the unique joint-Service and multinational military context of the ADFA, the potential for future capability deficiencies due to disruption during 2020 have been mitigated through the rapid adoption of virtual environments. Studying the experiences of ADFAs military and trainee officers (TO) from 2010 to 2020, this paper explores military education and training pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 environments. The objective is to examine the needs, tools, and initiatives that may serve as change agents for the future military education and training landscape.

Keywords: Military Capability; ADFA Military Education; Pandemic Disruption; COVID-19; Pedagogy; Progression and Graduation Rates.

Introduction

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) recognises the importance of generating future leaders in an environment that builds an intellectual edge. The ADF Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) framework is a coordinated education and training strategy established to achieve this outcome. The Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) provides the ab-initio training component of the JPME through a combination of joint military education and training (JMET), and university education. ADFA is the primary pathway for joint military trained, degree-qualified entry into the ADF. Annually, ADFA educates and trains approximately 1,000 midshipmen and officer cadets, collectively referred to as trainee officers (TO), concurrently completing full-time undergraduate

programs and initial military training. COVID-19 had the potential to disrupt the education and training objectives of ADFA, forcing the rapid and reactive exploration of alternative means to ensure the achievement of the required outcomes for the ADF.

The ADFA Charter requires that TO receive a balanced and liberal university education within a military context. Graduates are expected to have positively developed their character, leadership, and professionalism in an environment where they have built a cohort of joint-Service, multinational peers, who will grow and mature together through their careers. Peer networks span service, year of enlistment, employment categories, and domestic and international cohorts. These networks are highly valued in terms of ADFA outcomes, underpinning the ADF doctrinal approach to joint warfare through education and training pedagogy.

Historically, TO experience a concurrent military and university program delivered on-site at ADFA that relies upon a traditional approach to education and training in a full residential environment with two semesters from February to June and then July to November. Undergraduate degree awards are delivered in partnership with an accredited Australian university in the discipline areas of business, humanities, science, and engineering. During the academic semesters, approximately 80 percent of the daily routine for TO focusses on university study. The remaining 20 percent of semester time is dedicated to military activities including leadership, physical training, and ceremonial drill. Pre-COVID-19, there was limited use of online or blended pedagogy in either military and university programs with the mode of delivery for the JMET and university courses in a traditional face-to-face context using a combination of lectures, tutorials, and practicums.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many aspects of society, including the Australian education system, challenging traditional behaviours and assumptions on learning and teaching pedagogy. Conventional pedagogical principles, often carried over from the industrialisation of education during the twentieth century, have been tested during 2020. The education sector scrambled to create a degree of continuity in the learning pathway during 2020 with rapid adaptation to new technologies and the implementation of practices that were not considered suitable for mainstream education previously. As a result, change has encouraged the emergence of new and novel education and training attitudes in the military largely driven out of a necessity to focus on the required outcomes rather than an adherence to historical custom and practice. Enforced creativity in the educational approach at ADFA required modifications to the structure of delivery and redesign of assessments, challenging academic and military staff, and TO.

The transition away from traditional military pedagogy at ADFA during the COVID-19 pandemic aimed to maintain TO progression and graduation rates, a critical requirement in meeting ADF capability need. The ADF workforce pipeline is not resilient enough to survive a personnel deficit associated with a pandemic-enforced training suspension. Graduation from ADFA requires the successful completion of the three-year integrated program of

military education and training in conjunction with university undergraduate studies. In an attempt to maintain TO progression during the pandemic, ADFA rapidly deployed technology-enabled learning using a combination of synchronous and asynchronous virtual environments to maintain essential training and education during periods of enforced lockdown and restrictions on physical gatherings. While these technologies have been the core business for distance and open-learning providers, the blended pedagogy was largely untested at ADFA, or more broadly in an Australian military learning context.

