LTC16D080

Title:	**HUM - School Plans Addressing Outcomes from the 2016 Postgraduate Student Experience Survey (PTES)**
Author:	Nick Selby
Circulation:	Learning and Teaching Committee – 15 March 2017
Agenda:	LTC16A004
Version:	Final
Status:	Open

Issue

HUM summary of school responses to PTES 2016

Recommendation

Recipients are invited:
To note and consider the report

Resource Implications

None

Risk Implications

Medium – risk to QA process if issues not considered

Equality and Diversity

None considered.

Timing of decisions

Further Information

Nick Selby (ADLT- HUM); Dawn Goff (HUM-LTQC Secretary)

Background

Agenda item for LTC, 15/iii/2017

Discussion

General issues:

All schools (following the briefing note) noted that the PTES data are based on small sample sizes, and self-selecting respondents, so cannot be taken as fully reliable. In most areas, though, it is apparent that HUM schools are performing near (or slightly ahead of) the institutional (and subject) average. All school responses articulate well-defined strategies to address areas where they are performing below such averages and, indeed, where school performance has slipped (but still remains above average) since the previous year. On the

issue of the reliability of data, one school (HIS) pointed out discrepancies in the data provided by the briefing note. This should be attended to.

Schools also noted that given the small respondent size in the survey, a poor score in one course run by a school can significantly skew the data, giving a perhaps misleading picture of other, well-performing, courses / areas.

The need, therefore, to develop strategies to ensure much greater percentages of student participation in PTES is emphasised by all schools, and is an important aspect of the faculty's response to PTES data. Key to this will be ensuring that PGT students are given ample opportunities to participate in school discussions of teaching and learning – via SSLCs, representation on teaching committees – and at LTQC.

PTES 2016 identified that the provision of help and advice to students in preparation for writing dissertations needs to be improved. Across HUM, and within schools, it is clear that there are a variety of different practices around the preparation for and writing of dissertations. Each school will be examining this issue in upcoming teaching committee meetings (and / or teaching days), and schools are already developing strategies to streamline and consolidate practice around the dissertation between different courses. Schools are also planning to introduce extra provision / sessions on dissertation preparation that will also provide opportunities to clarify procedures and expectations relating to dissertations.

Other issues that were shared across school responses were: 1) worries about English language competency among students on certain MA courses; 2) how to make improvements in the scores for Resources and Services when much of what determines these data lies outside of the school's control; and, 3) a recognition of the need for schools to better explain expectations, learning objectives and marking criteria to students. These three shared concerns make apparent the need for schools to develop robust systems for communicating, and consulting with PGT students early on in their course, and to keep that dialogue open and ongoing. It also highlights the need for schools, faculty and the university to change attitudes and systems within which PGT students can become marginalised. This is especially important given the likely inclusion of PGT data in future TEF exercises.
So, a key message arising from the PTES data for HUM, and from school responses to it, is that schools (and the faculty) need to develop effective strategies to ensure that significantly larger percentages of PGT students complete the survey. We need, in short, a strategy for getting more reliable data flowing from PTES. Taken as a whole, the faculty achieves some excellent scores and receives very positive comments from students on teaching quality and staff enthusiasm. The very strong relationships between teaching staff and PGT students that is thus apparent in HUM should provide a strong base for the better communication with, and representation of, students which underpins school strategies for improving future PTES results.

School highlights:

AMA
- assessment and feedback review in semester 2
- recommending mid-module review
- identified a need to train staff teaching students whose English competency is poor
- discussing the introduction of study skills tutors
- seeking better student representation, and communication with students

HIS
- points out (note 1 of response) discrepancies in data provided
- robust strategy in place to consider and act upon the findings of PTES
- will further coordinate / consolidate module / course provision
- will liaise with library over resource issues
- introducing a new skills development module
- seeking better student representation, and communication with students

IIH
- low sample size (8 students on MACE) so no survey conducted

LDC
- will encourage higher student participation in PTES
- promptness of return of work still a priority
- develop use of British Archive of Contemporary Writing
- reframe student thinking on skills development (esp. given anomalous nature of Creative Writing students in relation to this area)
- seeking better student representation, and communication with students

PPL
- robust strategy in place to consider and act upon the findings of PTES
- conduct thorough analysis of data for MA in Applied Translations Studies
- examine issues around dissertation provision at teaching away day
- examine issues of student competency in English
- seeking better student representation, and communication with students

Suggested actions:

At school level these are noted above (and in individual school responses).

