

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

Faculty of Biological Sciences – School of Molecular and Cellular Biology

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	79	87	86	87	n/a	86	83	85	69	85	n/a	83	83	87	80	84	n/a	82
Teaching	83	89	93	90	n/a	88	86	85	73	84	n/a	83	94	87	87	85	n/a	84
Assessment & feedback	72	71	74	69	n/a	65	61	59	47	61	n/a	56	81	75	52	69	n/a	68
Academic support	78	81	84	80	n/a	77	73	72	63	72	n/a	68	81	85	78	80	n/a	79
Organisation & management	63	84	76	83	n/a	82	56	73	51	74	n/a	83	87	85	75	80	n/a	77
Learning resources	91	90	93	88	n/a	87	87	81	75	78	n/a	77	92	86	81	83	n/a	82
Personal development	78	81	76	81	n/a	78	69	69	55	68	n/a	65	89	77	77	71	n/a	70
Sector position		57/147		51/150		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)
n/a where comparison with previous years is not possible

Impact of 2011-12 actions	<p>This is the first action plan specific to the School of Molecular and Cellular Biology. Previous action plans were written largely at the level of the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools of the Faculty of Biological Sciences. This was particularly true for the next section, which documents our responses to feedback on specific aspects of the student experience. However, last year's action plan did describe, in this section, achievements in the previous year and main actions for the year being report that were specific to the School of Molecular and Cellular Biology. These items will be referred to specifically in this section of the report. For the first time both BSc and Masters programmes will be documented together. This reflects the introduction of 4-year integrated Masters in Biochemistry (plus Medical Biochemistry), Biological Sciences and Microbiology, increased ownership of postgraduate programmes by individual Schools, and the planned merger of Graduate and Undergraduate responsibilities at the level of Faculty directorship.</p> <p>Many of the actions described in this plan will be programme-specific, as significant differences exist between our programmes, e.g. the results obtained from the NSS and PES. These differences are not evident in the executive summary provided above. Overall, action taken over the last few years has had a positive impact. All of our programme areas have undergone a thorough review both internally and externally for the purpose of obtaining accreditation by the Society of Biology. Feedback from the accreditation panel during a recent site visit was extremely complementary, describing our course structures and content, environment and facilities, and commitment to education as excellent. They were also pleased that representatives of our students spoke highly of</p>
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	<p>their experience and education. As a result, we were awarded interim accreditation and will be considered for full accreditation when we have completed our first full cycle (class of 2015), without the need for a further site visit.</p> <p>Masters: The scores for each aspect increased most notably assessment and feedback with the scores in each area closely matching that of the university scores or in the majority of areas, exceeding that of the university scores.</p>
<p>Achievements in 2012-13</p>	<p>All of the main actions for 2012-13 were delivered.</p> <p>Assessment and feedback For all of our programmes, we moved a number of Year 3 assessments from Semester 2 to 1 and provided examples of good exam answers, thereby enabling students to gauge better their performance in the absence of January exams. We also encouraged students to form study groups, such that they learnt through interaction with others and had an active role in providing feedback, meeting challenges and providing support.</p> <p>Organisation and management We establish a fixed timetable for 3rd-year skills modules and impress upon staff concerned the need for clear communication. The previous year the timing of tutorials and assessments, particularly those of Biochemistry, were changed at the last minute, this was the consequence of a module manager taking on new tasks while needing to work long hours away from Leeds. This may have contributed to decreased satisfaction with Organisation and Management (NSS scores).</p> <p>Personal development We reintroduced <i>Research Highlight</i> seminars specifically for our undergraduates, and had leading researchers and industrialists as speakers. The majority of the students found this extremely positive judging by the overall level of engagement with speakers, who included Dr Venkatraman Ramakrishnan, one of the recipients of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2009.</p> <p>We also provided all of our students with membership of learned societies (e.g. Society for General Microbiology or Biochemical Society). This provided them with an 'external' perspective and additional guidance on personal development and career opportunities.</p> <p>We also published examples of answers from past assessments to enable students to gauge their level of understanding and knowledge prior to the final exam assessment, and encourage students to make better use of staff at the time of tutorials, practicals and lectures.</p> <p>Improving the Biochemistry 2nd-year Student Experience (in response of PES) We introduced some form of formative assessment at the beginning of Semester 2 for BIOC students. The absence of January exams meant that last year some students were unsure about their progress. Early in Semester 2 students on other programmes are, of course, examined, receive marks and can attend exam surgeries.</p> <p>We also organised the collection of reports and the return of marks for all practical classes via our undergraduate school office, released marks as they are obtained for individual pieces of work, and improved communication with students (BIOL2302 - Intermediate Biochemistry Practicals). The year before students felt the organisation and management of BIOL2302 could have been better.</p> <p>We introduced practice questions into the tutorial system to better prepare students for summative exams requiring short answers to a series of interrelated questions (BIOC2301 - Intermediate Integrated Biochemistry). The year before students felt ill prepared. Part of the problem was that this type of assessment was only used for the first time two years ago and consequently there was a shortage of past exam papers and 'model' answers.</p> <p>Masters The MSc Bioscience suite of programmes have been extensively reviewed for 2013 entry to refresh the curriculum and align more closely with skills required</p>

