School of Health & Human Sciences
Response to the Student Satisfaction Surveys 2012

Survey Overview & Background
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). 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.

This has been a really positive year for the School of Health & Human Sciences in relation to the results of the student satisfaction surveys. This is particularly important to us as teaching and learning, and thereby the student experience is the core business of our School. We are a diverse school that operates a wide range of pre-professional, post registration, undergraduate, postgraduate, part-time, full-time and different locality based courses. This makes general statements about the courses we offer difficult, and has been reflected in the responses in this year’s surveys. There were noticeable differences between the responses given for Colchester campus as compared to Southend Campus. This is likely to reflect the different courses that operate in each campus, and the specific developments made or infrastructure offered in the two locations.

As an example there was a 15% increase in satisfaction from the Southend campus in relation to Organisation & Management. This is also reflective of our position in relation to the Times Good University Guide. In a recent exercise conducted by the university (based on NSS results and comparison to the Times Good University Guide), Nursing was ranked in the top 20% and was furthermore ranked 1st for questions relating to ‘Organisation & Management.’ (Our BSc Nursing course runs from Southend campus.)

Survey Response Rates
NSS
The response rate from SHHS students for this year’s survey was higher than university average and slightly increased from last year’s survey. There was a better response rate from Colchester campus based students than in Southend, and so this is something we will focus on in next year’s survey.

SSS
Response rate to this survey remains low, with only a 23% response rate this year. This is likely to be due to the high number of students included in the survey sample from our ‘Continuing Professional Development’ (CPD) courses-these tend to only last one term (which may not be the term in which the survey is conducted), and may be delivered off-campus. This makes capturing these students’ experiences difficult as it will be different from the more traditional full-time, on campus experience.

PTES
This survey saw a large decrease in response rate from last year, with only 26% responding. There was a new system for entering into the survey this year that required additional information and steps in the process before the survey could be accessed. The majority of these students will also have been asked to complete other surveys, which may make them less likely to complete this one. There was also some confusion as to whether the CPD students were included in the survey sample. It is known that students are more likely under these circumstances to a) not respond, or b) not complete the survey sufficiently for it to be counted as a response. Because of this it is difficult to draw conclusions from this year’s survey results as they are likely to be unrepresentative. From the questions regarding the motivations for taking their chosen PG programme at this institution it is evident that the majority of responses came from the pre-professional programmes.

Review of overall satisfaction in survey responses
NSS
In all areas of the survey we scored within 5% of last year’s scores, with several areas seeing an increase; Assessment & Feedback up by 4%
Academic Support up by 6%
Organisation & Management up by 11%
Learning Resources up by 4%

SSS
We saw an improvement in all but 3 areas of the survey, being both higher than the Faculty and University average in;
Degree Content up by 4%
The teaching on my degree up by 4%
Assessment & Feedback up by 11%
Academic Support up by 9%
Organisation & Management up by 9%
Personal Development up by 8%
Overall Satisfaction up by 5%.
The areas that were lower than the University/ Faculty average were Learning Resources, (from the main survey questions) and Social Opportunities, and Facilities (from the optional questions).

PTES
In distinct contrast to the above, the students satisfaction rates were below the university & faculty average in all areas except ‘Skills and Personal Development’, and ‘Career and Professional Development’. However, from comparison to last year’s survey we have seen improvement in the majority of areas of the survey;
Quality of Teaching and Learning up by 17%
Assessment & Feedback up by 8%
Organisation & Management down by 1%
Learning Resources up by 15%
Skills and Personal Development up by 5%
Careers and Professional Development up by 9%
Overall Experience of my course- no change from last year.

