

ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE: SESSION 2010-11

Faculty of Biological Sciences - Postgraduate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY																		
Aspect	National Student Survey						Undergraduate Programme Experience Survey						Postgraduate Programme Experience Survey					
	2010-11		2009-10		2008-09		2010-11		2009-10		2008-09		2010-11		2009-10		2008-09	
	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni	School	Uni
Overall satisfaction	89	86	89	82	93	84	83	83	87	84	87	82	76	82	71	78	73	80
Teaching	89	88	89	85	91	86	82	83	83	83	83	82	85	84	80	81	77	81
Assessment & feedback	62	65	59	61	58	61	52	56	50	57	53	54	55	68	51	63	47	62
Academic support	80	77	81	74	82	75	68	68	67	68	71	66	79	79	70	76	78	76
Organisation & management	83	82	82	79	86	79	69	83	68	73	74	70	69	77	67	73	69	75
Learning resources	91	87	91	85	92	86	79	77	79	76	81	77	90	82	87	81	88	82
Personal development	83	78	81	76	84	78	62	65	64	63	70	62	62	70	68	68	64	67

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 2009-10 actions	The response rate improved from 41% during 2009-10 up to 64% for the year 2010-11. The Graduate School Office implemented a £100 cash incentive scheme with one winner drawn at random from all Graduate School survey respondents and there were efforts from supervisors to persuade their project students to return questionnaires over the summer. Introduction of new assessment criteria for essay and essay-type work to make marking discriminators clearer for markers, but also to make it easier for the students to understand what the markers are looking for and receive feedback against these criteria appears to have had a positive impact in some programme areas but not in all. The personal tutor system was administered by a single administrator in the school office and hence the organisation of the individual meetings worked more smoothly.
Achievements in 2010-11	A new careers advice session from former graduates in the Biodiversity & Conservation programmes was instigated. This proved successful and will be repeated in 2011-12. An employer engagement officer was appointed to increase the level of engagement between bioscience employers and the MSc Bioscience programmes. This is leading to developments such as employers contributing to the teaching and to course design.
Main actions for 2011-12	Ensuring that work is marked to expected time scales with regular reminders to staff of the urgency of meeting such deadlines. Providing increased opportunities for feedback on the MSc Bioscience programmes by building in additional formative feedback activities into the programme. Embedding an "employability theme" into the MSc Bioscience programme to aid personal and professional development. Introducing a new module 'Practical conservation with the National Trust within the Biodiversity & Conservation programmes with a view to providing direct hands on experience with a major potential

employer. Introduce more frequent sessions for staff and students to meet to discuss programme issues and feedback on actions taken.

