

Summary of NSS Free Text Comments

This summary is intended to support some discussion at Teaching committee. The students mostly made constructive comments on the issues they faced in AY 2017/18. This is a summary of the comments with potential measures we could take to help resolve the identified issues. Issues are included here if they occurred across multiple comments. Of course, this is an unrepresentative sample, but we should reflect on these, consider the extent to which these issues are manifest in our programmes and consider how we might resolve them. Academic year 2017/18 was not an easy year and the students were completing the NSS questionnaire when the UCU action was ongoing. Many students found the UCU action quite disruptive to their studies and this is reflected in the comments to some extent.

Following the list of issues is a list of potential solutions. This is intended to start discussion and should not be thought of as concrete proposals. We have limited resource and so should develop a manageable collection of actions and a plan to implement over the next year. I'd like the conclusion of the discussion to include a small number of measures we can take promptly together with some longer-term measures that we will consider in more detail together with implementation details.

Proposal: That we publish this list and make it available to the Undergraduate students so they can see we are responding to comment.

Teaching Issues:

- Unenthusiastic, uninspiring and unengaging lecturers
- Variety in course quality, there don't seem to be any guidance for course quality standards
- Lack of real world skills learned - lots of theory learnt but little improvement in programming
- Feedback received extremely late, the same lecturers have the same feedback issues year on year
- Exam weighting is too high compared to coursework
- Lack of past exam paper solutions for Honours courses is challenging, it would be helpful to know what kind of solutions should be given
- Timetabling can mean that it is difficult to have a good number of uninterrupted hours to study
- Feels like course feedback is ignored and course structure remains the same despite years of the same complaints
- Marking guidelines are not made clear, marks can be lost as key requirements are never specified
- Lack of emphasis on interdisciplinary work
- Flipped classroom does not work well when video recordings are of poor quality and not sufficiently explanatory

Potential Solutions:

1. Trying to engineer engagement points, e.g. Q&As with the lecturers (incorporate 15 minutes into the lecture), encouraging lecturers to be accessible in breakout areas.
2. Further analysis of course questionnaires, look at actions for commonly recurring issues.
3. Curriculum reform is currently ongoing to ensure more programming skills are covered, Programming Club helps to challenge students who are not confident with programming, consider implementing peer support "buddy" system for programming

4. Sensitive allocation of duties will help resolve some recurring issues.
5. Communicate more effectively to students the weighting of coursework over the entire degree (visualisation of coursework/exam balance).
6. Encourage lecturers to give specimen papers with outline solutions ahead of the exam and focus on revision lectures/exam answer prep.
7. Timetabling is a central function which is a difficult issue to overcome. The number of courses and central timetabling's desire to maximise utilisation of rooms tends to drive a fragmented timetable. There is new calendar tool on the horizon developed centrally which should help with time management.
8. Trying to address feedback at the moment. There is a major curriculum change to be implemented soon.
9. Develop guidelines for marking guidelines.
10. Interdisciplinary working isn't compulsory and is available to students who want it. More opportunities could be advertised as appropriate
11. Consider how to introduce ways of reviewing flipped classroom material.

Social Issues:

- Lack of community amongst students
- Little relationship between academic staff and undergraduates

Potential Solutions:

1. Work together with student societies to help further develop sense of learning community
2. Communicate more effectively to let students see the range of available activities.

Resource Issues:

- Not enough computing resources for the number of students
- A lot of disruption to working spaces because of building work
- Inefficient process for applying to become a teaching assistant, with little support
- ADHD support for deadlines was poor
- Lack of careers advice in Years 1 and 2

Potential Solutions:

- Resources are reviewed on annual basis.
- Building work is unfortunate but essential to improve the University's learning environment.
- Teaching resource admin is beyond the School's control, we are hoping that the University is able to provide contracts on time in future.
- Student Support Team has been introduced who are focusing on these issues and will become the named contact for students with ADHD.
- Working with careers service to improve career advice, particularly with students who are looking to have a short placement in Year 2 of their degree.

POSITIVES

In general, the undergraduates were more positive than the postgraduates. The UG issues we have a pretty good handle on and the main issue is how to communicate effectively with **all** of our students rather than the Reps plus the 25% or so of the “connected” students.

Social:

- Events and societies which enable students to network with other students, graduates and staff

Teaching:

- Some staff explain things in interesting ways that challenge students and help them understand difficult concepts
- Friendly and passionate lecturers who are happy to answer questions
- The quality of teaching has been good, access to experts in their field
- Quality of research is outstanding
- Diverse array of courses available
- Practical projects in courses have been helpful
- Recorded lectures and non-compulsory contact hours help with time management

Support:

- Help from Personal Tutors and ITO when students have had personal difficulties

Resources:

- Facilities are very convenient and provide 24/7 access
- Final year study space is excellent
- Student rep meetings mean that feedback can sometimes be actioned asap
- Availability of course statistics and reviews
- Career opportunities via employer events
- Student Disability Service and Counselling Service have been helpful

Degree Programme:

- Flexibility of changing degree programmes
- Flexibility of course choices in Honours years
- Flexibility of interdisciplinary course choices