

ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE: SESSION 2013-14

Faculty of Arts: Department of Classics

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY																		
Aspect	National Student Survey						Undergraduate Programme Experience Survey						Postgraduate Programme Experience Survey					
	2012-13		2011-12		2010-11		2012-13		2011-12		2010-11		2012-13		2011-12		2010-11	
	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni
Overall satisfaction	83	87	97	87	90	86	89	85	86	85	87	83	60	87	86	84	100	82
Teaching	90	89	97	90	97	88	91	85	90	84	88	83	100	87	85	85	83	84
Assessment & feedback	78	71	68	69	79	65	68	59	66	61	59	56	64	75	83	69	97	68
Academic support	77	81	86	80	91	77	67	72	71	72	70	68	71	85	90	80	94	79
Organisation & management	80	84	88	83	89	82	87	73	75	74	76	83	53	85	89	80	100	77
Learning resources	88	90	89	88	87	87	78	81	74	78	75	77	87	86	94	83	94	82
Personal development	66	81	68	81	83	78	59	69	62	68	60	65	65	77	92	71	100	70
Sector position	19/20	57/147	4/21	51/150	14/19	46/151												

Scores in each category are expressed as a percentage of the number of respondents who mostly or definitely agreed with a range of statements (score 4 or 5)

Impact of 2011-12 actions	The main focus was updating of language programmes with the 'linguistic pathway' modules and compulsory 20-credit research project to align them more closely with the student experience for Classical Civilisation: both developments were praised by the external examiner. Our JH portfolio was substantially overhauled and combinations with Classical Civilisation approved, and (Industrial) variants for our programmes also created as part of work on Personal Development; CLAS 2800 was significantly overhauled following module review with positive impact on student perceptions; and ongoing work on feedback to hit the 3-week target consistently consolidated improving scores in NSS and UPES.
Achievements in 2012-13	Though the most conspicuous development was the very disappointing score for 'overall satisfaction' in NSS, further analysis revealed that this was chiefly due to disaffection among language students (ironically in part due to their resentment at improvements being introduced for the following cohort [above]): for Class Civ the score was 94 (98 for teaching), and even without disaggregation, scores in most areas held up respectably, though there is plenty of work to be done on Personal Development in particular. It was pleasing that our work on assessment and feedback saw a rise of 10 points, the largest in the Faculty. Results for UPES were more obviously positive, with the department consolidating the progress of the previous two years and performing well in a Faculty and University context. We also fine-tuned procedures for compulsory research projects, where our experience will potentially be useful to the Faculty.

<p>Main actions for 2013-14</p>	<p>The principal focuses for 2013-14 will be academic support (especially for JH students) and personal development: in both cases we shall be working in tandem with Faculty initiatives. In teaching we shall finalise the overhaul of JH provision, including a new JH Ancient History offering, and fine-tune the new language programmes to improve student satisfaction there; we will also further develop CLAS 2800 to improve its relevance to an increasingly large JH cohort, and look to increase seminar provision. Taught postgraduate provision is also being overhauled to restore its operational efficiency (teaching remains well- received) and hence student satisfaction). Mechanisms for submission and handling of coursework are being upgraded (inc. use of Turnitin and more staggered deadlines) and a 4-week timeframe for return inclusive of check-marking will help to clarify student expectations. More strategically, we shall be looking to further implementation of the Curriculum Enhancement Project (notably the detail of CPT and Discovery Themes) and to the outcomes of Deputy Director of Student Education’s review of assessment at programme level, both of which have the potential for substantial positive impact on student personal development and employability.</p>
<p>Summary of student involvement in the production of this Action Plan</p>	<p>The outcomes of the three student experience surveys and our initial thoughts on the department’s response were discussed at the next Staff-Student Forum (now student-chaired as recommended in the 2013 Health Check). The substance of those discussions has been fed into the draft of this document which was discussed at STSEC: the Classics student rep is a member and participated fully in these discussions, and further student feedback was solicited through her. We will continue to liaise with our student representatives through the implementation of this plan.</p>