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School: Graduate

Faculty: Biological Sciences

Aspect	Progress with actions in response to 2009-10 feedback and indication of impact	Issues raised in 2010-11 feedback	Planned response in 2011-12
Overall satisfaction	<p>The response rate improved from 41% during 2009-10 to 64% for the year 2010-11. The Graduate School Office implemented a £100 cash incentive scheme with one winner drawn at random from all Graduate School survey respondents and there were efforts from supervisors to persuade their project students to return questionnaires over the summer.</p> <p>Assessment and feedback was the focus of our response for 2010-11. We achieved an improvement in scores in some of the programme areas but not in others (see Assessment and feedback).</p>	<p>Although overall satisfaction increased in 2010-11 (from 71% to 76%), it is still lower than the university average of 82%. However, there are big differences between programmes with MSc Bioscience and MSc Bioscience (Biotechnology) scoring above the university average, Biodiversity & Conservation marginally below the University average (but an increase by 21% compared to 2009-10) and MSc Bioscience (Human Disease and Therapy) and MSc Bioscience (Infection and Immunity) considerably below the University average.</p>	<p><i>Our scores for each aspect increased in 2010-11 compared to 2009-10 except Personal development. We scored equal to or higher than the University average in three areas; Teaching on the programme, Academic support and Learning resources but scored below the university average in Assessment and feedback (55% compared to University average of 68%); Organisation and management (69% compared to the University average of 77%) and Personal development (62% compared to the University average of 70%).</i></p> <p><i>The focus of our response will therefore be the latter three aspects but with assessment and feedback being our main priority area as the lowest score was achieved in this area.</i></p>
Teaching	<p>We indicated that as MSc Bioscience (Human Disease and Therapy) and MSc Bioscience (Bioinformatics and Computational Biology) were new programmes introduced in 2010-11, there may be some "bedding in" issues which appears to be the case from the responses for the MSc Bioscience (Human Disease and Therapy) programme.</p>	<p>Numerical scores were second highest in this aspect (only lower than learning resources) and marginally above the University average</p> <p>However, there are variations between individual between programmes with all programmes scoring equivalent to or higher than the University average (84%) except MSc Bioscience (Infection and Immunity) scoring marginally below (81%) and MSc Bioscience (Human Disease and Therapy) also scoring below the University average (74%).</p>	<p><i>We have developed the content of the MSc Bioscience (Human Disease and Therapy) programme for 2011-12. This includes the introduction of new specialist teaching (e.g. novel therapies) and engaged different staff in the delivery and management of the programme. We anticipate this will improve the teaching and organisation and management (see below) of this programme.</i></p>
Assessment and feedback	<p>We introduced new assessment criteria for essay and essay-type work to make marking discriminators clearer for markers, but also to make it easier for the students to understand what</p>	<p>Assessment and feedback scores are lower than the university average (55% compared to 68%)</p> <p>There was considerable variation in scores between</p>	<p><i>Within all the MSc Bioscience programmes, we have introduced an additional academic personal tutorial session early in semester 1 to provide students with detailed face to face verbal</i></p>

	<p>the markers are looking for. Criteria matching the quality of work is highlighted and returned together with comments on how to improve the work. We also introduced a system for monitoring the time taken to return marked work to students.</p> <p>These actions appear to have had a positive impact in some of the programmes but not in all.</p>	<p>programmes with scores increasing from 2009-10 in all programmes except MSc Bioscience (Infection and Immunity) and MSc Bioscience (Human Disease and Therapy) scoring the lowest. Variations amongst the MSc Bioscience sub-programmes indicate that the lower scores reflect concerns within the specialist rather than the core modules (as the latter are taken by all students).</p> <p>Student comments and scores mainly relate to concerns with the timeliness and quality of feedback received.</p>	<p><i>feedback on their first assignment. We have also developed a grid indicating the different ways in which students will receive feedback on their work beyond written feedback (for example, through pre and post coursework surgeries) and have built in additional formative feedback activities into the programme. We have used induction week and personal tutorial sessions to discuss student perceptions on feedback (summative, formative, different ways in which feedback is provided, student response to feedback and time of return of feedback) and will use the student staff forum to engage students in the same.</i></p> <p><i>In order to improve the timeliness of feedback – we have amended our procedures so that we aim to return marked within 3 weeks instead of 2 to more accurately reflect the time taken to mark complex and lengthy pieces of PGT work and provide interim feedback during that time.</i></p> <p><i>We have modified our assessment criteria for essay and essay-type work to include an additional box at the end asking students to identify how they will make use of the feedback provided by the assessors to improve on subsequent pieces of work to help them actively reflect and benefit from the feedback provided. In addition, we will devise tailored marking schemes for research planning type exercises to provide specific criteria for assessment by assessors and feedback to students.</i></p>
<p>Academic support</p>	<p>The personal tutor system was administered by a single administrator in the school office and hence the organisation of individual meetings worked more smoothly.</p>	<p>The numerical score increased by 8% in this aspect, matching the University average of 79%. There are variations between individual programme areas with all programmes scoring above the University average except MSc Bioscience and MSc Bioscience (Human Disease and Therapy).</p> <p>The scores for international students (as a group) were noticeably lower than that for home/EU students. Individual comments from overseas</p>	<p><i>We provide a series of induction activities to support the transition of International students onto our MSc Bioscience programmes including training on writing skills and referencing. As mentioned under Assessment and feedback, we have introduced an additional academic personal tutorial session early in semester 1 to provide students with detailed face to face verbal feedback on their first assignment and to discuss PGT level expectations of assessed work quality.</i></p>

