University of East Anglia

LTC11D085

Title:	**Student Experience Survey 2012**
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Circulation:	Learning and Teaching Committee – 27 June 2012
Agenda:	LTC11A006
Status:	Open
Version:	Final

SES Survey of Year 1 & Year 2 Students: Report and Action Plan from the Academic Director of Taught Programmes

The reports on the SES produced by Sree and her colleagues in BIU provide the University with a unique body of data for Year 1 and Year 2 students. **It should be noted, however, that the relatively low response rate (20%) means that the results should be treated with due caution.** I am sure TPPG colleagues will welcome the availability of this kind of data, even if, at present, it is imperfect. The opportunity to compare the experience of 1st and 2nd years is of value, as is the opportunity to compare the SES with our NSS data for finalists.

The PVC Academic has asked that TPPG consider the detail contained in the SES surveys and produce a report based on them for LTC to consider on 27 June. As ADTP I have reviewed the reports and have tried to identify areas where feedback suggests an area of weakness for the University, or a vulnerability, that the institution needs for address. I welcome the opportunity to share the survey reports and this action plan with TPPG colleagues and invite colleagues to consider:
   a) Whether the proposed action points needs to be refined
   b) Whether additional action points are needed to address the issues concerned.
The feedback from TPPG will inform a revised copy of the Action Plan for LTC.

Dr Adam Longcroft
Academic Director for Taught Programmes, 18 June 2012

Issue	Concerns	Actions for 2012/13
RESPONSE RATES		
Overall response rate of 20%. (Year 1: 22%, Year 2: 18%)	The response rate was relatively low. This undermines the reliability of the results. Important to increase participation in future years	• **Circulate info re the SES earlier, repeatedly, in different venues, formats.**
Variation in response rates between schools. NBS Year 1: 13%; CHE Year 2: 8%	Some schools have high participation, others have very low participation. Important to understand factors underlying this variance. Response rates across Years 1 & 2 of 20% (the average) or less a particular concern: e.g. EDU, CMP, ECO, NBS, CHE, LAW, MTH, NSC, PHI, PSI. Explore how lessons from these schools might nurture a higher response rate in other schools.	• **Examine why some schools achieved a high response rate across Years 1 & 2**. (AHP: 32%, SCI: 51%, ENV: 29%, DEV: 28%). • **Share factors/strategies between schools.**
TEACHING		
Feedback on quality of teaching is generally very positive across the University, though ratings are lower for SES than for NSS.	This should be celebrated since it has a huge impact on the student experience. There is a sound bedrock for the University to build on here.	• **Quality of teaching highly praised. LTC should acknowledge the positive feedback on the work of academic colleagues in their teaching and explore ways of maintaining and building-on this success.**
Over-use of PowerPoint	PPT is a hugely valuable tool, but its use needs to be aligned carefully with learner needs and objectives of taught sessions. If PPT slides can be used more as 'back-up' in terms of content delivery (e.g. via Blackboard) more time could be devoted to active learning, groupwork, discussion and dialogue in class/seminars.	• **Course/Module teams to consider whether the standard 'lecture' using PPT slides is the most effective method of supporting student learning.** • **Course/Module teams to consider creative uses of 'contact time' within the constraints of room availability/timetabling.** • **ADTP and CSED to develop/deliver workshops focusing on active learning, groupwork and creative uses of 'lecture' time and 'lecture' spaces.**

Variable standard of teaching by PGR/PHD students	Use of PGR students in Schools needs to be accompanied by a more robust system of 'mentoring' so as to enhance experience of UG students.	• **LTC to consider development of a more robust mentoring system for PGRs in schools.** • **Review CSED-run PGR training programme with a view to drawing-on best practice in sector and practical seminar preparation and management skills.**
Enhance use of Blackboard to support student learning	The use of Blackboard is extremely variable within the University. In some modules its use is dynamic, but in some it is not used at all or at a very basic level. Differences in student experience emerge and some are disadvantaged by not having materials available to them online.	• **Course/module teams need to examine how use of Blackboard can be enhanced and made more consistent.** • **ISD to work with Schools to identify Blackboard 'cold spots' in Schools and focus staff development workshops on key staff groups.** • **ISD Education Board is investigating how use of /content on Blackboard can maximised – the impact of these developments need to be welcomed and supported (and monitored) by LTC.**
ASSESSMENT		
Fairness of assessment. 7.5% of Year 1 and 10.8% of Year 2 students felt that assessment was not fair	That more than 1 in 10 Yr 2s do not think assessment is 'fair' is a source of considerable concern. Why do students feel this way? What might change their perceptions of fairness?	• **Where might causes for concern about 'fairness' be located within the process? Discuss in Schools with student reps and SSLCs.** • **Course teams to reflect on how they can make the marking process more transparent.** • **Schools/Faculties to place more emphasis on marking/feedback workshops focused on sharing best practice and achieving consistency across subjects/disciplines.** • **Involve students in reviewing/unpacking the criteria used to assess them – e.g. Senate Scale, assessment criteria for individual assignments etc.**

