

ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE: SESSION 2011-12

School: Civil Engineering

Faculty: Engineering

| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 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 | 100 | 86 | 78 | 82 | 73 | 84 | 80 | 83 | 79 | 84 | 83 | 82 | 71 | 82 | 81 | 78 | 73 | 80 |
| Teaching | 95 | 88 | 78 | 85 | 73 | 86 | 75 | 83 | 72 | 83 | 73 | 82 | 75 | 84 | 80 | 81 | 72 | 81 |
| Assessment & feedback | 83 | 65 | 46 | 61 | 48 | 61 | 41 | 56 | 42 | 57 | 41 | 54 | 52 | 68 | 53 | 63 | 53 | 62 |
| Academic support | 91 | 77 | 74 | 74 | 69 | 75 | 62 | 68 | 61 | 68 | 63 | 66 | 71 | 79 | 70 | 76 | 69 | 76 |
| Organisation & management | 93 | 82 | 81 | 79 | 74 | 79 | 67 | 83 | 69 | 73 | 70 | 70 | 72 | 77 | 75 | 73 | 75 | 75 |
| Learning resources | 89 | 87 | 75 | 85 | 79 | 86 | 73 | 77 | 70 | 76 | 74 | 77 | 80 | 82 | 74 | 81 | 78 | 82 |
| Personal development | 89 | 78 | 75 | 76 | 75 | 78 | 63 | 65 | 65 | 63 | 70 | 62 | 69 | 70 | 64 | 68 | 68 | 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)

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| Impact of 2009-10 actions | <p>Improved communication between staff and students has led to a dramatic improvement in satisfaction. The changes include; more staff-student fora, texting service, “you said, we did” posters within the school, and better use of electronic noticeboards.</p> <p>More explicit use of assessment criteria has helped students to understand their performance.</p> |
| Achievements in 2010-11 | <p>Overall satisfaction of 100% in the NSS was the obvious highpoint.</p> <p>The continual year-on-year improvement on module feedback scores are positive, and show that we are making a long-term effort to improve.</p> <p>We are seen as a “listening” department.</p> <p>There was a highlighted link between teaching and research made by a number of students to the external examiner.</p> |
| Main actions for 2011-12 | <p>More efficient use of resources is required, with demand for PCs sometimes greatly outstripping supply. Better communication is required, informing students of alternative facilities within the school and across campus.</p> <p>Feedback still needs to improve. There continues to be a reduction in assessment, but this needs to be associated with better feedback on the bits of work which are submitted.</p> |

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| 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 |
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| Overall satisfaction | The appointment of a fourth year tutor together with regular cohort meetings, has helped to communicate issues to students. This is just part of a concerted effort at improving communication with students. Other measures have included more regular staff-student fora, and better use of noticeboards. | <p>The NSS survey results were very pleasing, but a more nuanced understanding of the students' opinions could be gleaned from the individual comments and programme survey results.</p> <p>Looking at individual module reviews, there is a continual improvement in module feedback scores year-on-year, and as students progress through their course.</p> <p>There are recurrent themes occurring in all surveys which require addressing;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of IT facilities • Lack of detailed comments given as feedback • Part-time / temporary lecturers not being of the same standard as permanent staff. | <p>The school has plans to increase its footprint through the construction of a sixth floor. This will not be in place for a number of years, but will address the recurring concerns over lack of facilities.</p> <p>Similarly, the reduction in student cohort size will gradually address some of the students' concerns, as will the appointment of more staff, with the aim of reducing our staff-student ratio to more manageable levels.</p> <p>More explicitly, students are reminded, via the electronic noticeboards and posters, that IT facilities are available across campus and not just within the department.</p> |
| Teaching | Guidelines were issued regarding supervision of research projects, including recommended minimum contact hours, and support for academic writing. | There were a number of concerns about temporary staff being unprepared / disorganised or unsuitable. However, overall staff are rated highly. | The issues surrounding temporary lecturers have been addressed by the appointment of new members of staff, with new appointments hopefully being made throughout the year. |
| Assessment and feedback | <p>There has been an improvement in our performance under this criterion, and we are nationally ranked #1 in this category. However, it remains our weakest area (in common with almost all other universities). There still remains a problem that students don't necessarily recognise feedback when it is given, and that too often staff will only give a mark rather than any form of comment.</p> <p>The guidelines on project supervision and more explicit use of the school's assessment criteria have helped, but there still remains work to be done.</p> | <p>In terms of percentage satisfaction, this is our weakest area. However, compared to other departments, particularly when considering our size, we perform very well.</p> <p>As students progress through their degree programmes they appear to better value the feedback they do receive. The downside to this is that level 1 students do not feel that they receive adequate feedback, or that a grade is insufficient. Level 1 students in particular repeatedly complained that they did not receive detailed feedback, (some saying that they received NO feedback).</p> <p>Students don't appear to like group assessment, or rather, there are a group of students, typically those who are borderline 1-2i, who feel they are being disadvantaged by students who do not work as hard as them.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback should be explicitly labelled as such. • Feedback proformas to be more widely publicised, perhaps attaching them to module review forms. • A reduction in assessment will be accompanied by an increase in the quality of feedback for assessed work. • Expectations need to be managed better. Staff will be encouraged to stick to the coursework timetable, especially with regards to feedback dates. • Programme leaders and year tutors are to press home the difference between school and university, particularly with regards to independent learning. • Assessment of group work to be looked into to ensure that it is fair. |