		<p>students indicated that they would like more support to complete assignments and more support from project supervisors.</p> <p>Lack of initial support for 'non-standard' <i>Biodiversity and Conservation</i> students was also mentioned in the feedback to external examiner.</p>	<p><i>In the case of the Biodiversity and Conservation programmes, separate introductory meetings with part time and international students have been extended.</i></p>
Organisation and management	<p>Administrative procedures were managed by a single PGT administrator instead of two and this has had a small but positive impact on the score which has increased by 2%.</p>	<p>There are variation in scores between the programmes, with Bioscience and Bioscience (Biotechnology) scoring above the University average and Biodiversity & Conservation, Human Disease and Therapy and Infection and Immunity scoring below the University average. [University average of 77% (school 69%)].</p> <p>The Human Disease and Therapy programme ran for the first time in 2010-11. In addition, we have one module within this programme which is taught exclusively by an external expert who was unable to reach Leeds over the winter period due to bad weather conditions and hence some teaching sessions were cancelled (this is indicated in the student comments).</p>	<p><i>There has been substantial reorganisation of the Human Disease and Therapy programme and we anticipate that the programme will run smoother as a result. For example, the key external speaker in the Human Disease and Therapy module will now teach a smaller component within a larger module and the sessions are scheduled later on in the academic year to prevent reoccurrence of cancelled sessions due to adverse weather conditions.</i></p> <p><i>We are continuing to streamline and standardise procedures across our PGT programmes and this should improve consistency and organisation between programmes.</i></p>
Learning resources	<p>We have a regular equipment upgrade programme, with equipment requests being solicited and evaluated every September across both the Graduate and Undergraduate Schools. This annual process was supplemented by an additional round of funding in spring 2011, to use up unspent funds in the equipment budget, and equipment for Masters teaching was fully represented in both the autumn and spring purchases.</p>	<p>Highest numerical score of any aspect of the programme – higher than the University average across all programmes.</p> <p>Some out of date Biodiversity & Conservation material was reported by student comments on the VLE.</p>	<p><i>We have gone through the Faculty's 2011-12 equipment purchase exercise to ensure that the resources available to the students remain of the highest quality.</i></p> <p><i>We have screened materials available to the Biodiversity & Conservation students on the VLE and these are now updated.</i></p>
Personal development	<p>A careers "experience day" was introduced into the Biodiversity and Conservation programme with former graduates returning to Leeds to discuss their experiences with current students. This received positive feedback from students</p>	<p>There is considerable variation in scores between the Bioscience programme areas for this aspect with the MSc Bioscience programme scoring above the University average of 70% and the sub-bioscience programmes and Biodiversity & Conservation scoring lower than the University</p>	<p><i>It is difficult to understand why the scores are not higher as professional development forms a large component of all the PGT programmes. We will engage students in discussion to help identify the specific types of personal and professional development activities that would be useful to</i></p>

	<p>after the event.</p>	<p>average. Overall, however, this aspect increased in all programme areas from 2009-10 but dropped in MSc Bioscience (Infection and Immunity).</p> <p>It is difficult to understand the variation between individual Bioscience programmes as students in all of the sub-programmes attend four core skills modules in common, and in these much emphasis is placed on transferable skills, not only skills for academia but skills required in industry and commerce. Similarly, the Biodiversity & Conservation students all received core skills training, were exposed to teaching and assessment on practical skills of direct use in their careers and were introduced to professionals from the ecological professions to give them career guidance.</p>	<p><i>them beyond those already provided within the programmes.</i></p> <p><i>For 2011-12, we have explicitly embedded an “employability” professional development theme into the MSc Bioscience programmes, which includes career planning, industrial seminar series an alumni event and articulation of skills gained through the programme.</i></p> <p><i>In the case of the Biodiversity & Conservation programmes, the success of the ‘careers experience’ day has led us to expand this, with four invited speakers in 2011-12.</i></p>
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