

ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE: SESSION 2013-14
School of Modern Languages and Cultures (Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies) Faculty of Arts

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	
	Subject	Uni	Subject	Uni	Subject	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni
Overall satisfaction	87	87	88	87	92	86	82	85	86	85	86	83	91	87	75	84	85	82
Teaching	95	89	93	90	94	88	87	85	87	84	87	83	87	87	79	85	85	84
Assessment & feedback	90	71	84	69	91	65	65	59	64	61	64	56	70	75	63	69	67	68
Academic support	87	81	79	80	86	77	67	72	69	72	68	68	86	85	70	80	81	79
Organisation & management	91	84	85	83	86	82	75	73	79	74	79	83	84	85	69	80	79	77
Learning resources	90	90	81	88	84	87	79	81	76	78	81	77	77	86	79	83	87	82
Personal development	94	81	80	81	92	78	61	69	62	68	62	65	82	77	66	71	67	70
Sector position	2/5	57/147	1/3	51/150	1/3	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	<p>NSS Result: Judging from the significantly improved scores achieved in all question categories (bar overall satisfaction, where we remained essentially static), it can be said that last year's action plan has been successful in helping raise student satisfaction rates with key aspects of their learning experience here in AMES. We proudly acknowledge that on each of the question categories listed (again bar overall satisfaction) we received higher scores than some of our most immediate competitors in the UK (Manchester, Westminster, Exeter & SOAS).</p> <p>PS Results: As far as comparative data is available, it appears that our ongoing efforts to improve core areas of teaching and learning have been positively received by our Y1 and Y2 students. This is particularly the case in the areas of assessment & feedback and personal development, where our Y2 students scored us significantly higher than in 2011-2012. Y1 students also assessed us more positively on personal development, yet not on assessment and feedback where figures have remained essentially static.</p>
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Achievements in 2012-13	The NSS and PS results for 2012-13 are again overall very satisfactory indeed, highlighting the concerted efforts we have made in addressing students' concerns and in improving the educational standards in AMES. Particularly encouraging in this regard are the significantly improved 'overall satisfaction' rates recorded for our Y1 and Y2 students, which increased from 2011-2012 to 2012-2013 by 20% and 30% respectively.
Main actions for 2013-14	Given the success of the previous two action plans in improving student satisfaction rates in core question categories, we will continue to implement and improve on their recommendations in the coming AY. Particular focus will hereby be placed on further raising Y1 & Y 2 satisfaction rates in 1) the provision of feedback, 2) personal development and 3) the availability of learning resources. In all three areas, the data shows some of the lowest satisfaction rates amongst Y1 & Y2 students.
Summary of student involvement in the production of this Action Plan	Students will be able to scrutinize and comment on the proposed Action Plan for 2013-2014 through the Staff-Student Forum, scheduled for 6 November 2013. Their input will be considered and integrated into this year's action plan, where appropriate.

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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
Overall satisfaction	Marked improvements in overall satisfaction rates for Y1 & Y 2 students can be recorded, as noted above, whilst the overall satisfaction of our finalists has remained essentially static (-1).	The NSS results are positive across the board and in all question categories. The PS results also are overall very encouraging, but highlight some areas of possible improvement, particularly in the areas of feedback/academic support, personal development, and advice on module choices. It must be noted, however, that the picture is here far from uniform with significant discrepancies in satisfaction rates between Y1 and Y2 students.	It is hard to understand precisely why overall satisfaction rates have remained static, given the significant improvements recorded in student satisfaction rates across all question categories and questions asked. As in previous years, we will continue to monitor our practice in all categories and where necessary propose improvements, particularly in the areas of feedback and personal development.
Teaching	For finalists we can report the highest satisfaction rate (95%) on teaching since 2011, something we are rather proud of. The quality of our teaching is also rated overall highly amongst our Y1 and Y2 students, and has in fact increased significantly from the previous years in both cohorts.	The data suggests that most of our Y1/2 students were overall very satisfied with the quality of our teaching, rating us highly on enthusiasm and the delivery of intellectually stimulating lectures. This assessment also holds true for our finalists, where satisfaction with teaching is above 90%.	As in previous years, we will monitor our teaching practices. Light-touch peer observation will take place of all colleagues throughout the AY, and all new PT colleagues will be required to attend relevant teacher training as offered by SDDU. Colleagues will also be encouraged to review/enhance their teaching practices and alerted to