	<p>by industry, including the addition of practical bioinformatics as a core module and the introduction of a new module delivered by the company Lhasa.</p> <p>Overlap between undergraduate modules and Masters modules has been removed with the exception of a single module and occasional Advanced Topic Units in two other modules.</p>
<p>Main actions for 2013-14</p>	<p>The main action for this year is to keep to our plan for improving our degree programmes in partnership with our students. Particular emphasis will be given to the Biochemistry programmes, which had seen a drop in NSS scores (Overall Satisfaction), despite producing graduates with the best degree results in over a decade and with excellent career prospects.</p> <p>Develop a VLE-based set of homework for Biochemistry students. This will then be rolled out to all of our programmes if successful. This approach is being championed by a senior professor with the assistance of a newly appointed faculty Blended Learning Officer. Students will receive on-line instant feedback, while academic staff will receive detailed information on the performance of individual students. This will allow us eventually to tailor our tutorials to meet learning needs, while providing information on aspect of the course that might need attention.</p> <p>Continue to encourage our students to engaged with activities organised by our recently appointed Employability and Professional Development Officer, who has been charged with creating new supportive material (e.g. Employability Newsletter); liaising with University services, (e.g. Careers Centre) and developing existing courses (e.g. Masters Career Development Programme). It should be noted that employability activities are also embedded in the Y1/2 skills modules and continue through to Year 4 for Masters and MBIOL students.</p> <p>Other main actions are to finalise our plans for Year 4 of the MBiol programmes and the introduction of a new programme in Biotechnology with Enterprise. External assessment of the latter has just been received; it was very positive and suggested areas for further improvement.</p> <p>Ensure the integration of new members of our Undergraduate School Office into the team.</p> <p>Masters We will continue to implement and monitor revised procedures for timely return of marked coursework; continue to engage with students to discuss assessment and feedback and other aspects of the programme, including with international students to identify any additional support that maybe useful; continue to engage with industry to develop industry-orientated content for our programmes; strengthen instructions to personal tutors and students to increase engagement with the revised tutorial agenda; and Implement the Masters Career Development Programme.</p>
<p>Summary of student involvement in the production of this Action Plan</p>	<p>Main actions for 2012-13, which were reported above and are related largely to BIOC programme, were produced with considerable student involvement. Lunch meetings were held separately with the Medical Biochemistry and Biochemistry students and the outcome communicated via a series of email reports. This year all of our student representatives were sent a draft version of this report for comment and discussion. Two significant items were identified by the students. 1. Student reps or volunteers should be invited to any module choice meetings to give advice and comments on modules they had taken that year to give a student-based insight into specific modules. Programme leaders to implement. 2. Students appreciate the feedback they are given with regard to in-course assessments for BIOL2111 (Genetic Engineering) and BIOL2110 (Bacterial Genomics). Biochemistry students request similar for the Protein Structure and Function theme of BIOC2301. Module manager of BIOC2301 has given an undertaking to do so.</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>We did as planned at the level of the Faculty make efforts to:</p> <p>Continue to improve the quality of feedback and introduce initiatives to make sure students engage with feedback (e.g. documented response to feed forward);</p> <p>Monitor and review the impact of the feedback booklet and assess whether this has addressed issues around student expectations of feedback;</p> <p>Engage our student representatives more and revisiting our local Partnership Expectations document;</p> <p>Continue 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);</p> <p>Continue to encourage the use of innovative technologies to enhance the overall student experience.</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: Overall satisfaction with the programme remained high at levels 1 and 3 (both 89%) with a slightly lower score in level 2 (75%).</p> <p>Microbiology: The overall satisfaction from the NSS was 100% for Microbiology with Virology and Medical Microbiology. Specific areas where the NSS indicated lower rates of student satisfaction are discussed below.</p> <p>Biochemistry: Despite the actions taken in 2012-13, there was a drop in NSS scores (Overall Satisfaction) for Biochemistry (2012-13) despite producing graduates with the best degree results in over a decade and with excellent career prospects. Dissatisfaction arose before Year 3, as evidenced by the poor PES results obtained at Level 2 (2011-12). It might also have reflected the reshuffling of tutorial groups in Year 1, which was a consequence of restructuring and staff departures. It should be noted that much of the organisation and teaching of Year-3 Biochemistry (2012-23) was shared with Microbiology and Biological Sciences, which obtained much better NSS results. The only significance difference was the skills modules.</p> <p>Masters: Overall satisfaction increased from 77% to 83%. The score was lower in the international cohort (78%) compared to the UK/EU cohort (score of 89%). The main areas scoring lower than the UK/EU cohort are the 3 questions identified in the different categories below.</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: Overall satisfaction emanates from satisfaction with aspects of the programme. While we continue to make improvements with the programme in level 1 and, in particular, in level 3 we will consider how we can improve satisfaction in level 2. It is worth pointing out that level 2 is, in many ways, the most diverse and challenging year of the programme and has a considerable amount of input from other academic units.</p> <p>Microbiology: Overall satisfaction is high for the two Microbiology degrees with sufficient students to be included in the NSS. No major changes are therefore planned, but actions to improve student satisfaction in specific areas are discussed below.</p> <p>Biochemistry: Although we are not aware of any broad-ranging problems with the skills module for Biochemistry (BIOC3303) last year, it will be reviewed by the module manager and will receive additional staff input (from Jan 2014).</p> <p>Masters: Key actions to improve overall satisfaction are listed below.</p>