Detail of key areas of the surveys
Assessment & Feedback
Although we have continued to improve in relation to Assessment & Feedback, further work on this area has been a priority for us both as a University, but also at a School and course level. There have been several initiatives that have been implemented in recent months which we hope will continue to build on the improvements made. These are:
• A reduced standard turnaround time for return of feedback on summative work of 4 weeks
In the NSS, Colchester campus students did not score highly the promptness of feedback. The date students can expect their feedback returned to them will be published in their module handbooks, and if this target cannot be reached, (e.g. due to unexpected staff absence) students will be informed and a new date will be advised as close as possible to the 4 week deadline.
• New marking grids and feedback sheets
The new grids have been designed to mirror the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and provide students with detail of the tasks they need to undertake to achieve and build upon the required standard for their work. Students will be given grades (e.g. A,B,C) rather than percentage marks so that they can easily gauge their current performance. This should help to dispel some of the variance between courses on questions relating to assessment & feedback.
• New standard module handbook template
These have been introduced to ease student access to important information about their course, including assessments and feedback.
• Learning Resources
Although we have seen a 4% increase in overall satisfaction in relation to learning resources, this continues to be an area of difficulty for us. Satisfaction increased by 10% in Colchester, however it decreased in Southend, although the satisfaction here was still higher than Colchester campus. The IT support and access to specialised equipment is praised. Several developments to learning resources are planned in both campuses, which we believe will have a significant impact on student satisfaction. These include:
A new Student Centre and extension to the Albert Sloman Library on Colchester campus. The centre will be home to an integrated learning centre for group working, new IT facilities, a state-of-the-art media centre and will offer a 24-hour reading room. The Albert Sloman Library extension will include an archive and special collections book store, 24-hour postgraduate study area, additional study space and library shelving and an expanded student book collection.
‘The Forum’ development in Southend. Jointly funded by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, South East Essex College and the University of Essex, it will be a new state-of-the-art library and learning facility in the town. It will provide a new public and academic library to replace the existing Central Library, a new teaching facility for the College and new research and learning facilities for the University.
Both of these developments are due to be opened in 2013.

Placements
Under the placement questions, we scored between 78-88%. Students responded positively to the questions regarding allocation of and supervision during placements, and supervisors understanding of how the placements
related to the broader aspects of the course. An area we would like to work further on with our placement providers is to ensure they recognise the value of our students as part of the clinical team.

Dissertation and Module Organisation & Management
There are questions included in the PTES survey regarding the dissertation, and the balance of core modules and options. This potentially will have confused a major portion of students undertaking this survey as a) they are not required to do a traditional dissertation as part of their Masters pathway, and b) in order to meet the external regulatory body requirements for pre-professional courses all modules are core, with no options available. We scored poorly in each of these areas.

Social Opportunities & Facilities
The ‘Social Opportunities’ section of the surveys is problematic for us. This is likely to be influenced by the fact that a high proportion of our students are undertaking full-time work alongside various stages of their studies as part of their placements (which are a requirement of the course). Also students based away from the main Colchester campus did not have as good an experience of this. This limits their opportunity to participate in the clubs, societies and events, of which students did criticise the range of opportunities available. Particular comments are made about the price of food and accommodation. There is more dissatisfaction with the facilities at Southend campus as limited vending machines are available and catering outlets are not housed within the University buildings, with the expectation that students would access the town centre outlets located nearby.

Careers, Skills, Personal and Professional Development
There is significant variation in the responses to the questions in the PTES regarding careers. In the main survey questions we score significantly higher than the university and faculty average, however in the institutional questions we score below the average. However, looking at all three surveys, this is an area we generally do well at with overall satisfaction being high. One student comments that “studying at the university for me has been highly positive in that I have been able to develop myself in a lot of areas, and this has actually helped me in my everyday life”.

Teaching and Academic Support
This is an area we continue to receive praise for across many areas of the surveys. The External Examiners’ reports this year have highlighted several examples of good practice in relation to teaching and assessment. The range of teaching methods was also praised by our External Examiners, however there were some students who commented in the free text comments about the limited range of teaching methods utilised in some courses. Nevertheless, from this year’s surveys it is evident that our continued biggest strength is the excellent teaching and academic support offered to students, which is highlighted in the high score of the PTES additional questions and the majority of other free text comments in the surveys.

As an example one student says “Good course content, exciting subjects, stimulating teaching staff and learning material, use of real life scenarios, professional highly knowledgeable teachers who share their experiences and help to reflect. Fantastic Student support services, outstanding prompt empathic team, a credit to the university.”

Action Points;

1. Liaise with relevant departments and members of staff to ensure students are allocated and recruited appropriately to each of the surveys.

2. Emphasis to be placed on only answering the questions if applicable, (e.g. for pre-professional programmes do not answer dissertation or core/option module questions), whilst trying to limit number of partially completed surveys (e.g. due to technical failure)

3. Monitor and evaluate new measures to enhance assessment & feedback- 4 week turnaround time, new standard marking and feedback documents and module guides. Ask moderators to comment specifically on whether students are guided as to how they can improve their work.

4. Raise awareness of learning resources available to students on and off campus and encourage full use of the new facilities as they become available.

5. Raise at Operation Contract Meeting the issue of how placement providers can better recognise the value of students as part of the clinical team.

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