

ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE: SESSION 2012-13

Undergraduate School:

Faculty of Biological Sciences

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY																		
Aspect	National Student Survey						Undergraduate Programme Experience Survey						Postgraduate Programme Experience Survey					
	2011-12		2010-11		2009-10		2011-12		2010-11		2009-10		2011-12		2010-11		2009-10	
	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni
Overall satisfaction	91	87	89	86	89	82	83	85	83	83	87	84	75	84	76	82	71	78
Teaching	93	90	89	88	89	85	83	84	82	83	83	83	82	85	85	84	80	81
Assessment & feedback	67	69	62	65	59	61	54	61	52	56	50	57	46	69	55	68	51	63
Academic support	81	80	80	77	81	74	73	72	68	68	67	68	75	80	79	79	70	76
Organisation & management	84	83	83	82	82	79	69	74	69	83	68	73	67	80	69	77	67	73
Learning resources	90	88	91	87	91	85	78	78	79	77	79	76	77	83	90	82	87	81
Personal development	82	81	83	78	81	76	63	68	62	65	64	63	67	71	62	70	68	68
Sector position		51/150		46/151		75/154												

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 2010-11 actions	<p>The School continues to improve the way in which feedback is provided to students with there being a particular focus on the quality of the feedback provided, i.e. clarity and usefulness of comments as well as formalising the timeline for when feedback should normally be returned to students i.e. 3 term-time weeks unless otherwise communicated to students. In addition, there has been a drive to encourage academic colleagues to understand the value of providing 'feed forward' in terms of assisting students with their future preparation of work. In most areas, module managers were encouraged to embed formal methods of feedback within their module, such as feedback during lectures, podcasts and VLE feedback. The efforts from the last 2-3 years are now starting to pay dividends in that students feel that the quality and timeliness of feedback is improving within the School evidenced by gradual increases in NSS scores in this area. However, this is an area which the School continues to focus on and improve for the current session.</p> <p>Similarly, the School has spent time reviewing how personal tutorials and Leeds for Life is utilised within the School and by contributing to University working groups regarding the value and structure of the LfL webforms. The School continues to encourage all tutors and students to engage in personal tutorials and there has been considerable work undertaken to ensure that there is a clearer link between skills modules, careers and employability issues and the personal tutorials. However, it is recognised that this is still work in progress and although personal development is at the forefront of the School's strategy, there is still substantial work to do in this area in terms of highlighting to students the range and benefits of skills training available to them. During 2012-13, the School will continue to work with the Industrial Advisory Board, Careers and Skills partners in engaging with the employability agenda, in addition, the impact of the introduction of an optional skills module at Level 1 will reviewed at the end of session with a view taken as to whether this module ought to</p>
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	<p>become embedded in all programmes either as a stand alone module or elements extracted and placed into existing skills modules.</p> <p>There has been evidence via student feedback that students are increasingly engaging with the range and use of new innovative technology in delivering teaching. Over the last session, the School has advanced from using interactive 'clicker' software, to an increased use of podcasts and video feedback tools which may partly explain the increase in the NSS score for teaching. However, the ongoing engagement in the clicker initiative has been severely hampered by the software and hardware issues which remain to be resolved properly.</p>
<p>Achievements in 2011-12</p>	<p>As identified in the 2011-12 Action Plan, the School has spent time reviewing the assessment criteria and has revised its Standard Operating Processes and guidance for markers in terms of ensuring that all second marking activity is carried out consistently, equitably and of benefit to the student (useful script annotations) across all areas of the School. 2012-13 session will yield clearer results as to how effective this has been following end of year analysis. In addition to the improvement in the quality and timeliness of feedback/feedforward to students, the School has continued to monitor its feedback turnaround and utilise the statistics to highlight problem areas to staff as well as evidencing to students where we are achieving. The development of a feedback booklet which helps to manage students' expectations of feedback was also completed. The School has improved its use of innovative technologies and approaches to deliver teaching/feedback with there being a wider take up of tools, such as podcasting and video feedback, across most programmes. Module choice has been better articulated to students with there being clearer, more useful information being made available as well as a consistent approach to module choice meetings hosted by programme/module leaders ahead of module enrolment. In addition, the work undertaken in developing a skills matrix and working with the Industrial Advisory Board has facilitated the introduction of a skills module and review of how skills are taught in existing modules as well as bringing to the fore the importance of integrating skills, research-led teaching and core programme threads as part of the wider curriculum enhancement project.</p>
<p>Main actions for 2012-13</p>	<p>The School will continue to focus on the following key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessment and Feedback/feedforward – we will continue to monitor the timeliness of feedback using routine monitoring and in addition, shall encourage staff to enhance the quality of feedback/feedforward provided and challenge students to identify how they have interacted with feedback and feedforward in subsequent assessments. 2. Personal Development and Skills training for students in order to prepare them for life after Leeds, an initiative which will be the focus of the newly appointed Employability Officer. Make use of alumni to help inform and promote career planning for students. 3. Exploring and encouraging ways to further embed blended learning strategies into teaching provision, an initiative which will be driven by a newly appointed Blended Learning Enhancement Officer. 4. Engaging with our Student Reps in terms of encouraging them to raise their issues and concerns at an earlier point in the session so that action can be taken in 'real time' rather than after the event. 5. Undertake and complete a review of all assessment activities within the School to ensure that the issues of over assessing/utilisation of relevant assessment tools/deadline 'bunching' are addressed. 6. Focus at the level of the programme as a vehicle for the delivery of the expectations of a Leeds graduate and critically modify module content and assessment where necessary to achieve this.