<p>Teaching</p>	<p>Continue to encourage use of podcasting and other tools to supplement and enhance the learner experience and aid/support learning strategies;</p> <p>To develop a bank of examination script 'exemplars' for students to enhance clarity of assessment expectation;</p> <p>Continue to encourage staff to respond to student enquiries in a timely manner;</p> <p>Encourage staff to embed blended learning strategies into modules and programmes assisted by a new staff appointment in this area.</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: Overall satisfaction with teaching is high at level 3 (89%) and is strong at levels 1 and 2 where scores were generally good with the exceptions of students' knowledge of marking criteria and matters related to feedback.</p> <p>Microbiology: Teaching scored 85% and 98% for Medical Microbiology and Microbiology with Virology respectively in the NSS survey.</p> <p>Biochemistry: The PES results for Year-2 Biochemistry (2012-13) remained disappointing despite the action taken above. However, this likely reflects an unrelated incident in which the wrong exam paper was given to students for one of the tests that forms part of the in-course assessment of BIOC2301. This was the result of an uncharacteristic clerical error, which stemmed from an overstretched undergraduate school office (staff illness combined with loss of administrative assistant). It should be noted that the assessment of this exam was adjusted using an approach acceptable to students (as determined by polling of opinions at practical class).</p> <p>Masters: Teaching scored 94% for the MSc Bioscience suite of programmes with individual programmes scoring above 90%. The scores were slightly lower in the international cohort than the Home/EU cohort. In the case of the latter group; the free comments referred generally to including more practical work/modules within the Biotechnology Masters programme.</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: We will focus on improving feedback and return of assessed coursework and take every opportunity to direct students to the widely-available information on the VLE and elsewhere relating to marking criteria.</p> <p>Microbiology: Podcasting is now performed in all lectures to supplement the lecture material.</p> <p>Biochemistry: For 2013-14, we have appointed a second academic to the management of BIOC2301 (this followed discussion with the module manager and programme leader) and appointed a deputy Leader for the Biochemistry programmes.</p> <p>Masters: As part of the refreshed curriculum, we have added a compulsory practical bioinformatics module. This will increase the amount of practical work (computational) to the programmes.</p> <p>We are continuing to engage with industry to develop industry-orientated content for our programmes.</p>
<p>Assessment and feedback</p>	<p>The School will continue to monitor the formal mechanism for monitoring coursework and referring staff who fail to comply to their line manager;</p> <p>The impact of the refined qualitative marking criteria will be reviewed;</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: See above comments relating to teaching – scores on assessment and feedback in level 3 are very good (75-86%). In levels 2 and 3 there is a more mixed picture.</p> <p>Microbiology: Assessment and feedback scored 73% and 70% for</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: See above in relation to action points related to assessment and feedback.</p> <p>Microbiology: We will continue to monitor turnaround times for return of marked coursework and continue to engage in discussions with students around</p>

