

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

Faculty of Engineering

School of Mechanical Engineering

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	97	87	89	87	91	86	86	85	87	85	78	83	100	87	88	84	89	82
Teaching	96	89	92	90	85	88	82	85	83	84	79	83	94	87	84	85	89	84
Assessment & feedback	87	71	82	69	73	65	65	59	63	61	57	56	88	75	70	69	75	68
Academic support	91	81	89	80	84	77	71	72	73	72	63	68	91	85	87	80	82	79
Organisation & management	96	84	91	83	84	82	81	73	82	74	73	83	93	85	84	80	84	77
Learning resources	87	90	88	88	88	87	75	81	72	78	74	77	87	86	89	83	90	82
Personal development	92	81	94	81	84	78	74	69	76	68	70	65	76	77	78	71	76	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)

Impact of 2011-12 actions	The Theme Team (a small working group of academics with a particular interest in a specific area) focussed on improving feedback, continue to help deliver improvements in “Assessment and feedback”. Our mechanism for managing, coordinating and communicating deadlines continues to help us improve our scores in “Organisation and management” and student reps now play a key role in any “in year” changes that are needed. Refurbishment of key teaching areas (LabVIEW academy, dynamics and control, thermodynamics) is complete and these are now high quality flexible spaces for delivering labs with new high quality equipment. We improved the prototyping area facilities (most recent purchase being a laser cutter) to improve our ability to deliver more “hands on”, “problem based” activities. New teaching of electronics, using more “hands on”, “problem based” work has had a positive impact on our Product Design Programme in particular at levels 1 and 2 while new software engineering teaching material in MECH1010, linked to new our “hands on”, “problem based” activities has had a dramatic positive impact of the teaching of computing.
Achievements in 2012-13	Once again our School is extremely pleased and proud of its achievements in the National Student Survey. Data shows that from a very strong position last year, the school has continued to see either significant improvements (green arrows) or no significant change (yellow arrows) in all question categories. As last year, the school remains one of the very few schools to achieve “green lights” (scores greater than 85%) across all categories. We are particularly pleased to see our continued emphasis on “assessment and feedback” continuing to pay dividends in terms of improved scores. We are also pleased to see that in what was a difficult year, in terms of staff absences and continuing backlog maintenance, our ability to manage these affectively saw scores for

	<p>“organisation and management” improve and our overall score of 97% satisfaction is our highest ever.</p> <p>Our extremely vibrant Staff Student Forum has once again helped us to focus on and prioritise those issues of significance and just as important has helped us communicate the changes made as a result to students. We are delighted to see that 94% of our students agreed with statement B6.3, “It is clear to me how students’ comments on the course have been acted upon” some 40% points above the sector average.</p> <p>Improving NSS and other factors have again improved our standing in national league tables, The combined Times/Sunday Times table has once again placed mechanical engineering top of the Russell Group for “Student Satisfaction” for the third year in a row and we are now ranked 4th overall out of 62 universities, our highest ever ranking.</p> <p>Our adoption of the CDIO (Conceive Design Implement Operate) curricula has had a very positive impact on The School since its introduction and this year, at the Royal Academy of Engineering, The University was presented a “special recognition award” by National Instruments (one of our key strategic partners) for our work in linking practical design challenges to classroom theory.</p>
<p>Main actions for 2013-14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain vigilance of our feedback and marks return deadlines in response to comments referring to a small number of failures to deliver on time – This year ALL modules will use the VLE for return of marks so compliance can be demonstrated. • We will continue to promote staff student interaction (both formal and informal) to ensure affective communication. • Support a greater range of student activities such as societies with an engineering focus (for example the rocketeering, robotics and 3d printing groups). • Revisit how to get best usage from our teaching assets such as labs, the model making equipment, computers etc. • Continue to refresh CDIO/hands on activities if required. • Engage fully with the new Teaching Enhancement Scheme (TES) – particularly encouraging student participation and examine cross faculty TES initiatives in Blended Learning for example. • Work with the Employability Team to ensure we are promoting their work to students as effectively as possible. • Work with students and staff in electrical engineering to improve communication within our joint Mechatronics Programme
<p>Summary of student involvement in the production of this Action Plan</p>	<p>Our excellent results in the National Student Survey (and subsequent impact on the Times/Sunday Times league table) was communicated to all students over the summer via email. The results from the NSS and our programme surveys were summarised and presented at the first Staff Student Forum meeting and some initial areas for potential improvement were discussed. Student Reps were encouraged to discuss these (and others) with the wider student cohort. A prioritised list was discussed and agreed at the second Staff Student Forum meeting.</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
Overall satisfaction	Our ambition to work with student reps to foster a vibrant forum where students have a clear and significant influence on our teaching has been very successful. Students are clear where their point of view is taken into account and how their input impacts upon our teaching.	Our Overall Satisfaction Score of 97% in the National Student Survey is our highest ever and has resulted in our school being ranked top of the Russell Group in Times/Sunday Times league table for the 3 rd year running. This improvement in overall score is also evident in the Postgraduate Programme Experience Survey where our score is now 100% up from 88% last year. These improvements are not however apparent in the Undergraduate Programme Experience Survey where our score is broadly the same as last year.	We will continue to encourage further engagement between staff and students and use the staff student forum as a key component in our school's mechanism for further improvements.
Teaching	We have implemented numerous "hands on" activities to improve our teaching particularly in design and manufacture, computing and electronics. These have had a very positive impact on our teaching	Our NSS scores in teaching have continued to improve year on year and now stands at 96%. Our efforts to provide a range of approaches is apparent in the response to question, B5.2 "The range and balance of approaches to teaching has helped me to learn", where 97% of our students agreed with the statement compared to a sector average of 80%. The postgraduate data also shows significant improvement while the unfortunately the undergraduate data does not.	We will continue to promote our Head of School Award for Learning and Teaching and encourage engagement with the partnership awards to celebrate examples of high quality activity. We will continue to examine module evaluations and consult student representatives to find ways of improving the experience of students surveyed in the undergraduate survey.
Assessment and feedback	A new "theme team" (a small working group of academics with a particular interest in a specific area), focussed on improving feedback, was created with the aim of continuing to deliver improvements in this area.	Our continued focus on assessment and feedback through a "theme team" has been successful in maintaining the year on year improvements seen over numerous years. Our NSS score of 87% is one of the highest in the sector. Despite these improvements a small number of comments suggest a few isolated problems remain.	We will continue to ensure marking is delivered promptly by ensuring it is available on the VLE for ALL modules within our 3 week deadline.