Many commentators have highlighted the complexity of the disruption of COVID-19 to the learning environments, making it difficult to identify a singular cause-and-effect relationship in investigating the impact on education. The evolving nature of the pandemic and its influence on broader societal expectations and behaviors suggests that the impacts will continue beyond the coming months and years. This paper is selective in its examination of the disruption caused by COVID-19 through the impact on TO progression and graduation rates. The current and continuing impacts of disruption on education outcomes at ADFA will be restricted to an analysis of TO progression graduation rates combined with survey data obtained from students and staff during annual program evaluations.

The 2020 Context

The 2020 Year 1 intake began in January, consistent with the normal ADFA intake procedure: TO arrive at ADFA and complete four weeks of intensive military education and training using a traditional face-to-face delivery mode. This is the platform under which ADFA structures the JMET program for TO for the duration of their time at ADFA. Concurrent to the induction of new TO, returning Year 2 and 3 TO complete an intensive JMET period during January with a focus on development of military leadership attributes.

At the conclusion of the intensive 2020 JMET period, TO commenced their academic program in February under a standard pre-COVID-19 calendar. The typical daily routine for TO at the beginning of 2020 followed the normal face-to-face delivery of two hours of JMET between 8 and 10 a.m., followed by up to eight hours of university lectures, laboratory sessions, and tutorials. On occasion, additional JMET periods were scheduled after 6 p.m. for visits to ADFA by senior defense leaders and guest lecturers.

Disruption to the TO program began on March 13, three weeks into the 2020 academic program, as a result of the hard lockdown restrictions imposed in Australia by federal and state governments. Although each state and territory had different responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, in practical terms, there were strong similarities in the application of restrictions. Hard lockdown mandated stay-at-home orders, requiring closure of office environments, education facilities, and public spaces. The hard lockdown restrictions impacted ADFA for a period of two months requiring significant modifications to JMET, university, and social activities of TO. While not required by government, full restrictions

to education activities at ADFA extended for the duration of semester one and partial restrictions during semester two.

The nature of the pandemic required rapid modifications to the pedagogical approach within JMET and the university. Accommodating the restrictions of social distancing became the highest priority intervention for ADFA to maintain the integrity of the training and education programs. While the adaptations in semester one were reactive to meet TO immediate learning needs, as the pandemic extended into semester two, more strategic decision-making on interventions emerged. Significant reprioritization of resources into areas of infrastructure, personnel, and educational redesign were required to support the interventions and adjustments associated with the modified delivery of education.

Methodology

The analysis covers two periods, pre-COVID-19 (2010-2019) and COVID-19 (2020). Pre-COVID-19, ADFA used the Defense Training Model (DTM) to analyse, design, develop, implement, and evaluate military education and training pedagogy. Using this formal and strategic approach, the ADF is able to identify the specific and complex capability attributes of a joint officer and ensure they are embedded into the education and training program. Particular attention focusses on the individual graduate behaviours and attributes as identified by external reviews, including by the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, in addition to the skills required to meet the emerging operational and technological requirements.[1] The DTM informed the development of the ADFA military training during the pre-COVID-19 period, coinciding with a nomenclature change from Academy Military Education and Training (AMET) to JMET as shown in Table 1.

For the second period in this analysis, COVID-19 spanned the 2020 academic year. The JMET program was not due for a major review during 2020 under the rolling DTM evaluation schedule. Changes in the design and implementation of the JMET program that occurred in 2020 were the result of conditions imposed by federal and state governments, and by the ADF in response to the emerging pandemic. Face-to-face education activities at ADFA ceased for both military and university in March 2020. Jurisdictional direction required ADFA to modify and transition programs within a one-week period in order to minimise learning disruption. Due to the heavy reliance on residential programs at ADFA, a number of changes to the educational program required immediate implementation, including the transition to alternative learning modes from face-to-face learning in classrooms, lecture theatres, and laboratories.

The analysis in this paper was inclusive of all TO at ADFA between 2010 and 2020. The individual impact of Service was not considered a variable of analysis in this paper. For analytical purposes, the data is presented as Cohort Intake Year (CIY). The progression data was sourced from personnel records and survey data by the ADFA military evaluation unit. The qualitative student experience surveys used in this paper are also attributed to CIY. The CIY of 2018 are the ADFA graduates in 2020 and their survey results in 2020 analyse their experience during their third year of study.