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| <p>Academic support</p> | <p>Staff are now more easily contacted and are seen as being more available, but there still some room for improvement.</p> <p>The guidelines for project supervision have been valued, but some students still struggle with the submission of large pieces of written work.</p> <p>Increased availability of programme leaders has resulted in better communication between staff and students.</p> | <p>Level 3 and 5 students complained that there had been inadequate preparation for the third and fourth year dissertations in terms of writing skills.</p> <p>Apparent lack of structure in Integrated Design Projects has been flagged across all levels.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier submission of workplans for final year projects, plus the use of supervision guidelines and feedback on draft chapters should help. • Staff are being encouraged to show typical examples of good, bad and indifferent work, so that students can gauge for themselves what is expected of “divergent assessment”, such as IDP and dissertations. |
| <p>Organisation and management</p> | <p>The increased number of staff-student fora have been appreciated, and the school is seen as listening to student concerns.</p> <p>The text alert service has also proved successful.</p> <p>There remains a dichotomy between assessment and feedback. To improve the quality of feedback, assessment needs to be reduced. However, students appear to like assessment since they don't like to have one exam as the sole piece of module assessment.</p> | <p>Sudden cancelling or re-arranging of lectures is not appreciated by students.</p> <p>Some staff are still seen as not being available.</p> <p>Students don't like “too many 9 o'clock starts”, and some complain about the number of apparent gaps in the timetable.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text messaging service will be used to inform students of sudden changes. • Staff to be reminded that ignoring a student's email because the answer can be found elsewhere simply moves the problem on to someone else, i.e. the next person emailed. A courteous reply saying that the information is in the student handbook or the VLE should suffice. • The prospect of detailing on the timetable possible “study periods” should be investigated so as to show the students that it is not just lectures which are important, but the amount of effort which they put in which also helps. |
| <p>Learning resources</p> | <p>There remains criticism of the amount of IT facilities available within the school. However, the provision of more facilities for students on the Architectural Engineering programme has led to a sharp increase in the satisfaction of these students.</p> <p>The availability of relevant software across campus is welcome, but the strong sense of community within the school makes students reluctant to travel across campus to access facilities.</p> | <p>There were numerous comments made about one particular member of staff and their attitude towards the use of the IT facilities.</p> <p>There are insufficient IT facilities for the size of cohort. Students also criticised being ejected from rooms when teaching was scheduled in the two large rooms where computers were available.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT facilities are now available to level 5 MEng students in the MSc study room on the first floor. These should be promoted to students. • The gradual reduction in student numbers will help, but this is a long-term solution. • The planned construction of a sixth floor on the school will also help, but again this is a long-term solution. |
| <p>Personal development</p> | <p>We have performed very well in this category, being the best ranked UK civil engineering department.</p> | <p>Level 1 and 2 students don't feel quite so positive about this aspect; being particularly uncomfortable with assessment where there is not a well-defined single answer. Similarly, the large class size leads to an occasional impersonal feel.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff changes in level 1 and re-vamp of CIVE1706. • Students are being encouraged to visit the careers centre to make use of their facilities. • Visiting lectures from the careers centre, library and recent graduates have been introduced for level 3 and 5 students. |