LTQCs and LTC should take measures to ensure that PGT provision, and students, aren't marginalised in / by UEA structures (by ensuring PGT students are properly represented).

LTQCs and LTC to develop better strategies for communicating with students, so as to ensure much higher student participation in PTES.

The data discrepancy pointed out by HIS needs looking into.

Attachments

AMA: School response to PTES 2016
HIS: School response to PTES 2016
LDC: School response to PTES 2016
PPL: School response to PTES 2016

PTES 2015/16 AMA Response

Dissertation modules

- The School will improve communication about what is expected (including deadlines, research proposals and marking criteria). Feedback sheets (including marking criteria) will be included in dissertation module handbooks.
- Across all its dissertation modules, the School will re-introduce classes on how to prepare for, plan and write a dissertation.
- Student feedback suggests that there is varying practice across the School when it comes to providing written feedback on draft chapters. Further discussions will be held to explore whether there should be a minimum of written feedback that every supervisor must provide.

Feedback

- Course Directors will liaise with Module Organisers to assure that marking criteria are being discussed on every module.
- Feedback sheets will clearly list marking criteria and will be included in module handbooks.
- Course Directors will liaise with Module Organisers to assure that all modules have a piece of formative assessment in the first half of the semester.
- The School will hold an assessment and feedback review in semester 2, 2016/17. All teaching active staff (including associate tutors), UG and PGT students will be invited to this meeting.

Management and Student Workload

- Departments will review assessment strategies and patters at the end of semester 2, 2016/17. As part of this review we will explore how we might address the current bunching of deadlines and aim, as a minimum, to spread deadlines across key weeks e.g. weeks 12 and 13)
- Student feedback suggests that there is a discrepancy between what students and Module Organisers think is an appropriate workload at MA level. Further discussions need to be held to address this issue.
- On some of MA programmes students struggle with academic reading and writing, in particular English for academic purposes. Module Organisers and students suggest that much more resource needs to be put in place to support students whose first language is not English. Module Organisers rarely have training in English language support/teaching and so as a School we feel ill-equipped to provide the support that is needed by the students we recruit (particularly in FTM). There is a need to review the School's admissions strategy, and/or to invest in English language support.

Contact time and communication

- This year the School has made a concerted effort to advertise advising hours to students as contact time that students are expected to use. However, there may be a need to increase contact time. Members of the Teaching Committee have suggested that dedicated study skills tutors may be a way to help offer students the support they need.

The School is aiming to improve communication between students and staff in several ways: Module Organisers will communicate marking criteria and expectations in class on all modules. Feedback sheets with marking criteria will be included in module handbooks. The School's Teaching Committee has agreed that there should be a student rep on the Committee. The Chair of SSLC is currently

PTES Student Satisfaction 2016 Analysis

School of History Reply

I.   Introduction

As the introduction to the HUM Briefing Note points out, there are several points which undermine the validity and value of the 2016 PTES, at least to some extent. This includes, most importantly, variations in the (small) size of the student cohort and the number of answers received (i.e. one more positive or negative reply compared to previous years has a major impact on the overall scores), but also the fact that not all questions in the survey are compulsory, that respondents are self-selecting and not pre-assigned to Schools, and that the sector average includes AMA results. Thus, many of the findings must be viewed as indicative only.[1] Nevertheless, the various issues raised (especially in the verbatim feedback) need to be addressed here and are a welcome opportunity to reflect on best practice and ways to improve our performance.

II.   HIS Performance

Compared to the scores in 2014 and 2015, HIS performance declined in many areas. However, it is also evident that the School is often performing above the sector and UEA average:

	HIS Scores (2016/15)	Sector avg. (2016)	UEA average (2016)
Overall satisfaction	89% (down from 96%)	85%	86%
Teaching and Learning	92% (down from 94%)	86%	85%
Engagement	87% (down from 89%)	81%	81%
Assessment and Feedback	79% (up from 71%)	77%	77%
Dissertation	88% (down from 95%)	83%	79%
Organisation & Management	73% (down from 79%)	75%	77%
Resources and Services	81% (down from 91%)	82%	87%
Skills Development	74% (down from 79%)	74%	79%
Information	89% (up from 81%)	82%	88%

While HIS has experienced a downturn in several areas, it continues to maintain very strong scores in overall satisfaction, Teaching/Learning, and Engagement. The School has significantly improved in the fields of Assessment/Feedback and Information.

