

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

School: Philosophy, Religion and History of Science/Philosophy

Faculty of Arts

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	85	87	87	86	82	82	85	85	90	83	91	84	88	84	75	82	75	78
Teaching	90	90	89	88	86	85	87	84	90	83	92	83	100	85	100	84	75	81
Assessment & feedback	65	69	70	65	56	61	63	61	60	56	65	57	68	69	48	68	58	63
Academic support	75	80	68	77	73	74	64	72	63	68	76	68	96	80	70	79	70	76
Organisation & management	86	83	86	82	80	79	79	74	79	83	76	73	83	80	70	77	71	73
Learning resources	89	88	80	87	85	85	71	78	70	77	74	76	86	83	90	82	83	81
Personal development	72	81	69	78	72	76	53	68	64	65	52	63	70	71	58	70	84	68
Sector position	26/41	51/150	28/36	46/151	36/38	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The disappointing fall of 2 points in the NSS overall satisfaction score for philosophy is somewhat alleviated by pleasing rises in the categories relating to teaching, academic support, learning resources and personal development.. Our Achilles heel remains assessment and feedback, where we have lost some of the large gains made in the previous year. Programme survey results are generally lower than NSS scores in absolute terms – as was also the case in the previous year. The postgraduate survey shows large rises in every category except learning resources. Our results put us third in the University league table and we are extremely pleased that provision at MA level appears to have been very well received.
Achievements in 2011-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constructed teaching allocations to allow for co-teaching of the very large modules at Level 2. Implemented new teaching arrangements for large modules taught by means of interactive lectures to allow for one of the three weekly sessions to be taught by means of parallel smaller seminars. Took the decision to move forward with the introduction of our new Philosophy, Ethics and Religion programme. Appointed two new permanent members of academic staff to meet teaching need in the areas of ethics and logic and language and appointed a new Leadership Chair to forge research links across the School and bring a new coherence to the new PER programme (which he will manage).

Main actions for 2012-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We plan a serious focus on Level 1. Our aim is (from next year) to have permanent academic staff teach some of the core tutorials across the central curriculum. Our other main focus this year will be assessment and feedback. We have now centralised the publication of essay deadlines to students and incorporated a feedback return date into the document so that feedback arrangements are obvious to all. We will renew our marking criteria in Semester 2. There is some evidence that our Joint Honours students are amongst the most dissatisfied students in our School. We will forge better links with co-teaching Schools, so that (as parent school) we are better informed of the requirements of other programmes and are able to convey student concerns more systematically to co-teaching schools.
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	School:	Faculty:	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have improved the effectiveness of personal tutoring via the further embedding of Leeds for Life which is now used regularly by the vast majority of staff in the School. We produced audio podcasts explaining the content of each of our modules and placed them on the VLE, in order to improve module advice. Some students remained unaware of the existence of these podcasts, however, despite having been emailed about them. (Communication with students is a general issue for our School – emails often apparently go unread or undigested by students. This is an issue on which we need to continue to focus). We have developed our careers advice area on the VLE. The latest figures reveal that there has been a significant rise in visits to the Careers Service by our 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One clear theme emerging from comments in all surveys is that many JH students currently feel badly served – they complained of being left out of crucial provision and of being given less guidance than fellow SH students. PPST appears to be a particular problem here with Psychology often named as a particular culprit. JH students feel they are sometimes unprepared for the level of prior knowledge being presupposed by certain modules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal tutors (already arranged in such a way as to act, in effect, as ‘specialists’ in particular JH programmes) will be regularly provided with up-to-date information about the names and contact details of the ‘link’ tutor in the co-teaching school and asked to provide that to their personal tutees. They will also be asked to ensure they are <i>au fait</i> with basic details of the other side of the programme, so they are able to respond effectively to some sorts of queries themselves. The DoSE in Psychology has been made aware of the problem. The Programme Review for PPST will address the issue in more detail. Staff to be reminded on a regular basis of the presence of JH students in their modules and instructed to ensure that no

