School of Health & Human Sciences (SHHS)
Response to the Student Satisfaction Surveys 2013

Survey overview and 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 within this there are questions around employability issues.

This year the comparison between SHHS outcomes and the rest of the university was superseded by the new comparison measure which is the Times Good University Guide (TGUG). This is calculated based on four indicators: research quality; entry standards; graduate prospects; and student satisfaction. All indicators have equal weighting. This report is relevant only to the final category
Comparison in the TGUG is problematic for SHHS at this time. Some areas of student response have not been included in this year’s overall TGUG and this has impacted the rating. Work with the University is taking place to change reporting mechanisms in time for the next TGUG. It is envisaged this will have an improved outcome for the School within the TGUG ratings.

When considering our Unistats satisfaction results in comparison to other providers around Great Britain; SHHS shows a high satisfaction rating. The Unistats Comparison of Official Course Data from universities and colleges shows us to be in the upper quartile of Universities offering Nursing as a BSc Programme, with an overall satisfaction rate of 94%. This places us favourably for BSc Nursing and we are first (with a satisfaction rate of 94%) for Overall Satisfaction when reviewing rates for other Universities across Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire

Response
This has been a 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 a few 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.

Survey response rates
NSS
The response rate from SHHS students for this year’s survey continued the trend for higher response rates than the university average and increased on last year’s survey. This is likely to be due to action taken to improve allocation and recruitment of students to the appropriate surveys during 2012. The response rate has improved from students at Southend Campus overall and are more equitable with Colchester.
A better response rate to placement based questions is noted across both Campuses Colchester 85% vs. 80% last year, Southend 76% vs.69% last year. We will continue to focus on improving these response rates further in next year’s survey.

SSS
Response rates to this survey remain low, with only a 38% response this year. However, this is an increase of 15% on last year’s rate. The majority of these students will also have been asked to complete other surveys, which may make them less likely to complete this survey. 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. A marked 23% difference between Colchester and Southend responses is noted and an area for the School to address.
PTES
This year has seen a change in how response rates are measured for PTES; there is no longer a measure against other faculties within the University for responses. Work has been undertaken to make it easier for post graduate students to enrol on the student survey to improve response rates which is the case with a 7% increase. However, the response rates (as with SSS) remain low at 31% and owing to this it is more likely that negative responses will be registered when this is not the overall experience of students of all that took part. Because of this it is difficult to draw conclusions from this year’s survey results as they are likely to be unrepresentative. As with previous surveys, 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.

PTES will not form part of the university student survey in 2014.

Review of overall satisfaction in survey responses
NSS
In all areas of the survey we scored within 8%+/-of last year’s results with several areas seeing increases;
Teaching on course up 3%
Assessment & feedback up 3%
Personal Development up 8%
Overall Satisfaction up 8%

SSS
We saw an improvement in all but 2 areas of the survey.
Teaching of my degree up 1%
Academic Support up 5%
Learning Resources up 1%
(NB Students at Southend gave a 100% positive response that they had sufficient online course materials and e-learning support).
Personal Development up 1%
Quality of my degree up 7%
Overall satisfaction up 1% and remaining at 99% for the Southend Campus

In all areas but one, we have maintained a higher than University average. The only area where we were lower than the University average was, as with last year, learning resources in general. It is envisaged this will increase next year with the opening of the new facilities both at the Forum and Albert Sloman (see Learning Resource section below).

PTES
In the majority of areas we have maintained a higher than university average. A 12% increase in positive responses to questions on Career and Professional Development demonstrates a significant improvement. In relation to the university average response to the quality of teaching and learning this remains high and overall 90% of students responded that they are satisfied with the quality of their degree course.
Institutional results have shown some areas which require action to improve outcomes and these include assessment and feedback and learning resources. It is envisaged that with the new Albert Sloman Library extension at Colchester and the new Forum facility at Southend issues around resources will result in improved responses in the future.

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.
 The turnaround time of 4 weeks for standard student feedback has continued to be noted as positive by students.
 Use of a standardised module guide stating specific draft, summative deadlines and return of feedback dates has been instated and has been welcomed by students.
 Standard marking grids and feedback sheets are now in common usage across the School with clear detail of the tasks student need to undertake and build upon.
Employability related
The Optional section provides information on how well students believe the course has improved career prospects. We maintain a higher than University rating for this and have improved on the Colchester Campus up 2%. Southend Campus has remained the same at 99% agreement. Historically SHHS students undertake professional programmes which lead to the qualification for employment and as such we are likely to have high rating for this. The fact that this has improved again however is likely due to the work around employability (workshops, designated Moodle site) which has been actively included across all programmes this year.