Cohort Intake Year	Year 1 (Total TO)	Year 2 (Total TO)	Year 3 (Total TO)
2010	AMET (330)	AMET (279)	AMET (254)
2011	AMET (363)	AMET (309)	AMET (245)
2012	AMET (327)	AMET (283)	AMET (245)
2013	AMET (340)	AMET (280)	AMET (247)
2014	AMET (370)	AMET (293)	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (260)
2015	AMET (332)	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (292)	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (263)
2016	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (336)	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (264)	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (243)
2017	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (322)	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (289)	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (267)
2018	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (336)	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (328)	JMET- COVID-19 (317)
2019	JMET Pre-COVID-19 (378)	JMET COVID-19 (338)	JMET COVID-19 (335)
2020	JMET COVID-19 (378)	JMET COVID-19 (362)	(JMET COVID-19) (not available)

Table 1. Military training program for cohort year groups 2010-2020. Bracketed numbers indicate headcount at the commencement of the period.

Progression rates provide a tool by which educational achievement can be measured between cohorts. Higher progression rates are considered to be positively correlated to greater effectiveness of the education program. The ADFA progression rate is measured using:

- Within year – Number of TO successfully completing a year/number of TO in cohort at commencement of that year.

- To graduation – Number of graduating TO in an intake cohort/number of TO in intake cohort at commencement at ADFA. Progression rates to graduation will be a cumulative of progression rate over the duration of their program.

Progression rate, expressed as a percentage rather than absolute numbers, normalizes the influence of the size of the individual cohort year, allowing comparison and analysis across the period. Annual surveys are routinely provided to all ADFA TO at the conclusion of the academic year. The survey results are expressed as a percentage of the cohort, indicating a favourable or positive agreement for a variety of qualitative measurements relating learning experience. The data analysed in this paper, uses Year 3 surveys from the 2012, 2014, and 2018 CIY. The three data sets generated provide two pre-COVID-19 and one COVID-19 periods for the comparative analysis.

Statistical analysis is not used on the data set as only a single COVID-19 data set is available at the time of this writing.

Results

Graduation rates. The average graduation rate during the pre-COVID-19 period (CIY 2010-2017) was 75 percent (Figure 1). While having variation, evidence suggests an improvement in graduation rates in the pre-COVID-19 period increasing from 77 percent in CIY 2010 to 80 percent in the CIY 2017. There are three clear aberrations from the upward trend with graduations in CIY 2011, 2014, and 2016 (68 percent, 70 percent, and 75 percent respectively) which are well below the trend of improving graduation rates in the pre-COVID-19 period. The graduation rate of CIY 2018 completing ADFA in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic was 87 percent. This exceeded previous graduation rates in the pre-COVID-19 cohorts from 2010 to 2017.

Progression rates. The average progression rate for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 during the pre-COVID-19 period (CIY 2010-2017) was 93 percent, 84 percent, and 76 percent respectively (Figure 1). Similar to the graduation trend, progression rates gradually increased in the pre-COVID-19 period with two clear aberrations from the upward trend in the CIY 2011 during Year 3 (70 percent), and the CIY 2014 during Year 2 (71 percent). The progression rate for Year 1 (CIY 2020), Year 2 (CIY 2019), and Year 3 (CIY 2018) in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic was 94 percent, 90 percent, and 87 percent respectively. This exceeded previous progression rates in the pre-COVID-19 cohorts from 2010 to 2017.

