

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

School: Philosophy, Religion and History of Science (TRS) **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	89	87	88	86	91	82	84	85	78	83	82	84	100	84	100	82	100	78
Teaching	96	90	86	88	91	85	82	84	81	83	86	83	87	85	96	84	100	81
Assessment & feedback	73	69	61	65	68	61	59	61	62	56	69	57	74	69	87	68	100	63
Academic support	82	80	75	77	76	74	68	72	70	68	69	68	83	80	100	79	83	76
Organisation & management	90	83	86	82	89	79	83	74	82	83	78	73	100	80	100	77	100	73
Learning resources	81	88	66	87	69	85	69	78	63	77	68	76	81	83	96	82	100	81
Personal development	79	81	70	78	64	76	57	68	58	65	53	63	45	71	81	70	63	68
Sector position	19/32	51/150	18/28	46/151	12/28	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"> NSS scores have gone up in all categories, sometimes by very significant amounts. It is disappointing that the overall satisfaction score changed by only one percentage point, despite these very large improvements. Progress has been a good deal more patchy so far as the Programme Survey is concerned, however, suggesting perhaps that there are still aspects of the student experience at levels 1 and 2 that need addressing. The postgraduate survey results are pleasing in general.
Achievements in 2011-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new level 2 core module, THEO 2300, Studying Religion in Context, was designed and put into place to begin in 2012-13. Two new members of staff were appointed to improve staff:student ratios and cover areas hitherto not well served by the programme. We took the decision to move forward with the introduction of our new Philosophy, Ethics and Religion programme, designed to improve student recruitment and offer a genuinely interdisciplinary student experience, building on the research strengths of the new School of PRHS. A Leadership Chair was appointed to help forge links across the School of PRHS.

Main actions for 2012-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Assessment and Feedback: We will closely monitor to check that feedback is indeed returned on time. Last year, although all staff knew of the three week deadline, not all met it. We have stressed to all staff that assessment is an absolute priority. We will keep our own figures concerning the percentage of modules on which feedback was returned on time for additional transparency. We will renew our marking criteria. • On Personal Development: We will improve guidance for personal tutors and continue our efforts to promote CSER 8000, Study Abroad, Students into Schools and the External Placement module in order to help students acquire employability skills; we also plan an increased focus on alumni events. • 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, as planned, appointed two new members of staff (and one further member will join us in January) to increase staff:student ratios and decrease reliance on external tutors. • 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. 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 instituted audio podcasts placed on the VLE for the delivery of module advice. • We continue to develop the VLE area concerned with Careers and Employability, using it to advertise one-to-one sessions with careers staff • We instituted an Industrial Year – six 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students complained that the course was not very social and that it was difficult to get a sense of belonging to the dept. • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSF thought this complaint likely to relate to former years since the newly invigorated TRS Society has done a great deal on this front – organising a book club and a film club as well as a large number of other activities for TRS students. • The Director of Undergraduate Studies has also organised a social for all TRS students; assuming feedback is good, she plans to continue with regular events of this sort. • The issue has been addressed in JH Programme reviews this year and link tutors in co-teaching schools have been made aware of the difficulties. • We will investigate the possibility of organising personal tutoring in TRS in the way currently done in Philosophy, whereby individual personal tutors have

	<p>students from the School have now taken up the opportunity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have continued to incorporate 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were complaints in particular about the JH programme with Sociology . 	<p>tutees concentrated in particular programmes, thus enabling them to develop expertise in that programme, so as better to advise students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have discussed this with the link tutor in Sociology who plans to advertise her availability more effectively to JH students.
<p>Teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have introduced some seminars at L1. It is currently too early to gauge student response but we are hopeful that this has been viewed as a positive development. We have introduced student discussion sessions on a number of modules. New modules have been introduced following the appointment of two new staff. 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 seminars is thought of as something students owe to each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact hours remains a concern. Choice of modules said to be relatively poor until L3. Some students felt they were discouraged from doing a dissertation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are doing what we can in the way of increasing seminar provision and group discussion sessions, though we remain constrained by relatively high SSRs, and would like to do more. New appointments have enabled us to include new modules in our programme this year, particularly enabling improvements on the Theology side. We will continue to explore new possibilities with the new Leadership Chair. This may have been an unintentional consequence of efforts to ensure that students intending to take a dissertation were aware of the possible pitfalls! It is a problem that will inevitably disappear, once dissertations become compulsory for all L3 students.
<p>Assessment and feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have instituted a policy of returning essays along with feedback forms, to meet student demand. We have encouraged more widespread use of Grademark, which students appear to like. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students complained about late return of feedback. 	<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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have provided staff with trays outside offices for swifter and simpler essay return. On some modules, mid-semester feedback is now being provided. Feedback deadlines are now published together in a school-wide document for greater simplicity and transparency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Feedback sheets often not very helpful” need to be more detailed, with more analysis needed of what would have to have been done to hit top mark. Many deadlines fall on the same day. Need sessions in some modules to explain the form of assessment – e.g. how to write a literature review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff to be encouraged to provide more detailed comments on the feedback sheets – students to be asked whose sheets might be used for the sharing of good practice. Now that all submission is electronic, it may be possible to relax our current policy of insisting that all deadlines fall on a Monday, which may ease this difficulty. Relevant module leaders to be asked to provide guidance – perhaps via the VLE.
Academic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new staff handbook contains guidelines concerning the importance of responding promptly to student emails; the new student handbook also explains to students why it might be unreasonable to expect an instantaneous response. 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"> Some tutors said not to answer emails promptly or at all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We suspect this problem may now disappear of its own accord now we are less reliant on external tutors. The new staff handbook contains guidelines concerning the importance of responding promptly to student emails; the new student handbook also explains to students why it might be unreasonable to expect an instantaneous response.
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 has increased to 90% satisfaction despite the inevitable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process for registering for a 40 credit dissertation said to be too difficult and off-putting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are currently reviewing our dissertation provision in the light of the CEP proposals. It is expected that improvements in the timeliness and transparency of information pertaining to

	<p>upheaval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have continued to expand the use of the VLE for effective communication with students, but communication problems remain, with students failing to read emails, notice announcements, etc. All module handbooks are now available on the VLE. 		dissertations will result.
Learning resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Together with the library rep, we focused on improving library resources for TRS students, securing a one-off additional increase in the library budget in order to increase provision of crucial resources. The score for this category has been responsive to this initiative, increasing by 15%. 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"> Some students continued to complain of poor book selection in library (though this may relate to earlier years). Not enough IT facilities and study facilities at peak times. Sometimes too few copies of required reading in library. Fines said to be extortionate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are continuing to work closely with the library rep to improve TRS provision. It has become apparent that the TRS book budget may be unaccountably low – the library is investigating. This complaint has been fed back to ISS. 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. This issue was considered at our SSF and students agreed that heavy fines were necessary as an incentive to return wanted books swiftly.
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 continued to develop the VLE area concerned with Careers and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students wishing to apply for a PGCE need to be advised at L1 they have to cover all world religions. Leeds for Life needs to be more consistently used by tutors. Personal tutors are often changed many times. Not much info about applying for research Masters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This information to be included on personal tutor information sheets. We will continue our efforts to encourage all staff to use Leeds for Life to communicate with personal tutees. New arrangements to be established for personal tutoring to cover staff leave so as to minimise changes of personal tutor. We will improve advertising for our information sessions.

	<p>Employability, using it to advertise one-to-one sessions with careers staff, as well as 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.		
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