Each year, the University conducts a survey of its students to establish how satisfied they are with the programmes they are studying. There are three such surveys. For undergraduates there are the Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS), completed by 1st and 2nd year students, and the National Student Survey (NSS) completed by final year students; for Postgraduates there is the Postgraduate Taught Experience Satisfaction Survey (PTES) which was run for the first time in 2010. Areas covered include the quality of the teaching on the programme, the assessment and feedback arrangements, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources and personal development.

We review the School’s outcomes, comparing ourselves with the University as a whole but in particular within our Faculty, of Science and Engineering.

SSS and NSS

NOTE: For the UG SSS and NSS the number of students eligible to participate was relatively small, this therefore means that the figures may not be statistically significant.

In the 2009-2010 Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) there was a 25% response rate. The overall satisfaction level of all responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the School. This compared favourably with the previous year’s results apart from degree content where there was a slight decrease in satisfaction (3%). However, ‘the teaching on my degree’ section of the survey received an improved satisfaction rate from 89% in 2009 to 93% in 2010. There was also an increased overall satisfaction from 91% in 2009 to 96% in 2010.

In the 2009-2010 National Student Survey (NSS) the overall satisfaction level was good, being rated as 83%, with ‘learning resources’ also seeing a slight improvement in results from the previous year’s survey. Other areas had a decreased satisfaction rate. Overall the results from the NSS do not appear to be consistent with PTES and SSS survey results and module evaluation feedback. However, this is only the second year our students have participated in this survey, so it will be interesting to see how these results develop over coming years.

Particular areas highlighted as being problematic were:

Academic Support– there was some dissatisfaction voiced over the academic support received from one temporary part-time lecturer. The review of teaching support and use of temporary staff is part of annual review and this feedback, alongside module evaluations are noted when planning future delivery of courses.

Learning Resources– Some students at Southend and Colchester felt that the library resources were inadequate. There is a new library and resource centre planned for Southend which will improve the student experience on that campus. At Colchester the influx of large numbers of students from Colchester Institute has put pressure on the library, this, however, is continually improving through close liaison with the subject librarian.
PTES

The latest PTES results show in many aspects the School is above average in comparison to the University as a whole.

**Assessment and Feedback** - University average; 79.7% vs. SHHS: 81.5%

**Skills and Personal Development** - University average; 90.1% vs. SHHS: 96.3%

**Career and Professional Development** - University average; 87.1% vs. SHHS: 97.5%

In relation to overall satisfaction this survey showed that we were within 1 point of the university average for all sections. In ‘Skills & Personal Development’ and ‘Career & Professional Development’ we scored well above the university average. Many of our modules are closely linked with work based learning where skills development, work experience and professional development play a major role. We have close links with local employers and professional regulatory bodies that help to ensure we meet their needs and that these are in synchronisation with the student’s aspirations. In the free text comments there are numerous students who give praise for the high quality of teaching provided by the lecturers in the school and that this has directly helped them to develop the skills and knowledge to enhance their professional practice.

In comparison to others in our faculty we need to focus on ‘Organisation & Management’, and ‘Learning Resources; although our scores for this are in line with the university average. 35% thought that the learning resources were not sufficient for their needs but 72% said that they were satisfied with the quality of resources. This therefore seems to be an access problem rather than a quality issue. In the free text comments some highlighted difficulties in accessing on-line resources,— Developments within the library service provided by the university are planned. We have put in place a library liaison lead that communicates regularly with the library regarding our needs and contributes to planned developments. Many of our students are working full time alongside their studying and therefore rely more heavily on on-line resources (as they cannot go to the library except outside normal opening times). Access is therefore often reliant on what is available via their employers or in their own home. This may also affect their responses to organisation and management where time release for study is limited. The question in this section regarding the balance of core and option modules would be skewed by those undertaking pre-registration training where all the modules in their programme are core due to professional body requirements. However it must be acknowledged in the free text comments that one student had been delayed in receiving feedback and another felt that one part of their programme had been poorly organised. Our Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance committee has recently strengthened the structured and detailed process by which all modules are reported on and action followed up. This has and will continue to provide us with an important opportunity to follow up on areas that need developing.

The response rate to this survey was 35% which is marginally improved on last year’s survey participation results for SHHS and is in line with the overall university response rate. Due to the high number of PG students taking a modular route we do find getting them to engage in such surveys at a time when they may be in between modules difficult. This leads to a predominance in respondents from the full time, pre-registration courses which may affect the results (e.g. these students do not do a traditional dissertation and therefore the questions in this section may not reflect their experience). As noted, we do not have data to compare to previous years; however the numbers and balance of students across the PG programmes have changed dramatically over recent years and will be interesting to continue to monitor this in subsequent years.