	<p>students which may in part at least be due to the greater accessibility and visibility that this initiative has produced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have incorporated the parenting and personal tutoring of JH students into our processes and procedures, following the closure of the Joint Honours Centres. Though all the basic processes are now in place, more clearly needs to be done to ensure that JH students do not feel that their distinctive needs are not being properly met. We are working on this as a matter of priority. • We are piloting an L2 module which utilises presentations as a mode of assessment in order to develop a model for this mode of assessment which can be more widely rolled out across the School. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing modules said to be more complex for JH students. → • There are complaints that the staff-student forum is ignored. → • Availability of advice and help should be publicised more. → • Workload perceived to vary unfairly between programmes. → 	<p>knowledge is presupposed, beyond that contained in official prerequisites. We also plan to prepare a VLE-based glossary of crucial philosophical terms and concepts which we think will be invaluable to all our students, but perhaps particularly useful to those who have inevitably had less exposure to the subject (JH and elective students).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The catalogue can sometimes be confusingly presented. We intend to continue to improve the clarity of its instructions concerning module choice. We already offer module advice sessions specifically tailored to JH students. • This is untrue! – but it is clear that we need to do more to explain to students what we have done in response to their suggestions and complaints. We have now instituted a system whereby a summary of what has been done in response to concerns is forwarded to all students by the programme reps on SSF following each meeting. • Staff to be encouraged to make it clear that office hours are for anyone – one needn't have what one student called a 'giant crisis' in order to be able to attend them. This information also to be stressed in our student and staff handbooks. • The complaint here seems to be that there is too much summative assessment in Philosophy (by comparison with students in some other programmes). This matter is currently the subject of
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<p>Teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We reduced SSRs on the centrally important L2 modules through co-teaching (though impact will not be seen until next year when changes to teaching arrangements take effect). We have introduced a new L2 module, 'The Philosophy of Food', in order to enliven our provision at L2 and provide an opportunity for assessment by presentation, and for more group work than has been traditional in our subject area. We envisage sharing experience with these experiments with other staff to encourage wider use of these more unusual modes of teaching and assessment on appropriate modules. We have highlighted the Partnership in a number of different fora (SSF, Welcome back meetings, personal tutor meetings, etc.) in order to encourage a culture in which attendance at and preparation for tutorials is thought of as something students owe to each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students expressed a desire for a wider variety of modules and noted that certain interesting aspects of the discipline were excluded from study due to "somewhat overly Anglo-American conception advocated by the dept". More contact hours wanted. → Too many compulsory modules at L1 and L2 which were "incredibly difficult and not particularly relevant". → 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In due course (and once the reforms at L1 have bedded in a little) we plan a complete review of our curriculum. This complaint, which is perennial, should be factored into any decisions we might make about curriculum reform and about future hirings. We have already significantly increased contact time on those modules taught by means of interactive lectures – though the reception of this mode of teaching has been mixed. Our current focus is therefore on improving the <i>quality</i> rather than the <i>quantity</i> of contact with staff (e.g. more small-group teaching done by permanent staff, as opposed to pgs.; more small-group teaching in general, etc.). We will give consideration (as part of the review process mentioned above) to the question whether there is any scope for reduction in the number of compulsory modules on our SH programme. We note,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have reinforced a policy of having a strict maximum on numbers in a given tutorial. • On the largest modules taught by means of interactive lectures, we have arranged for the third weekly session to be broken down into smaller groups, taught concurrently, to improve the environment for student discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be more focus on essay writing. → • Not enough tutorials or proctorials. → 	<p>though, that other comparable philosophy depts. currently take the same approach as we do, laying a broad more or less compulsory foundation at L1 and L2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are piloting an approach to 'essay workshopping' this year which so far seems to be going extremely well – we will share this practice across the School if feedback continues to be positive. • We have introduced group discussion sessions on a number of upper level modules this year – but student engagement with them has been very low. We intend to provide more tutorials on modules currently taught by means of the 'interactive lecture' mode. We will also consider the provision of some L3 teaching by tutorial only – which may be one way of expanding tutorial provision without unduly increasing workload on staff.
<p>Assessment and feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to a relatively low score on Q9, staff were encouraged to provide some feedback relating to clarification of misunderstandings, explanations of material, etc., as well as feedback related to the development of general philosophical skills, and to rebrand some office hours as 'feedback hours'. This does not appear to have helped, since our score on this question has slipped further. • In response to a low score on Q8, we have now restructured the largest L2 modules to allow for co-teaching, and hence for more detailed feedback. The effectiveness of this strategy remains to be seen since the change has only just 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students unhappy about promptness of feedback. → • Some students complained about confusion about paper vs. electronic essay submission and corresponding late penalties. → • Request for example essays. → 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralised information on feedback deadlines is now in place. • We will closely monitor whether these deadlines are kept. • We plan this year to keep our own statistics on percentages of modules for which feedback was returned by the deadline for additional transparency. • All submission is now electronic only – which should make such confusion a thing of the past. • Sample (anonmyised) dissertations are now available on the VLE; we plan to do