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Aspect	Progress with actions in response to 2010-11 feedback and indication of impact	Issues raised in 2011-12 feedback	Planned response in 2012-13
Overall satisfaction	<p>The majority of actions described in the 11-12 Action Plan have been completed successfully with there being evidence available via the NSS and Programme Survey results to gauge the overall positive impact they have had on the student experience.</p>	<p>The NSS results show an increase in overall satisfaction from 2010-11 with three of the UG programmes receiving scores of 100%. However , Programme survey results remain static or lower in some areas suggesting that Level 1 and Level 2 students are still not seeing/feeling an improvement in the results of the work undertaken in the School (see above). After effects of the FBS review are becoming relatively minor as the School starts to stabilise, however, it is clear that in some programmes there needs to be full review of why programme survey results in particular were much less positive than previous years.</p>	<p><i>We aim to concentrate efforts on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continuing to improve the quality of feedback and introduce initiatives to make sure students engage with feedback (e.g. documented response to feed forward)</i> • <i>Monitoring and reviewing the impact of the feedback booklet and assess whether this has addressed issues around student expectations of feedback.</i> • <i>Engaging our student representatives more and revisiting our local Partnership Expectations document.</i> • <i>Continuing to review and embed skills into the curriculum and highlight the benefits to students of careers/employability based activities i.e. internships, research placements and reflection (living CV).</i> • <i>Continuing to encourage the use of innovative technologies to enhance the overall student experience.</i>
Teaching	<p>Peer Review of teaching remained suspended for 11-12 and will be reintroduced in the 2013-14 session following the outcome of the pilot of the Teaching Enhancement Scheme. However there are many examples of positive teaching development within the School, co-ordinated by ULBERG, and at academic staff meetings.</p> <p>The Faculty continues to make use of supplementary learning technologies (eg podcasts, VLE content) and these initiatives are being increasingly adopted across the School.</p>	<p>The NSS results show an increase from 89 to 93% and a marginal increase of 1% in the programme survey. This would suggest a positive outcome of the initiatives to enhance the delivery and support of teaching (eg. lecture podcasts which are overwhelming welcomed by students) over the past 2 academic sessions and that students are engaging with these initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continue to encourage use of podcasting and other tools to supplement and enhance the learner experience and aid/support learning strategies</i> • <i>To develop a bank of examination script 'exemplars' for students to enhance clarity of assessment expectation</i> • <i>Continue to encourage staff to respond to student enquiries in a timely manner</i> • <i>Encourage staff to embed blended learning strategies into modules and programmes assisted by a new staff appointment in this area.</i>