While variations exist over the 10-year period, average graduation and progression rates have increased. The exception observed in CIY 2011 Year 3 progression is attributed to an incident of serious misconduct in 2011 resulting in a Supreme Court trial in 2013. Sensitive internal data from CIY 2010 supports the attribution of the issues with progression to this event. A second significant event occurred in 2015 reducing CIY 2014 Year 2 progression by approximately 14 percent. The decline was associated with a serious motor vehicle incident in which multiple TOs sustained significant injuries leading to medical discharges. While the CIY 2016 had a lower progression in both Year 1 and Year 2, the cumulative effect negatively impacting graduation from ADFA, TO were retained in the ADF by transferring to non-degree qualified workforces. Despite the TO not graduating ADFA, their retention in the ADF reduced the impact on workforce capability.
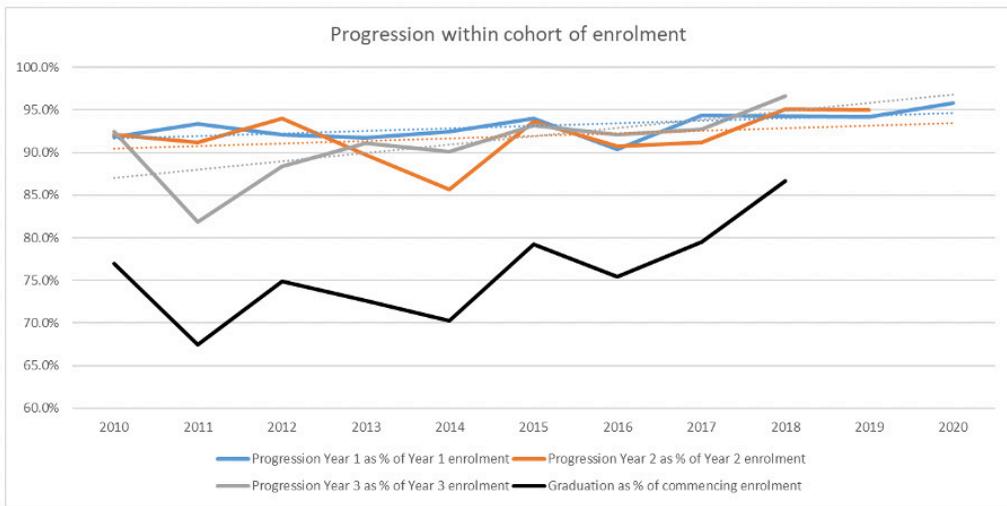
Figure 1. Progression rate within cohort intake year (CIY). Progression rate based on number of TO successfully completing the year of study compared to the number commencing the year. Graduation rate based on the number of TO graduating compared to the initial cohort intake.
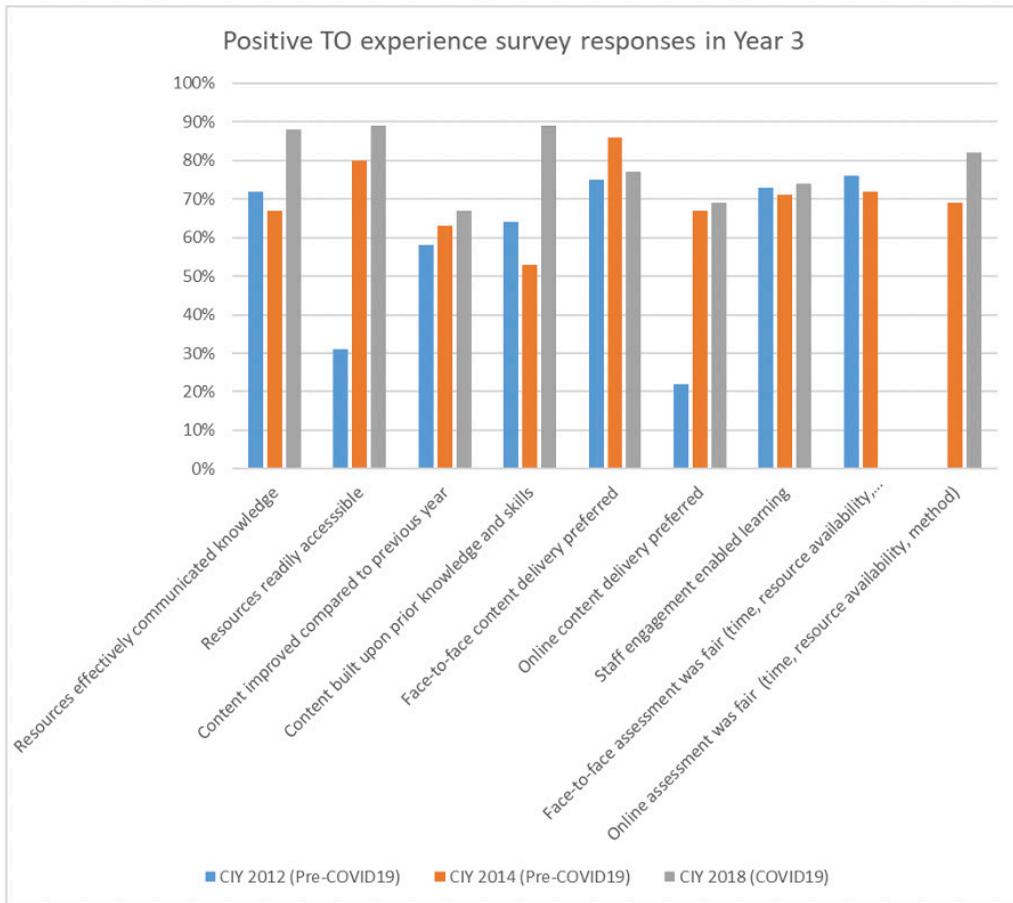
Figure 2. Positive student survey responses by cohort intake year(CIY) taken in Year 3. The positive response is based on the survey respondent agreeing to the question posed. Survey respondents were required to agree or disagree, no options for a non definitive response were provided. Face-to-face and online assessments were not undertaken in 2014 and 2020 (CIY 2012 and 2018) respectively.