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Aspect	Progress with actions in response to 2011-12 feedback and indication of impact	Issues raised in 2012-13 feedback	Planned response in 2013-14
<p>Overall satisfaction</p>	<p>Last year’s planned initiatives were very largely implemented as reported above: work on JH programmes with History, including a new proposed JH in Ancient History, is ongoing, though it is too early to see any impact in terms of recruitment. We maintained attention to feedback on and return of assessed work, which led to improved scores. Continuing work to raise awareness of opportunities for personal development has yet to show impact in improved NSS/UPES scores.</p>	<p>NSS score for overall satisfaction is markedly affected by very negative responses from language students despite attempts to address their concerns through SSF and TSEC; scores for Classical Civilisation and for Classical Literature-English are more positive, though Academic Support (especially for JH) and Personal Development are key areas for improvement, and we need to maintain our progress on Assessment and Feedback, and these are likewise the key areas highlighted by UPES (Assessment & Feedback more at level 2).</p>	<p>As indicated above under ‘Main actions for 2013-14’, we shall focus particularly on Academic Support and Personal Development (see below for details), while continuing incremental change in other areas (mainly teaching and assessment and feedback): scores in these areas remain good for Classical Civilisation (and so for KIS) and may be expected to improve for linguists with the bedding in of the new programme, while JH will benefit from both local improvements and a more holistic Faculty-centred approach.</p>
<p>Teaching</p>	<p>New modules were brought in to align the experience of language students more closely with the rest of the department, including an independent research project. Two modules in</p>	<p>Despite some decline from last year’s very high scores, teaching remains a strength overall. There were minor teething troubles in introducing the new linguistic pathway modules, mainly around details of</p>	<p>All external’s recommendations will be followed to improve preparation of students to meet the distinctive demands of assessment in new language modules; full implementation of the new-</p>

	the core research strand for Classical Civilisation (CLAS 2800 & 3200) were modified and enhanced following module reviews and appear to have increased student satisfaction (the third module reviewed, CLAS3510, will next run in 2013-14 and impact monitored then).	assessment, and the external's report has recommended some adjustments here, as well as improvements to preparing students for the particular skills and approaches required by these modules. Support issues for the linguists' research project are likely to be one source of the grievances of level 3 students.	style language programme is expected to improve student satisfaction (though we are now teaching this out after a strategic decision to cease recruitment). Freeform comments in NSS and UPES, underlined by discussion in SSF, point to increased contact hours, particularly seminars, as a top priority for students, and we shall be focusing on ways of meeting this demand; including presentations in these will also contribute to personal development.
Assessment and feedback	We continued our efforts to hit the 3-week targets for return, with a higher rate of success. Revised grade descriptors clarified discriminating factors for the first-class work, especially in dissertations. The well-received examination feedback forms were moved to an electronic format to improve legibility and enable return via VLE. Appreciation of these efforts was reflected in significantly improved scores in NSS and continued progress in UPES under this heading.	Some delay in finalising details of assessment for new language modules (above) likely to have led to perception of lack of clarity over assessment criteria and arrangements (UPES Q.5). Some confusion was flagged up in the AHC over moderation [= 'check-marking'] of marking by PG TAs (esp. for the very large cohort in CLAS2800) and prompted a recommendation from Pro-Dean (SE) that we move to a four-week target for return clearly inclusive of all check-marking.	The 4-working-week return period (or date of resumption of teaching if earlier) is being implemented (with a few exceptions where a 3-week return is needed for formative feedback) and further work done on spreading deadlines, while hand-in arrangements have been modified in line with university guidelines and parallel electronic submission via Turnitin introduced. As previously, staff will be reminded of adherence to the advertised schedule for returning work.
Academic support	Measures to improve the student experience in this area focused on improved communication, particularly through FAQ sections on the VLE, to provide better support to student module choices, and on steps to include JH students in initial induction into the department through CLAS1025, the level 1 skills module, to develop them as students of Classics and to enhance their sense of belonging to the department.	Despite our efforts, both NSS and UPES scores show some decline, chiefly for JH students (also level 3 Classics [language students]), and a relatively high rate of student engagement with LfL does not translate into a sense of academic support (nor for personal development). Some free-form comments indicate that speed of response to enquiries is a particular issue.	This is one of our two highest priorities for this year. We strongly endorse the Faculty's prioritisation of reform to support for JH students and will contribute to the best of our ability. We will encourage students to make full use of personal tutor support, particularly dedicated level 1 & 2 module choice meetings ahead of module enrolment, and impress on staff the importance of prompt response to student queries. We will also continue to review opportunities for more effective use of VLE for student support.
Organisation and management	Increased SES staff, relocated in the department, were supported by line management from History, with direct control of administrative processes returned to Classics. More extensive use was made of communications via VLE both to notify routine procedures (e.g. essay return) and to alert students to changes. A marked improvement in UPES scores here, and in NSS, Classical linguists excepted, suggests that these initiatives have been broadly successful.	NSS scores are distorted by the very negative responses of language students to changes to that programme (QQ14-15) and otherwise are slightly up (91 for Class Civ. 93 for JH), and likewise show a marked improvement in UPES (though less good in Classical Literature-English, which mirrors the general picture of a need for further work on JH support). However, the score in the PG survey was very sharply down and the area of lowest satisfaction, suggesting that implementation of the	Work by the TPG Tutor to improve the delivery of that programme is in hand, including a more explicit work schedule and enhanced research skills training. For UG students a change in SES staff and the increased familiarity of their line manager with distinctive aspects of the Classics operation present the opportunity to introduce further improvements in organisation and communication. As already noted, effective oversight of and support for JH programmes is the