		• Involve students in 'mock' mocking exercises so they develop a better understanding of marking process.
Procedure for submission of coursework is clear. Disagree: 9.3% of Year 1s and 17.2% of Year 2s	Feedback from Year 2 students re the HUBs differs from Year 1s. How can their experience of the submission process be enhanced next year?	• **Enhance quality of written guidance and verbal guidance provided in Handbooks/Class.** • **Clearer guidance on LTS website about submission process.** • **Ensure clear guidance for online submission.**
I understand how and when to expect marks. Disagree: 24.4% of Year 1s and 28.6% of Year 2s	Feedback from Year 2 students re the HUBs differs from Year 1s. Return processes problematic. How can their experience be enhanced next year?	• **Enhance quality of written guidance and verbal guidance provided in Handbooks/in Class.** • **Clearer guidance on LTS website about release of marks and return process for coursework.**
Satisfaction with assessment in general. Year 1s experience more positive than Year 2s.	Why do Year 2s feel less satisfied with assessment? Is it just the HUBs or are they affected by increasing difficulty/challenge and a subsequent drop in marks? How can their level of satisfaction be enhanced next year?	• **Schools/Faculties to place more emphasis on marking/feedback workshops focused on sharing best practice.** • **Ensure clear guidance for online marking and feedback is available to students.**
FEEDBACK		
Feedback was prompt. Disagree: Year 1s 30%, Year 2s 40%. In relation to **HUBs,** student's views on prompt return of coursework are again a concern. **35.4%** of Year 1s disagree **44.7%** of Year 2s disagree	30-40% of students feel feedback was not provided promptly. Huge 20% negative difference between SES(45%) and NSS (65%). Similar big difference (11%) between ratings for assessment overall (58% *vs* 69%). Research indicates that the value of feedback is inversely proportional to the time taken to receive it. Therefore	• **Adequate academic resource needs to be applied to marking and internal moderation process - and achieving 20 day return period.** • **Re-emphasise importance of meeting 20 day return period.** • **Close monitoring of return dates and receipt of scripts in HUBs by HUB managers, TDs and Faculty ADs.**

	prompt return of feedback is key to effective learning and a positive student experience. UEA (like other HEIs) knows that prompt turnaround is critical – we need to explore all possible means of addressing this issue at institutional level.	• **Improve liaison between markers, moderators and HUBs**.
Satisfied with <u>quantity</u> of written feedback. Disagree: Year 1s 25.0%; Year 2s 31.1%	Between a quarter and a third of students want *more* written feedback. Students will probably always want more feedback regardless of how much is provided. However, first we need to be clear when we will be giving feedback (the cycle of feedback needs to be explicitly articulated) and we need to remind students when we do give it to them. The latter is crucial in terms of influencing students' perceptions of the quantity of feedback received.	• **Roll-out online marking and new ITC-led methods of providing written feedback on scripts. This will also address the 'illegible handwriting' issue.** • **Schools/Faculties to place more emphasis on marking/feedback workshops focused on sharing best practice.** • **Develop/articulate clear 'cycle of feedback' at course and module level.** • **Remind students when they are receiving feedback.**
Satisfied with <u>quality</u> of written feedback. Disagree: Year 1s 21.4%, Year 2s 24.7%. **Feedback often difficult to read.**	Between a fifth and a quarter of students want better *quality* feedback. Hand-written feedback often difficult to read.	• **Roll-out online marking and new ITC-led methods of providing more helpful computer-generated (legible) feedback on scripts.** • **Schools/Faculties to place more emphasis on marking/feedback workshops focused on sharing best practice.** • **CSED to run workshops on role of written feedback as an aid to learning.**

Satisfied with <u>quantity</u> of oral feedback. Disagree: Year 1s 33.5%; Year 2s 43.2%	Between one third and 43% of students want *more* oral feedback.	• **Schools to build-in more opportunities for oral feedback in modules/courses, e.g. by**
		   o using more formative assessment where feedback is oral;
		   o building-in more tutorial time;

		- building-in more opportunities for generic 'group' oral feedback. - Reminding students when they <u>will</u> receive and <u>do</u> receive oral feedback. **• Separate return process for coursework, and provision of feedback on coursework.**
Satisfied with <u>quality</u> of oral feedback. Disagree: Year 1s 28.8%, Year 2s 35.1%	Roughly 29-35% of students want *better* oral feedback.	**• Schools to run collaborative workshops on providing oral feedback. Share practice. Involve students?** **• CSED to run workshops on role of oral feedback as an aid to learning.** **• Separate return process for coursework, and provision of feedback on coursework.**

EMPLOYABILITY		
The course is preparing me for employment. Disagree: Year 1s 7.4%, Year 2s 11.1%	More than 10% of 2nd years feel their course is not equipping them for employment. This is despite more Year 2s being involved in internships/placements.	**• Schools to articulate for students how transferable/translatable skills are being developed via assessment in each module/across courses.**