<p>Assessment and feedback</p>	<p>The school has focussed considerable effort on enhancing this aspect of provision across all programmes. This work has led to improvements both in the quality and timeliness of feedback/feed forward and the implementation of formal monitoring mechanisms, consistent marking criteria, processes for script annotation and second marking as well as communicating to students the range of feedback available.</p>	<p>This area has seen the most dramatic increase in student satisfaction compared with previous years in both the NSS and PS results. This can be largely attributed to the previous work undertaken in the School however, there is still substantial room for improvement. Issues continue to arise regarding the timeliness and quality of feedback in both the NSS and PS and it is clear that a single issue on one particular module can colour the students' perspectives of the entire provision. Assessment bunching was also identified as an issue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The School will continue to monitor the formal mechanism for monitoring coursework and referring staff who fail to comply to their line manager.</i> • <i>The impact of the refined qualitative marking criteria will be reviewed.</i> • <i>Staff will be monitored in providing better script annotation (c/w and exam) via the implementation of the new SOP.</i> • <i>Tutorials will seek to reinforce and engage students with the feedback they have received and challenge them to reflect on how they have interacted with the feedback/feedforward</i> • <i>Review the number, type and timing of assessments in all programmes.</i>
<p>Academic support</p>	<p>The School continues to embed transferable and employability skills and problem solving into curricula and support the LfL tutorial system however to date, there has been limited success with students' use of the living CV.</p> <p>Previous initiatives have focussed on ensuring personal tutorials are fit for purpose, that staff are accessible and respond to student enquiries in a timely manner, that Leeds For Life webforms are relevant and useful, and that career planning and skills based teaching is available to enhance the student experience.</p> <p>The DEMOCs process during 10-11 has resulted in the articulation of a local Partnership Expectations document which has been developed and agreed with students and staff.</p>	<p>There has been a slight increase in satisfaction in this area in the NSS scores (+1) whereas at L1 and L2 there has been a increase of +5 which suggests the initiatives currently underway are enhancing provision in this area. Issues still arise however with regard to accessibility of academic staff / tutors to students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The School will continue to use the LfL webforms as part of the Personal Tutorial system and will continue to be involved in developing bespoke agenda.</i> • <i>The School continues to develop and embed career planning at an earlier stage in the curriculum to enhance student employability by reviewing its Skills matrix across all programmes.</i> • <i>The School will review the usefulness and take up of the new employability skills module at level 1</i> • <i>Continue to encourage staff to respond to student enquiries in a timely manner</i> • <i>To review and revise the Partnership Expectations document with student input.</i>
<p>Organisation and management</p>	<p>Module choice has improved with better timed module choice meetings and more cohesive information being made available to students (e.g. module outlines providing information of module syllabus and assessment). However, due to the timing of the 11-12 surveys and these meetings taking place, the School will not yield results until 2012-13.</p>	<p>There has been a slight increase in the NSS score for this area whilst programme review results remain static. It is anticipated that the work being undertaken during 2012-13 in relation to reviewing curricula structure, developing an assessment map and subsequently reviewing assessment will go some way to improving this score in future years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To continue to ensure that module choice meetings are supported by module synopsis and better/more informed module information</i> • <i>The School will complete its assessment mapping exercise and review assessment strategies at the programme level.</i>

	An assessment map for each programme is in development to focus on the frequency and type of assessment tools/strategies across all modules/programmes.		
Learning resources	The School has continued to employ new innovative learning technologies to enhance Learning and teaching and take up has slowly extended into most programme areas. VLE usage by staff is high in all programme areas.	<p>The NSS and Programme Survey learning resources score has decreased by 1 for 2010-11 despite there being favourable feedback from students regarding the increased use of learning technologies (especially podcasts). Work continues with ensuring that there are more library resources made available and that the organisation of the VLE is reviewed and improved.</p> <p>The Faculty's learning environment has been significantly improved with the opening of new facilities and labs, however, it is anticipated this may not impact student survey responses until next session.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The School will continue to encourage staff to provide better access to blended learning resources assisted by the newly appointed Blended Learning Officer.</i> • <i>The School will continue to work with the Library services to improve availability of journals/texts for students.</i>
Personal development	<p>The School has continued to work with the Careers Service to improve the relevance, quality and accessibility of careers information. The weekly Careers 'drop-in' session, based in the UG Office, continue to be popular with students.</p> <p>A new L1 Skills module has been introduced for 2012-13 as an option in semester 2.</p> <p>UG research placement opportunities have been promoted and the quality of information and number of opportunities relating to Industrial and International placements has continued to improve.</p> <p>An Industrial Advisory Board has been convened and is working with the Faculty to advise on current and future skills training for undergraduates.</p>	<p>There has been a slight decrease in this area in both the NSS and Programme Survey responses despite the more integrated approach to delivering skills and careers information.</p> <p>Similarly, although there has been significant work undertaken with regard to developing an employability Action Plan and Skills matrix as well as forging closer links with external providers and industrial partners, actions and outcomes will only be implemented over the forthcoming session.</p> <p>Feedback suggests that students would still like to have more structured and informative information on career choices and skills training/opportunities that prepare them for life after Leeds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continue to work with the Careers service and promote internships, research placements, Industrial and International years.</i> • <i>Continue to embed and review employability skills and opportunities into curricula, reviewing the L1 Skills module, promoting the bespoke Biosciences careers programme and reviewing the weekly drop in sessions.</i> • <i>Continue to review the opportunities on Leeds for Life and to raise awareness of the value of the 'living CV'.</i> • <i>Continue to work closely with the Industrial Advisory Board to identify gaps in provision and help refresh curricula to enhance graduate employability.</i> • <i>Enrol all final year students into their scientific society of choice to enhance career planning resources and opportunities for students.</i> • <i>To encourage students to attend research seminars (e.g. Research Highlights).</i>