Survey results. Return rates for Year 3 TO surveys were 41 percent, 76 percent, and 73 percent for CIY 2012, 2014, and 2018 respectively. TO reported minimal differences in pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 experiences in relation to content, staff engagement, and face-to-face and online assessment. Responses to resources effectively communicated knowledge and content built upon prior knowledge and skills suggest the COVID-19 adjustments positively impacted the TO experience. Poor TO experience in CIY 2012 was evident in resources readily accessible (less than 31 percent expressed a positive experience) and online content delivery preferred (less than 22 percent expressed a positive experience). Both CIY 2014 and CIY 2018 expressed a marked improvement in TO satisfaction for both in resources readily accessible and online content delivery preferred compared to CIY 2012 (average 85 percent and 68 percent respectively). Little difference in the TO experience

in these two fields exists between the CIY 2014 and CIY 2018. TO responses indicate a reduction in preference for face-to-face content delivery between CIY 2014 and CIY 2018 (86 percent and 77 percent respectively).

Discussion

The ADF relies on ADFA for the annual supply of joint military-trained, degree-qualified junior officers. The services specify the supply requirement at commencement of ADFA by recruiting the number of personnel needed to fulfil forecast ADF capability needs, historical graduation rates inform Service recruitment into ADFA. The recruitment pathway commences up to four years prior to workforce entry, with Services assuming ADFA will deliver at or above historical performance. One of the key influences to meet the Services' expectation of ADFA is maintaining progression through JMET and university programs within each CIY. Failing to meet graduation projections creates a persistent workforce capability deficit with an enduring impact on Services as affected cohorts progress through the workforce capability lifecycle.

To address issues associated with low graduation rates observed prior to 2014, ADFA undertook a review of the military education program (AMET). Concluding in 2015, the review utilized information from TO surveys and Service consultation, with the outcomes resulting in the creation and implementation of JMET in January 2016. A key finding of the review recommended the increased use of online learning within the JMET program.

The introduction of restrictions on gatherings, which in the initial phases of the COVID-19 response included education, shifted delivery of JMET and university programs online. As a full residential campus, the pandemic fundamentally changed the operation of ADFA and had the potential to be a major disruption. Postponement of programs at ADFA would create the enduring workforce capability impacts previously mentioned. To avoid the disruptive influence of the pandemic on capability output, ADFA rapidly changed its learning structure, delivery, and assessment, as well as practicum and pastoral activities, to an online mode.