Many verbatim comments praise the enthusiasm, knowledge, and helpfulness of the course tutors and supervisors: 'The teaching staff have been fantastic.

---

[1] There also seem to be some inconsistencies in the figures provided. There are clashes between the tables on pp. 8 and 21-22, and the profile on pp. 23-24. The table below refers to p. 8 (sector average) and p. 21 (UEA average).

Their enthusiasm is contagious.' Other students wrote that 'the lecturers are all interesting, knowledgeable on their topic, passionate and very helpful' and that the overall experience was very good: 'the support, camaraderie and work has been fantastic, so thank you staff and students.' To most extensive comment read as follows: 'All of my staff have always made an effort to make time to see me if I need them, or have offered to call me if they're too busy to fit me in for an appointment. They all know their subjects as extensively as you would hope and it has been a pleasure.'

III.   Action Points

Particular areas for improvement are Organisation and Management, Resources and Services, and Skills Development:

1) **Organisation and Management**:
    Verbatim feedback mentioned the lack of (initial) information on marking criteria and the need to be clearer about deadlines, especially regarding the dissertations. The first weeks provide postgraduates with the necessary guidance. There will also be a dedicated Blackboard site for MA students from 2017/18, and students will be reminded of certain dates by email.
    - The School will coordinate module provision at MA level and avoid any confusion or overlaps regarding content delivery and assessment. In the past, certain modules, that had been initially advertised, did not run due to low student numbers. We have withdrawn those modules.
    - The signing-up for language training needs to happen before students arrive at UEA.
    - The SSLC has been extremely useful as it allows postgraduate students to voice their concerns (in addition to emails and other feedback, e.g. during office hours) and to be involved in certain decision-making processes. The views and concerns expressed there are addressed already during term time.

2) **Resources and Services**:
    - Some respondents would have liked to be able to access more subject-specific and IT resources. More specifically, there were complaints about 'limited library space and quiet working areas', the 'slow and cumbersome' inter-library loan system, and the lack of online resources offered by the Library. There is little the School can do about these issues.
    - The same applies to the lack of IT resources for PGT students, or indeed limited childcare facilities (as mentioned by one former student).
    - However, we can certainly liaise more with the Library, ordering key readings for our modules and/or making them available online via Blackboard.

3) **Skills Development**:
    - Skills Development is another area of concern where HIS is currently positioned in the bottom 25% of the History and Archaeology sector in the country. In 2016/17, the School launched a new joint module 'Historical Research Skills' for Early Modern and Modern British/European History students. It introduces students to the research skills necessary to pursue postgraduate historical research and also includes sessions on employability and professional development. The Landscape and Medieval

sectors have long offered skills-focused modules as part of their MA teaching provision.
- One aspect that was repeatedly mentioned in the PTES and also more recently in the SSLC meetings is the need to explain expectations (marking criteria) and to introduce more specific essay writing skills at postgraduate level. There will be dedicated sessions on that from 2017/18, including referencing guidelines and Blackboard basics.
- Some respondents would have liked more student interaction outside of class. There are a number of opportunities that need to be advertised better and more widely, including our PGR colloquia and research seminars, not least because this relates to skills development as well. The Early Modern sector has been particularly successful in recruiting MA students to its research seminars.

The results of the 2016 PTES, the various issues raised, and the subsequent action points suggested here will be further discussed during HIS board and management committee meetings, and more specifically in review sessions with MA course directors.

Dr Jan Vermeiren, HIS PGT Director
28 February 2017

LDC PTES Response

The School is delighted to see so much overall improvement in its PTES results. The very positive nature of so many of these matches the many more informal pieces of feedback we have received from our students. The single most important response from the School here, I think, has to be to work to encourage more of our students to complete the survey – that would I think, serve not only to guarantee the robustness of the results but also to improve them.

We are delighted by the improvements in Overall Satisfaction, Teaching and Learning, Engagement, Assessment and Feedback, Organisation and Management, and Information. The promptness of the return of work continues to be a priority for the School and we are very pleased to see the improvements there registered in the students' experience.