	<p>been introduced for 2012-13.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We appear to have resolved the problem we had with promptness of feedback at MA level – where our assessment and feedback score is up by 20 points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is alleged that what the lecturer is looking for – and the standards applied - changes from module to module. This is a very common complaint. Some students were unhappy that some of their first year marks had been judged by pg students. 	<p>the same with essays (with student permission).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will refresh, simplify and raise awareness of our marking criteria next semester, aiming for a School-wide approach, so far as possible. Staff will be encouraged to provide feedback that is specifically tailored to the marking criteria, so that students can see that all staff are using them. Our new plans for L1 will mean that the majority of assessment at L1 will now be done by permanent staff.
Academic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We instituted audio podcasts placed on the VLE for the delivery of module advice (in addition to our usual module advice sessions). Students who listened to them were extremely positive about the development – but many students claimed not to know about them. Welcome back sessions were held once more at the beginning of each semester and are beginning to be somewhat better attended, as student expectations change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A complaint was made about the lack of support for students with dyslexia. Electives were said not to have been explained thoroughly enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have newly instituted an Equality and Diversity Committee which will look at the question of whether we could be doing more to help our dyslexic and dyspraxic students. We will improve the explanations offered in induction sessions and make more information available to personal tutors about how best to advise students concerning elective choice.
Organisation and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reorganisation of the School is now more or less complete in all essentials. We are pleased that our score in this category remained constant at 86% satisfaction despite the inevitable upheaval. We have continued to expand the use of the VLE for effective communication with students, but communication problems remain, with students failing to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students expressed confusion about how many credits they need to pass, which count, etc. There were many negative comments about the organisation of JH courses – and knowledge of these courses amongst Philosophy staff said to be insufficient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This year, we have produced a new student handbook, much more user-friendly and comprehensive than the last. Some known issues have already been addressed by programme reviews. The measures detailed above (overall satisfaction) for improving communications between the two co-teaching schools ought to help with this. It

	<p>emails, notice announcements, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All module handbooks are now available on the VLE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students complained that they are unable to hand essays in in middle of day. 	<p>may be a good idea for relevant personal tutors to attend the programme review for programmes in which they 'specialise'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now resolved by new office opening hours.
Learning resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have continued to urge staff to exploit opportunities for digitalisation. We have requested staff not to set books which can be neither bought in sufficient quantities nor digitalised. We have continued to remind staff to supply reading lists early to the library and to do so by way of the Reading List Tool. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library should be 24 hours. Library fines said to be excessive. Not enough copies of books in library. Inconsistency between modules wrt what gets put on VLE. Computers in library insufficient at busy times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has been fed back to the library rep. This issue was considered at our SSF and students agreed that heavy fines were necessary as an incentive to return wanted books swiftly. We continue to remind academic staff to supply reading lists early by means of the Reading List tool and to increase their use of the digitalisation service. Our student education support officer is this semester undertaking an audit of all modules to assess the current situation; we will review this shortly. This has been fed back to ISS.
Personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have continued to attempt to embed Leeds for Life, requesting that staff use it to contact their personal tutees and mentioning it and explaining the range of opportunities to be found there at Welcome Back meetings at the beginning of each year. This year, it was particularly helpful to be able to invite the Leeds for Life ambassadors along to these meetings to alert students to the many benefits of the site. We continue to develop the VLE area concerned with Careers and Employability, using it to advertise one-to-one sessions with careers staff, as well as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor advice from personal tutors. Some students unhappy with too-frequent changes of personal tutor. Need to bring in "outside sources who inspire". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An information sheet to be prepared for all personal tutors, indicating the range of resources available to students (e.g. the volunteering hub, the Leeds Network, the Careers Centre and drop-in sessions, etc.), about which some staff may lack information. New arrangements to be established for personal tutoring to cover staff leave so as to minimise changes of personal tutor. We are currently exploring possibilities for organising some alumni events within the School; this is likely to be a central focus

	<p>Faculty of Arts events and other careers information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We instituted an Industrial Year – six students from the School have now taken up the opportunity.• We introduced a new module with assessment partly by presentation in order to pilot and develop the use of what is, for our subject, a very rarely used form of assessment which students often request.		<p>of the next couple of years.</p>
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