With little previous experience of online delivery nor the time to deliberately plan through the DTM methodology, ADFA used the existing learning management platform in a reactive, rather than pre-planned, approach to record lectures and upload instructions for tutorials. The delivery and materials that emerged from this period were unsophisticated, and represented a recording of a traditional ADFA classroom rather than a specifically designed, non-residential learning activity. Assessment scheduling and rubrics designed around a heavy residential support framework were not optimized for online delivery nor accommodating for a period of disrupted learning, and they required continual modification throughout 2020. This approach is similar to that documented as a sector response in the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) summary of the impacts of the pandemic within Australian higher education sector.[3] Some elements

of JMET—for example, physical training, weapons handling, and ceremonial drill—could not be accommodated within the online environment, resulting in their suspension from delivery in the initial COVID-19 response. The ongoing uncertainty around lockdowns forced a decision not to return to a full residential model in semester two of 2020 (July to November). As a result, ADFA developed asynchronous and tailored online learning materials in combination with alternate means to enable practicum activities.

CIY 2012 survey responses during their third year of study were critical of ADFA progress in the online space with the survey participant comments indicating dissatisfaction with access to learning materials and online content delivery (Figure 2). ADFA considered the dissatisfaction expressed in the surveys was related to information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure supporting the learning content, rather than with the learning materials. As an outcome in 2014-2015, ADFA extended the use of the ADF online learning platform, Australian Defence Education Learning Environment (ADELE), improving content access. Limited specific online teaching materials were developed, as the primary focus was accessibility of supporting resources such as readings and assessment submissions. Survey responses from CIY 2014 signal this intervention was successful with a notable improvement in positive responses to the implementation of ADELE as a learning platform, with indications that the online content delivery was preferred in a greater proportion of the TO. Of note, prior to 2020 ADELE was not a primary teaching tool, remaining a repository for learning materials and a tool for assessment submissions.

The COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 required a directed shift to ADELE as the primary teaching tool required for online learning. The enforced interventions included the development of synchronous and asynchronous online teaching, collaborative online workshops, and modifications to assessments to accommodate the removal of face-to-face activities. ADFA experience at the commencement of the pandemic was consistent with that observed across the higher education sector with Nick Saunders, Chief Commissioner of TEQSA, noting the enormous undertaking required for the rapid adoption of online learning.[4]

While earlier investment had prioritized development of ADELE, the extensive approach to online teaching was a new experience for ADFA staff and TO. Being untested prior to implementation, online teaching had the potential to significantly disrupt capability outputs and experiences of ADFA staff and TO. The potential for disruption associated with rapid move to online education in response to COVID-19 has been noted in other studies.[5] Early indications at ADFA observed in progression and graduation rates during 2020 suggests the anticipated disruption did not cause a decline in capability outputs over this period. ADFA graduation and progression in all three cohorts was maintained or slightly improved during 2020 (Figure 1). Comparison of progression and graduation rates with the Australian sector cannot be undertaken at this time due to the public availability of such data; publications have focused on the impact to the student experience.

TEQSA indicated concerns from students around the rapid transition to online learning, particularly associated with reduced interaction with lecturers and peers, the impact of IT, and the difficulty in transitioning some fields of study.[6] The report found a "large proportion of respondents … did not like the experience of online learning and did not wish to ever experience it again."[7] This is contrary the TO experience at ADFA with reported benefits associated with the transition to online learning during 2020, as reflected in the evaluation surveys at Figure 2. Small improvements were reported in satisfaction for learning material access, knowledge communication, and assessment formats. A more substantial response was noted in the TO perception that content delivered online during the pandemic built upon prior knowledge and skills. Interestingly, the only survey metric showing a decline in 2020 was face-to-face content delivery was preferred. With only three weeks of face-to-face delivery at the beginning of 2020, this result is difficult to substantiate.