There are three areas for improvement

1. Resources and Services: we look forward to working with the new Faculty Librarian to improve library provision, but that is, of course, an area that is under such pressure (financial, space). We are making much fuller use of the British Archive of Contemporary Writing and many of our students have commented that they have especially enjoyed that this year, but that seems to be a resource of a slightly different kind from the one concerning the students here. The School will look to help refine the Library's provision of resources, but this seems like a problem that will require considerable support if it's to be seriously amended. The School would most certainly welcome such support were it available.

2. Skills Development ("with career development as part of the course being a clear area for improvement and development of research and communication skills appearing to be key areas for improvement"): this is a desperately tricky area for the School because of the singular nature of so many of its MA students. I think this can be seen very clearly in the results here which note that the Creative Writing cohort (though that is, in fact, a mix of four or five or six cohorts rather than a single one) replied unfavourably on this front but very warmly on all others. The challenge, of course, is that so many of our MA students arrive *from* jobs – they approach the MA as a break *from* their careers (where many are already extremely successful professionals). That makes it rather hard to encourage the students to conceive of their MA as part of their career development. And there is something similar, I should think, in the negative response to the question of *research* skills. I suspect the problem to be addressed here is one of encouraging the students to reframe the questions in ways that allow them to respond to them more positively.

3. The School is committed to providing increased opportunities for students to provide feedback on their experience; this happens as an important (and routine) part of module-review. The School will look to encourage great PGT student participation on the SSLC, which it hopes may be one way of addressing this issue. This year the four long-standing Creative Writing programmes are also due their quinquennial reviews and this should provide another occasion for the students to comment on those programmes in the round.

PTES Report

School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies

Introduction

The following action plan is devised in response to the results of the Postgraduate Taught Evaluation Survey (PTES). The action plan is organized around the specific themes outlined in the survey and the action points have been identified in any areas where the school of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies has performed below the institutional average. It should be noted, however, the PPL scored in line with UEA average on the majority of themes. However, there has been a decline in various areas and as such the report addresses these issues specifically.

Action Plan

Section	Issue	Action	Time Frame	Additional Notes
Overall satisfaction	Score declined by 10% in 2016.	Discuss with MA ATS course director PPL will make a conscious effort to encourage *all* students to complete PTES	immediately 2017/18	'Applied Translation Studies course plays a part in this lower score with an Overall Satisfaction score of 75% in 2016'. MAATS had the highest response rate and therefore it may have been the case that other areas of the school would have achieved a similar uptake
Teaching	No issue	PPL will monitor and implement suggestions from mock TEF exercise. Specific qualitative comments	Continuous	Slight dip on 2015 (87% to 90%)

		have been addressed with course directors		
Engagement	No issue	N/A	N/A	N/A
Assessment and Feedback	No issue	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dissertation	PPL scored 71% - almost 10% below institutional average	PPL director to raise at TC and ensure space is dedicated in Away Day to discuss best practice.	2017/18	• PPL's lowest scoring theme remains Dissertation in 2016 with a score of 71% which is significantly behind the UEA average of 79%. With a score of 70% UEA scores well within the bottom 25% of institutions on this theme of English-based studies with PPL clearly playing a part in this. More positively, UEA is positioned in the top 25% of institutions for the Politics and Media Studies subject areas due to DEV and LDC results

				boosting this. o Looking at the individual questions making up this theme highlights that this decline in PPL's score was driven by a marked decline in agreement with I am happy with the support I received for planning my dissertation (down from 71% to 62%). UEA scores below the sector average for this question on the Politics (62%) and English-based studies (65%) subject areas but in the top 25% of institutions for Media Studies (83%). Whilst the part played by other Schools is clear, this also indicates different levels of provision within the School. o It is also notable

that PPL respondents were less likely than average to agree with two other questions on this theme: My supervisor has the skills and subject knowledge to adequately support my dissertation (74%) and My supervisor provides helpful feedback on my progress (69%). Notably, 100% of respondents that selected the Politics subject are agreed with both of these questions indicating a best practice example. Note that the Applied Translation Studies course plays a part in this lower score with, albeit from a low base of 14, a Dissertations

				score of 49% in 2016.
Organisation and Management	No issue	N/A	N/A	N/A
Resources and Services	92% but qualitative data suggested an issue with IT provision	PPL will monitor the situation	2017/18	'PPL respondents were more less than average to agree that I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to (82%).'
Skills Development	No issue	N/A	N/A	N/A
Information	No issue: PPL increased score on information	N/A	N/A	N/A