ACADEMIC SUPPORT		
Role of DOS	The feedback on services and support provided by DOS should be celebrated. The rating and qualitative feedback is remarkably positive – it has a huge impact on the student experience and on the progression/performance of individual students.	**• The SES survey illustrates DOS's huge contribution to ensuring a positive student experience at UEA – LTC and the wider University community need to find ways of maximising this as a 'USP' of the University.**
I have adequate opportunities for discussions with staff. Disagree: Year 1s 6.9%, Year 2s 9.0%	Nearly 1 in 10 2nd years feel they do not have sufficient opportunity to speak to staff.	**• Module convenors, seminar leaders and advisers to use clear 'office hours' when they are available to talk to students.** **• Develop school culture with greater emphasis on oral, 'individualised' contact with**

		• **students – more human, face-to-face interaction and less online (i.e. by e mail, or Blackboard).**
		• **Re-emphasise importance of the role of the adviser and use of adviser as a 'sounding board', source of guidance etc.**

ORGANISATION & MANAGEMENT

Changes are communicated effectively. Disagree: Year 1s 13.0%, Year 2s 12.2%	More than 1 in 10 students feel that changes to courses were not communicated effectively.	• **HUBs and Module Convenors to identify most effective and speedy means of conveying info re changes. Inform students repeatedly how this info will be conveyed – e.g. emails, e-vision, texts etc.**
		• **Share anonymised examples in Schools of how poor communication disadvantages students and sometimes results in concession requests (e.g. DFS)**
Changes to rooms/timetables are communicated effectively. Disagree: Year 1s 15.5%, Year 2s 16.3%	Around 15% of students feel that changes to timetable/rooms etc were not communicated effectively.	• **HUBs and Module Convenors to identify most effective and speedy means of conveying info re changes. Inform students repeatedly how this info will be conveyed.**
		• **Share anonymised examples in Schools of how poor communication disadvantages students and sometimes results in concession requests (e.g. DFS)**

EXPERIENCE OF THE HUBS

Negative comments on HUBs.	There were three times as many negative comments as there were positive ones. However, negative comment largely relate to delays in release of marks and return of coursework. HUBs cannot do either until all scripts are marked and moderated internally. It would be	• **Training to be prioritised for frontline HUB staff re customer service.**
		• **Training for HUB staff on dealing with extension requests.**
		• **Enhance 'link-up' between HUB staff and school-based academics re approval of extensions.**

	unwise, therefore, to interpret negative comments on HUBs solely as an LTS problem since the marking process is in the hands of academics.	• **Investigate introduction of a system of receipts for submitted coursework.** • **Roll-out online submission more widely and online marking/feedback to improve quality/quantity of feedback.** • **Modules where coursework is returned well after the 20-day return period need to be clearly identified. Module Convenors need to consider whether they need to redesign assessments in such a way that they are not 'setting themselves up to fail' in terms of meeting the 20-day rubric.**
Staff were knowledgeable and helpful. Disagree: Year 1s 8.8% Disagree: Year 2s 17.3%	Experiences of 2nd years much less positive than that of 1st years. 2nd years have obviously been most affected by the new HUBs.	• **Prioritise staff training of frontline HUB staff.**
My problems were dealt with in a timely manner. Disagree: Year 1s 10.2% Disagree: Year 2s 16.4%	Experiences of 2nd years much less positive than that of 1st years. 2nd years have obviously been most affected by the new HUBs. 1st years seem very happy with the HUBs.	• **Prioritise staff training of frontline HUB staff.** • **Improve communication between HUBs and academics**
LEARNING RESOURCES		
There are adequate group study spaces. Disagree: Year 2s 18.3%	Nearly 1 in 5 students feels there are inadequate small group spaces	• **Identify new spaces for group learning in Schools, in other study areas, and in Library.** • **Explore how provision of University iPads or similar tablets might free-up space currently dedicated to desk-top IT facilities. The latter could be dedicated to group learning space instead.**
I have been able to access IT resources when I need them. Disagree: Year 2s 17.2%%	Nearly 1 in 5 students feels there are inadequate desk-top IT resources.	• **Explore how provision of University iPads or similar tablets might free-up space currently dedicated to desk-top IT facilities. Provision of tablets would ensure**

		24-7 access to online resources and key (e.g. MS Office) packages.
There are adequate quiet study spaces. Disagree: Year 2s 16.5%	Many students feels there are inadequate quiet spaces for study.	• **Explore how provision of University iPads or similar tablets might free-up space currently dedicated to desk-top IT facilities. The latter could be dedicated to quiet learning space instead.**
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT		
The lowest scores are for oral skills and team-working skills.	Scores for analytical and problem-solving and research skills are very good indeed. Lower scores for Oral communication skills and team-working skills are a cause for concern - they are key to employability (e.g. interviews and job selection processes) and to wider professional development/competencies.	• **Roll-out PAL across UEA over a three year period – mentors will develop both oral and team-working skills to a high level.** • **Build into modules more opportunities for individual and group oral presentations.** • **Build into modules more opportunities for collaborative learning and team-working.**