The positive student experience observed at ADFA may be expected as a response to the highly supported educational environment provided by the military context. Throughout 2020, ADFA TO retained secure employment, a strong peer network, ready access to welfare support, relatively small class sizes, and intensive tuition support. Students in the broader Australian university sector experienced greater external stressors interacting with their education through uncertain employment and social support systems.[8]

In addition to the external pressures experienced by Australian university students due to enforced restrictions, TEQSA suggested that students across the sector were dissatisfied with staff engagement, insufficient peer interactions, and online workload.[9] Contrasting with the TEQSA report, the CIY 2018 survey results indicated TO satisfaction with staff engagement remained at pre-COVID-19 levels (Figure 2). This may have been indicative of ADFA staff having a combination of leadership experience and military skills instructor (MSI) qualifications. The unique combination of academic and pastoral skills in ADFA staff may have contributed to students remaining satisfied during the rapid transition from face-to-face to online learning activities. While a small decline in satisfaction with face-to-face content delivery was observed, positive responses were associated with resources and technologies, effective communication of knowledge, and building on prior knowledge and skills implemented in 2020 (Figure 2). This is notable, as the CIY 2018 had experienced two years of face-to-face teaching pre-COVID-19. These observations suggest the maintenance of a highly supported learning environment at ADFA positively influenced student experience, and in doing so contributed to protecting capability output. High-level support that was possible at ADFA is unlikely to have been available throughout the Australian higher education sector, particularly where intensified academic workloads were associated with a transition online as highlighted by Allen et. al.[10]

In conjunction with a move to online delivery, the majority of Australian higher education institutions either shut down or restricted access to campuses, resulting in students becoming non-residential as well as a subsequent deterioration of physical peer support networks. To prevent the transmission of COVID-19 into ADFA, the ADF

restricted incoming and outgoing movements at ADFA while maintaining the integrity of the peer networks in a residential context. In addition to maintaining the TO peer network, staff retained a physical presence at ADFA enabling a continuity of welfare support which may not have been possible across other higher education institutions. The maintenance of pastoral care by military staff served two critical needs, primarily to ensure the welfare of TO, but also to prevent mental health problems from disrupting capability through poor progression and graduation. Anecdotal evidence from ADFA psychologists during 2020 suggests the interventions used for both pastoral care and academic support were effective with the number and types of presentations consistent with previous years.

Effectiveness of assessment in an online environment continues to be widely discussed with the broad scale move to online learning.[11] Transitioning from face-to-face to online learning required ADFA to rationalize the assessments focusing on critical elements of JMET that required an understanding of individual TO performance. This principle was similar to that indicated by Davidson and Tsakissiris, in developing new and different criteria when evaluating success.[12] Acknowledging that some assessment methods are more vulnerable to academic misconduct than others, the primary focus for ADFA was to assess individual attainment of capability in relation to the defined learning outcomes.[13] Prior to 2020, JMET used a combination of lengthy essay-style individual assessments combined with end-of-semester group presentations. During COVID-19, JMET assessments were modified to regular short-answer individual submissions using ADELE. Although not conclusive, Figure 2 indicates TO were positively receptive to the fairness of the online assessment methods implemented in 2020.

Recognising the disruption to learning and assessment resulting from COVID-19 restrictions, JMET marking rubrics and feedback were amended to encourage TO reflection on performance rather than just achieving a grade. Using rubrics in this manner facilitated learning in TO, and had the benefit of enhancing the skills and knowledge of staff through qualitative measures of teaching effectiveness.[14] The impact of effective feedback in the learning experience is not unique to online learning with Hattie and Timperley highlighting the positive impact that can be gained through targeted feedback focusing not only on justifying a grade but also contributing to the learning experience.[15] Disentangling the relationship between feedback and grades enabled staff to better understand the learning journey and maintaining the unique purposes of assessment through effective feedback.[16] TEQSA observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a need for staff development in online pedagogy, with research here indicating that assessment type and arrangements are an issue.[17]

Conclusion

The rapid and unplanned transition to online learning during 2020 was disruptive to the ADFA education and training environment and had the potential to impact capability output. The interventions implemented by ADFA to mitigate the disruption of COVID-19

allowed for the continuation of the JMET, with minimal negative impact on capability as observed in the progression rate to graduation and student experience. While the initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic focused on protecting the capability output associated with progression and graduation, as the pandemic extended in duration, greater emphasis was placed on the student experience in order to instill a positive attitude toward life-long learning.