<p>Academic support</p>	<p>We established a “theme team” to look at supporting students with their use of our wide range of software. We have developed support material to help students with the uptake of high powered computing in years 3 and 4.</p>	<p>At 91% in both the NSS and the Postgraduate Survey our scores in this category are well above the university average. At level 1 and 2 the question “Good advice was available when needed to make module choices” is a persistent problem, as there are, in general, no module choices. This results in the category “Neither agree nor disagree” being selected by the majority of our students with obvious consequences.</p>	<p>We will continue to work with the Faculty Employability Team to improve our support for students wishing to undertake a year in industry and provide support regarding careers advice.</p>
<p>Organisation and management</p>	<p>A new mechanism for managing, coordinating and communicating deadlines (both submission and feedback) was implemented with the aim of improving our scores in this category. Student Reps now scrutinise deadlines at the start of each year and suggest changes as required. We also monitor adherence to the timetable of return of feedback and marks.</p>	<p>In what was a difficult year with both backlog maintenance and staff illness affecting our provision of teaching and facilities. Our systems allowed us to continue to deliver well managed and organised programmes. With scores of 96% and 94% in the NSS and postgraduate surveys respectively we believe the student support office has played a vital role in helping us deliver high quality programmes.</p>	<p>We will work with our counterparts in electrical engineering to resolve any organisational issues with the delivery of our joint Mechatronics Programme. We will continue to work closely with our student support staff to ensure we remain highly organised.</p>
<p>Learning resources</p>	<p>Over the last few years we have invested heavily in new laboratory space and new equipment and refurbishment via backlog maintenance. We have also significantly increased the provision of high power computer work stations.</p>	<p>Our scores in this area are perhaps a little disappointing but perhaps not unexpected given the amount of disruption refurbishment and commissioning of new equipment has brought. We have also perhaps raised expectations of our students by the introduction of more ambitious practical projects. Comments suggest access to resources is the most pressing issue rather than quality of the facilities. Some comments related to the poor quality of computing for product designers was also noted.</p>	<p>New high power computing in design studio A will be deployed. Access to our prototyping area and our dynamics and control lab will be affected by infrastructure changes in support of our ambition to develop our manufacture facilities for robotics. We will work hard with faculty services to mitigate against access issues as much as possible. We will continue to work with student reps to find ways of improving access to our resources.</p>
<p>Personal development</p>	<p>The post of director of external affairs was established to improve our student’s preparation for employment. This was later subsumed within the employability team.</p>	<p>Despite a small reduction in scores in this area across all surveys, our NSS score of 92% remains significantly higher than the university average</p>	<p>We will support students who wish to develop interests allied to engineering through various clubs and societies. For example we will look to support the rocketeering society, the robotics club and the 3d printing club as appropriate.</p>