		new arrangements for the programme did not go smoothly and that further work is needed here.	focus of a Faculty-led initiative which we strongly support.
Learning resources	As last year, our focus was on enabling students to make the most effective possible use of the very good level of library resources available through skills training in locating bibliographic resources via databases and online searching: the steadily increasing focus on resources accessed online (e.g. via JSTOR) in the level 2 CLAS 2800 bibliographic exercise suggests that this is bearing fruit and reducing the acuteness of pressure on print resources, while trends in survey scores are cautiously positive.	NSS scores are likewise good for Class Civ and JH, with a smaller disparity from linguistic Classics, and in both cases perhaps lowered by the questionable relevance of Q.18; the same goes for UPES, where scores are close to the 85% threshold and up for level 2, though down for level 1, where expectations driven by the new fees regime are evident in some freeform comments. This was also one of the areas where PG satisfaction remained high.	We will continue to work on training in library and information skills at levels 1 and 2; we could still improve liaison with the library over online reading lists, where reforms to library policy and processes should provide welcome stimulus. Likewise we will continue to supplement the range of resources made available on the VLE, and to maximise uptake of opportunities for digitisation of reading list items.
Personal development	Last year's agenda was to maintain the career-related activities which had seen a sharp rise in NSS scores in 2010-11 and consolidate this through personal tutoring (Classics has a relatively high student engagement with LfL). We completed specification of International and Industrial variants of programmes; we actively encouraged students to consider these, as well as internships and volunteering, and are starting to see increased uptake of these options. Language students excepted, NSS scores are a little up.	Survey scores here stubbornly refuse to improve. The high proportion of level 2 UPES respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing suggest that the key objective is to create a positive sense of support in this area; NSS scores for non-linguists hint at a little recovery from last year, and our track record in the PG survey gives us hope that we can return to the high level of performance of previous years.	While maintaining the activities we have run for level 3 students, we will encourage personal tutors to be more proactive in discussing career plans with students at all levels, following up the prompts in the LfL agendas and directing them to more specialised source of guidance, and we will run a session in the spring (parallel to that for level 3 students) for level 1 students through CLAS 1025 to encourage them to start thinking about these issues. We will also continue to make good use of the support we receive from the Careers Service and Faculty-led activity.