Positive responses in progression and graduation rates and student experience suggest the interventions put in place to alleviate the potential impact of COVID-19 were successful in protecting the critical output requirement for ADFA. With student experience influencing engagement in learning, and therefore success, the interventions associated with maintaining staff engagement, positive peer networks, resource accessibility, increasing sophistication in the use of the online learning platform, and maintaining sustainable workloads may have been critical to keeping ADFA progression and graduation rates from declining. In the face of positive outcomes over this period, the challenge to the ADF will be identifying those that have ongoing benefit to education in the joint context of ADFA.

Given the nature of the pandemic, many of the adjustments made to the ADFA program were reactionary. Zacharias and Brett highlight the connection with the achievement of education objectives and a strategic approach to enabling life-long learning through the collection of information, evaluation of stories and statistics, and analysis of evidence-based consequences.[18] Capitalizing on the observations associated with the ADFA response to COVID-19 and the resulting pedagogical changes that emerged during 2020 provides an opportunity to future-proof military education and training in line with the requirements of the JPME. The identification and implementation of COVID-19 initiatives linked to sustainable learning improvements will be central to facilitating a progressive but considered approach enabling benefits to future ADF workforce capability.

Commodore Peter James Leavy, CSM, RAN (primary author), joined the Royal Australian Naval College in 1984 and transferred to the inaugural graduating year of the ADFA in 1986. As a principal warfare officer (PWO), he has commanded HMAS Stuart (FFH153) and HMAS Sydney (FFG023). In 2016, Leavy was the Australian Naval Attaché to the United States and returned to Australia in 2019 on appointment as Commandant of ADFA. Leavy was awarded a Conspicuous Service Medal for meritorious achievement as the Commander of Joint Task Force 658 in 2014. His publications include *Get the Balance Between the Art and Science of Maritime Warfare Right* (U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, 2018); *A View from the Bridge* (U.S. Naval War College Conference Proceedings, 2011), and "RAN Communications into the Future," *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute* 136 (2010). He holds a bachelor of science degree (Hons); a master of arts (maritime policy); and a master of management (defense studies). He is also a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors Course.

Shevahn Telfser, Ph.D. (secondary author), has been with ADFA for 2 1/2 years where she has held the role of Director, Academic Agreements. Prior to coming to ADFA, she was engaged for over 23 years in the Australian university sector as an academic and administrator. Among her academic leadership roles, she was a head of discipline and led a multi-campus learning and teaching group. Her publications include "Internationalising the Curriculum with Study Abroad Tours," *International Journal of Learning in Higher Education* 20, no. 1 (2013); "A Course Approach to Student Transition to University: A Case Study in Agricultural Business Management," *Creative Education* 3, no. 6 (2012), and "Enhancing the First Year Experience in the Bachelor of Agricultural Business Management" (CSUED 2010). Her education includes a bachelor of science degree (agriculture), a Ph.D. (veterinary science) and a graduate certificate in university leadership and management.

Group Captain Jeffrey Howard, OAM (secondary author), graduated from ADFA in 1998. He has held a variety of leadership and technical specialist appointments including squadron command in deployed and non-deployed combat support units Howard's operational service includes numerous operational deployments in joint, multi-agency, and multi-national environments to Afghanistan, the Middle East, and the Solomon Islands. He is a fellow and chartered professional engineer in civil engineering and an Australian Institute of Company Directors Course graduate. He holds a bachelor of engineering degree (civil), a master of arts degree (strategy), and a master of commerce degree (accounting). Howard was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2019 for service to Airfield Engineering and No. 65 Squadron.

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Books: Feldman, Lily Gardner, *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation: From Enmity to Amity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 20-33

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Feldman, *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation,* 73-78.
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