	<p>Staff will be monitored in providing better script annotation (c/w and exam) via the implementation of the new SOP;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>Review the number, type and timing of assessments in all programmes.</p>	<p>Medical Microbiology and Microbiology with Virology respectively in the NSS survey.</p> <p>Biochemistry: Poor experience due to clerical error, see above.</p> <p>Masters: Our assessment and feedback score increased from 52% in 2011-12 to 81% for 2012-13. Questions 6-8 scored the lowest relating to the timelines of feedback and receiving detailed comments on their work.</p>	<p>assessment and feedback and manage expectations. Feedback on presentations in the skills modules will be enhanced to include a feedback sheet that will be annotated by the tutor. Weekly feedback sheets have also been introduced into the final year project module.</p> <p>Biochemistry: Ensure integration of new staff in UGSO.</p> <p>Masters: We will continue to monitor turnaround times for return of marked coursework and continue to engage in discussions with students around assessment and feedback and manage expectations.</p> <p>We have introduced revised marking criteria for the project dissertation and oral presentations with improved descriptors of expectations.</p>
<p>Academic support</p>	<p>The School will continue to use the <i>LfL</i> webforms as part of the Personal Tutorial system and will continue to be involved in developing bespoke agenda;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>The School will review the usefulness and take up of the new employability skills module at level 1;</p> <p>Continue to encourage staff to respond to student enquiries in a timely manner;</p> <p>To review and revise the Partnership Expectations document with student input.</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: High scores were obtained at all levels (>80%)</p> <p>Microbiology: Academic support scored 89% and 67% for Medical Microbiology and Microbiology with Virology respectively in the NSS survey.</p> <p>Biochemistry: This programme offers the greatest number of academic tutorials of all in SMCB.</p> <p>Masters: The lowest score in this area was 56% (by international students) for “I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies”.</p> <p>We deliver a series of induction activities at the start of the course, to support the transition of international students onto our programmes.</p> <p>For 2013 entry, we provided additional reading material and an associated quiz with self-test questions prior to students arriving in Leeds. We also delivered a webinar on “Masters study at Leeds”, outlining expectations, assessment and</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: Maintain the motivation and enthusiasm of staff in delivering high levels of academic support to the students.</p> <p>Microbiology: Staff are encouraged to respond to student enquires in a timely manner. <i>LfL</i> webforms are used as a template in pastoral tutorials to highlight issues that can then be discussed in the meeting with the tutor.</p> <p>Biochemistry: Continue with current system, reviewing implementation of eHomework. Comments provided by sister programmes also apply.</p> <p>Masters: Strengthen instructions to personal tutors and students to increase engagement with the revised tutorial agenda.</p> <p>Monitor whether the additional resources/activities support student transition and undertake discussions with international students to find out</p>