Learning resources
There has not been much change in overall satisfaction in relation to learning resources. Satisfaction increased again this year in Colchester by 9%, however it decreased in Southend. September saw the opening of the new Forum teaching & library facility in Southend. This has received some very positive anecdotal feedback already and it is envisaged that the 2014 survey will show improvement in the survey responses. The increase in lending books as well as a major increase in student IT facilities which are open 24hrs (in line with the Albert Sloman Library – Colchester Campus) is likely to demonstrate a significant positive impact on student satisfaction.

Placements
Under the placement questions, we scored between 76-85%, remaining similar to last year. 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.
13 % more (94%) of students from the Colchester campus felt valued as part of the team in placement than Southend based students. This may be that the Colchester Campus students are Masters Students who are more experienced in engaging with placement providers. For the Southend course in particular this is an area we would like to focus on improving further.

Social opportunities & facilities
The ‘Social Opportunities’ section of the surveys presents difficulties 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). This limits their opportunity to participate in the clubs, societies and events, of which students did criticise the range of opportunities available. 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. This may well improve in the next survey as catering businesses are now located on the ground floor at the Forum.

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 these areas.

Careers, skills, personal and professional development
There is significant variation in the responses to the questions in the PTES regarding careers. This year we have scored significantly higher than the university average with over 90% of students noting improvement in professional development and employment prospects. This is likely to reflect the work which has continued throughout the year around improving employability across the school. This is an area we have historically done well in and this year is no exception.

One student comments: ‘the work has definitely impacted on my personal development positively. I really enjoyed developing through the academic process’.

Teaching & 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.
Teaching methods and assessment: students continue to respond positively, in the main, around teaching resource support. IT based platforms enable review of delivered sessions and interaction between students. This was felt to be excellent with a 100% positive response by students at Southend.
Responses to questions around individual support is mixed but in the main positive.
One student comments: “The lecturers are all very enthusiastic about the course. It’s great to have a named personal tutor and to be encouraged to be in regular contact with them as I feel very supported. It’s also great to have tutorials about the assignment and to have the opportunity ask questions”.

It is pleasing to note that students specifically commented upon the regard for administrative staff support as well as teaching support.

One student comments: “I have much regard for the staff; from teaching staff to the admin people......everyone has been so helpful and understanding and supportive. I will always carry happy memories of my time at Essex University........ The only negative is that I will have to leave in September 2013”

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<tr>
<th>Actions taken in response to 2012 Survey Action Points:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Action Point: Liaise with relevant departments and members of staff to ensure students are allocated and recruited appropriately to each of the surveys.</td>
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<td>Action Taken: Work with the University has taken place to ensure that students are allocated to the correct survey at the time of registering for the survey.</td>
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2. Action Point: 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)

Action Taken: Further information will be provided as part of the University survey support this year regarding the questions in the survey and how they might apply to the course a student is undertaking.

3. Action Point: 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.

Action Taken: Standard marking grids, feedback documents and module guides were introduced in September 2013. All module leaders’ reviews of module are considered at the Teaching & Learning Quality Enhancement Committee to ensure the turnaround time was met. Questions on guidance feedback for students are included in the module review document.

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

Action Taken: All module guides and module leads provide information around learning resources. The completion of The Forum library at Southend has facilitated student access to resources and is available 24 hrs. Per day. Moodle sites are made available more widely for modules.

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

Action Taken: This was discussed at the OCM with the issue being acknowledged by representatives from placement providers. This has formed part of the Planning and Quality Assurance process that is jointly undertaken by the University and placement providers.
Action Points from 2013 Survey:

1. Liaise with all members of the academic community within SHHS to encourage student response rate to meet the 2014 60% target including an increase in the use of student ambassadors.

2. Closely monitor the impact of the new learning resources available to students at Southend campus and coming on line during 2014 at Colchester Campus.

3. Investigate ways to share good practice from Southend Campus to enhance the experience of Colchester Campus based students.

4. Work with planning to ensure wherever possible a more representative sample of data from the school is entered into the TGUG.

5. Work with the Student Union in their planning and delivery of social opportunities that will better meet the need of our students.

Pip Bradstock.  
Director of Education for School of Health and Human Sciences  
8th January 2014