			<p>any workshops/seminars/conferences offered here at Leeds University on the subject. Lastly, we will solicit student feedback through mid-term survey questionnaires, which colleagues will then use to address any teaching-related matters raised by their students.</p> <p>In language teaching we will continue our practice of reviewing the course materials taught and of providing students with up-to-date teaching materials and small class sizes (no more than 15 students) for our language classes.</p> <p>In Middle Eastern Studies, we will continue updating our module offerings at levels-2 and 3, with new modules being introduced in Arabic Literature, Performative Arts and the International Relations of the Middle East in 2014-2015.</p>
<p>Assessment and feedback</p>	<p>Whilst student satisfaction with assessment and feedback has seen marked improvements amongst our cohort of finalists, the picture remains more mixed for our cohort of Y1&Y2 students. However, even amongst this cohort of students, overall satisfaction rates have either not changed from 2011-2012 (Y1) or seen a significant improvement (Y2).</p>	<p>Given the discrepancies that exist in student ratings on questions pertaining to assessment/feedback, it is hard to single out specific areas of dissatisfaction requiring improvement. Areas AMES seems to have done comparatively less well in, and have thus scope for improvement, include 1) the provision of feedback that was helpful in clarifying things not properly understood 2) promptness of feedback 3) the level of detailed comments. This said, on most of the question categories listed above, we improved our student satisfaction rates from 2011-2012.</p>	<p>As in previous years, colleagues will continue to provide detailed oral/written feedback to their students:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As far as possible, feedback on essays/presentations will be given in one-to-one meetings with students. Colleagues will be reminded to provide timely feedback in accordance with the stipulations spelled out in the programme handbooks. 2. We will continue to organise feedback weeks in week 6 (S1) and week 3 (S2) and advertise this additional forum for detailed feedback on individual student progress widely and extensively to our students. Students will be encouraged to use this feedback to reflect/improve on their overall performance. Feedback week in Semester 2 will be used to provide detailed feedback on Semester 1 examinations and written assignments (e.g. essays) 3. For language students, feedback on overall language progress will be available through the weekly/bi-weekly assignments they

			complete, the feedback they obtain after their oral/aural exams and the feedback weeks we offer in Semester 1 & 2.
Academic support	Overall satisfaction rates with the academic support we provide in AMES have increased amongst our finalists & and Y2 students, but slightly decreased for our Y1 cohort. Amongst all question categories, scores for academic support remain, however, comparatively low.	According to the data, the area students were least satisfied with concerns the provision of detailed advice on study/module choices. This is definitely an area we will focus on this academic year, in the hope of improving student satisfaction on the matter.	We will continue to provide various channels of academic support to our students, including through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular meetings with our personal tutees (2-3 a year) 2. Provision of weekly office hours, and by encouraging students to see their personal tutors for support/assistance 3. Updating the Programme/Module Catalogue entries for our AMES modules (which were out of date) 4. Updating the information on AMES optionals/electives available on the AMES VLE pages (module handbooks, blurbs & staff contact details) and encouraging students to consult this information. Discussing study/module options with students during tutee meetings and in the SSF, particularly in Semester 2. 5. Continuing current practice of involving PG students in support language students at levels 2 and 3 6. Introducing a 'taster week', in weeks 5/6 of Semester 2 where level-1/2 students can sit in on level-2/3 optional/elective modules they are interested in. This would allow students to get a feel for the module, its content and the level at which it is taught.
Organisation and management	Overall satisfaction with the organisation and management of our programmes has again been high amongst our finalists, but less so amongst Y2 students (with Y1 students not being surveyed on the issue).	According to the data, Y2 students appear to have been less satisfied with some aspects of programme management, particularly with AMES communication on any changes in programme/teaching and some aspects of programme organisation.	To address some of the issues raised, we will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to communicate to our students in a timely fashion any changes made to their teaching schedule and reschedule classes in a timely fashion 2. Advise managers of co-taught modules to communicate effectively to colleagues teaching times/locations, assessment

			<p>structures & marking arrangements, so as to ensure the learning experience is consistent.</p> <p>3. Provide our language students with detailed/up-to-date information manuals on their YA/TA and host countries.</p>
Learning resources	<p>Improvements in student satisfaction rates in this area amongst our cohort of finalists is unfortunately not matched by similar results amongst our Y1 and Y2 cohorts, where overall satisfaction rates have dropped significantly.</p>	<p>Upon closer inspection of the data at hand, it appears that learning resources constituted a key area of concern for some of our Y1 students, particularly access to IT facilities & library resources and services.</p>	<p>This is an area that requires a concerted effort from stakeholders beyond AMES, including the University Library and SMLC. As in previous years what we in AMES can and will do, however, to improve student access to learning resources, is the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that up-to-date reading materials on all our subject areas are made available for students in the library through our Library rep. 2. Ensure that reading lists are up-to-date and posted on the VLE and that, wherever limited copies of books are available, colleagues digitise required readings and post them on their module VLEs. Colleagues are also encouraged to highlight to students the purpose of additional readings, which can/should be consulted in cases core readings are unavailable. 3. Review with Maureen Pinder our AMES specific library training session for level-1 students and assess whether there is scope for improvement.
Personal development	<p>Amongst our finalists, satisfaction with their personal development has risen sharply (by 14%) and also seen great improvements compared to 2011-2012 amongst our Y1 and Y2 cohorts (40% and 10% rise respectively).</p>	<p>Despite the significant improvements seen in student satisfaction rates at the aggregate level, a detailed look at the data provided, highlights that there remains scope of improvement, particularly with regards to the development of communication skills, the ability of tackling unfamiliar problems and the support received to enhance a student's personal development.</p>	<p>Building on last year's action plan and the obvious success it had in raising student's overall satisfaction rates on this question category, we will continue to help students develop their personal development through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highlighting clearly the transferrable skills trained/acquired as part of the modules taken 2. Discuss personal development issues at our personal tutee meetings and encourage students to make use of Leeds for Life. 3. Advertise and encourage students to join in extra-curricular activities on campus and

			<p>beyond</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Organise an annual AMES-specific careers event for all level-2/3 students. This proved to be hugely popular last year.5. Reviewing our group presentation provisions across AMES, to see how they can be harmonised and to ensure they adequately assess both a student's individual contribution to as well as the collective effort of the group on a given topic.
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