		study types to help prepare them for Masters level study at Leeds and developed the “Step-up-to-Masters” website.	what type of additional support would be useful to them whilst at Leeds.
Organisation and management	<p>To continue to ensure that module choice meetings are supported by module synopsis and better/more informed module information;</p> <p>The School will complete its assessment mapping exercise and review assessment strategies at the programme level.</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: High levels of satisfaction are noted at level 3 (>75%). This was less evident at level 2, possibly because of the choices that students must make in relation to the theme that they will pursue.</p> <p>Microbiology: Organisation and management scored 78% and 77% for Medical Microbiology and Microbiology with Virology respectively in the NSS survey. Additional content was added to the level 3 Skills module in 2012-3. A number of organisational issues were encountered with the implementation of new material into the level 3 Skills module.</p> <p>Biochemistry: Students experience was blighted by issues detailed above.</p> <p>Masters: Scores increased from 75% to 87%. The lowest score in this area was 67% by international students for the question “I was provided with accurate information about the programmes”</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: Maintain module choice meetings prior to and at the beginning of level 2. Maintain student advice at the office and PL level to students.</p> <p>Microbiology: The level 3 Skills module has been modified to reduce the potential for organisational issues.</p> <p>Biochemistry: Ensure corrective measures already in place are followed through.</p> <p>Masters: We are revising our webpages and the Step-up-to-Masters website and will engage students in reviewing the content to ensure that the information is comprehensive as possible.</p>
Learning resources	<p>The School will continue to encourage staff to provide better access to blended learning resources assisted by the newly appointed Blended Learning Officer;</p> <p>The School will continue to work with the Library services to improve availability of journals/texts for students.</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: High levels of satisfaction were noted at all levels (>80%)</p> <p>Microbiology: Learning resources scored 80% and 89% for Medical Microbiology and Microbiology with Virology respectively in the NSS survey.</p> <p>Biochemistry: High levels of satisfaction were noted at all levels</p> <p>Masters: Scores increased from 81% to 92%. However, students continue to ask for IT facilities within the Faculty particularly when conducting their research projects over the summer.</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: Maintain the facilities in this area and continue with initiatives in new resources (e.g. blended learning).</p> <p>Microbiology: Podcasts are now recorded for all lectures and are made available to the students on the VLE. Blended learning has been integrated into the tutorial component of the Skills modules. Question banks are provided to help students to prepare for MRQ-type assessments.</p> <p>Biochemistry: Comments as other programmes.</p>

			<p>Masters: Discuss IT Facilities for Masters students with the Faculty Executive Team.</p>
<p>Personal development</p>	<p>Continue to work with the Careers service and promote internships, research placements, Industrial and International years;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>Continue to review the opportunities on Leeds for Life and to raise awareness of the value of the 'living CV';</p> <p>Continue to work closely with the Industrial Advisory Board to identify gaps in provision and help refresh curricula to enhance graduate employability;</p> <p>Enrol all final year students into their scientific society of choice to enhance career planning resources and opportunities for students;</p> <p>To encourage students to attend research seminars (e.g. Research Highlights).</p>	<p>Biological Sciences: Results from the surveys suggest that students have high levels of confidence in tackling problems and have self-confidence (>75% in NSS).</p> <p>Microbiology: Personal development scored 94% and 73% for Medical Microbiology and Microbiology with Virology respectively in the NSS survey.</p> <p>Masters: Biochemistry: Comments as other programmes.</p> <p>Scores in this area Increased from 77% to 89%. The Faculty appointed an Employability & Professional Development Officer in December 2012 who is working with the students to enhance employability awareness and undertake training activities with them.</p>	<p>Biochemistry: Comments as other programmes.</p> <p>Biological Sciences: Continue to work with Careers Service and Employability Officer to develop students' employability skills. Continue to build students' skills and self-confidence. Provide more opportunities to improve interview technique (with Employability Officer).</p> <p>Microbiology: Induction week programmes for levels 2 and 3 include a number of sessions on careers and employability. CV preparation is developed at level 1 and practice interviews are being embedded at Level 3.</p> <p>Masters: There are many opportunities within our PGT programmes for professional development including core scientific and professional competency training and interaction with employers, alumni and careers.</p> <p>For 2013-14, we have implemented a "Masters Career Development" module, which includes practice job and/or PhD interviews but with changed timing to increase student uptake.</p>