

BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

MINUTES OF FACULTY EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

22nd October 2015 in the Committee room, Poole House

Present: Prof Keith Phalp (Chair), Reza Sahandi, Richard Stillman, Peter Hills, Melanie Coles, Paul Kneller, Huseyin Dogan, Michael Jones, Christos Gatzidis, Simant Prakoonwit, Philip Sewell, Amanda Stevens, Paula Peckham, Nikki Finnes, Helen Leddy, Ellie Mayo-Ward, Leia Daniels, Sophie Griffiths, Owen Addicott, Emma Pearson

Apologies: Apologies were received from Jane Elsley, John Hallam, Rick Stafford, David Osselton, Vasilis Katos, Remco Polman, Tom Davis, Ben Thomas and Chloe McMenamin

Introductions and Background

The chair introduced the main item for discussion as the Faculty ESEP, and provided some context on the nature and derivation of the plan. Notably, that this had evolved from discussions across all departments, which had first taken place during clearing, on the release of the NSS scores. These had been followed by many discussions with HoDs, and latterly with HoEs. We also noted that we have already had many productive meetings with DDE&PP and HoEs, and thus our plans, for each area, had evolved accordingly.

It was also noted that this, ESEP, had been seen as an internal document, where we genuinely wanted to consider the real reasons for issues, and focus on actions, often specific to certain areas, which we believed would have a real impact. Hence, having derived the document in this way, we saw this as an 'authentic' description from the Faculty perspective. However, we also noted that this had resulted in something that perhaps was not in the style or format of previous ESEPs, which were often more sanitised. However, that all believed that this would be more beneficial as a starting point for open and productive discussions.

The chair also emphasised that, despite NSS having been a source of data, and a driver, it was genuinely the student experience that we cared about, and that NSS was one way of trying to understand issues with that experience. In terms of the meeting the chair asked each department (through either HoD, HoE, or both), to provide an overview of the 'high-lights' or otherwise, of their analysis and plan. The chair also suggested that we wanted discussion, so that, if anybody had question or comments arising at any point to air them, even if this meant digressing briefly before returning to the plans. [This was very much the feel of the meeting with all participants, including reps, taking place in an open way].

The following provides notes on what were quite extensive discussions.

Creative

RS: Creative Technology is a new department; it was formed in 2006 and expanded rapidly. It was difficult to recruit staff. As a result there has not been as many staff recruited as anticipated. The department are happy to report there are now new staff in posts and fully staffed.

The student reps last year were not particularly active. There were framework meetings and forums throughout the year but the reps were not feeding back to the department, or reporting back to the other students.

It may be a combination of lack of staff and inactive reps which may have had an impact on the NSS scores. The department did not hear student comments, or what the department did was not fed back to the students.

The department now have an Action Plan so everyone is aware and receive the communication.

SP added to this that the action plan was a result of the NSS scores; that they have tackled every point, and also added there are going to be a number of guest lecturers now coming in.

EM-W: regarding unengaged reps, there is now a 'stepping down' policy. This is the role of the Champion. The role of student reps has changed, needs an effective Champion (the Champion was previously Andrew Main).

The Champions will be the Heads of Education.

Action: Provide a list of the Heads of Education and Heads of Department to SUVP Education.

Life and Environmental Sciences

Geography's NSS scores went down. Main issues; feeling of not having departmental responses or accountability. By bringing organisation down to department level they are able to answer any issues sooner.

There is also an issue of a lack of content. All of the programmes have now been validated. For Geography an extra unit has been added.

KP: there was a strong feeling the shared units were there for efficiency. It was noted at the revalidation that many of the staff wanted to do more.

There is a continuous issue of lab space and lack of technical support.

With regards to low scores, not all students want to do every unit. Students may give low scores because they are not passionate about it, when students choose units often scores are higher.

The rep stated it was good to get time frame of feedback. It is good if the lecturer explains the reasons behind the timeframe, for example because of the need for a second marker.

KP: feedback is an issue across University, but specifically addressed in our plans.

DO how clear assignment set out and feedback is what we did not do well on. To us it is obvious, but it is useful to know that others may not know that.

There was a discussion regarding whether the questions are measurable, and are they negatively focused. If you are not happy you may give other non related things a lower score because the questions may not ask about the specific issue the student wants to score.

The rep stated students will focus on the negative, and that they will often find it easier to think of a negative thing.

Psychology

The NSS scores were not as good as previous years. Similar to LES, it is down to, predominantly, organisation, consistency and feedback.

The Psychology department have created an extensive teaching guide for staff and for students. They shared good practice and introduced specific and clear guidance on the very issues that were raised in the NSS. For example, they have redesigned the assignment brief, and all students get a booklet of all assignments at the beginning of the year.

The rep said one of the things she had to do previously was find information from different places, so this guide has been helpful as it is all in one place. Accessibility of resources is easier if it is in one place and given to students.

It was suggested this Guide could be shared across departments. [Indeed, this has been discussed at meetings of HoEs, as to whether this could inform similar guides across the Faculty].

Also, it was mentioned that the Psychology department had wanted to introduce anonymous marking. Another area was the revamp of academic advisors, which is now more structured, and the second years have said they like it, and feel that there have been improvements.

Computing

NSS scores have gone up. The biggest weakness is assessment and feedback. The department now have subject specific teams for assessment setting, initially introduced last year, which has been very effective in finding issues and improving the quality of briefs, as well as for sharing practice.

The rep stated the need to look at student expectations and gave an example that students were already asking when their project proposals will be ready, a week after submitting.

There is a need to manage expectations. If a student marks a piece of work they can see how long it takes.

EM-W: get students on board. It is important to remember they have not been to another HE so they are not aware of how long marking should and can take.

It was asked how MUSE will run. When MUSE is run it is not clear what course they are on, just the unit. It would be interesting to know if the core units are giving different results to those who pick it as an option. [This was also reflected in other discussions, as particularly where there are shared units, different courses may have quite different perceptions of the merits, or otherwise of that unit]. It was suggested the students could put their course in the notes, and then look at it before they are sent off for scanning.

KP would need to speak to AM to see if it was feasible.

[This has been investigated already with the learning technology team, and we are told that this is not possible with the current set up of myBU, though is being looked at, and should be possible in 2016/2017].

AAFS

There are two years which are still merged. As a result the forums are hard to organise. Half students may love something, but the other half will not like it.

The department have some really small courses and it is not clear how these affect the NSS scores. We have programme seminars which are a good thing. Every student should be going, and registers taken. In these seminars students are able to ask questions and raise problems.

The department redesigned first year as a result of comments from students. There is now more subject specific content for all of the courses.

Design

There was an increase in NSS score for one course, and a decrease for two.

The department did reflect on the drop in scores. Made changes to Industrial Design, and the introductions were not smooth. The expectation is that these issues to not be there next time.

The department will use the programme seminar idea. We are telling students what we have done.

The student rep last year was good. The students want to have pride. The department may do a newsletter, to give an overview of what has been done. They want to get across what staff are doing. The rep asked if are there opportunities to get involved in things. There are some research opportunities, usually for third years.

Masterclasses have been brought in.

PK 100 day plan. student evenings/pub quizzes etc. but then money dried up NSS scores were great then – has been affected.

KP if people came up with ideas of enhancement we can look at it. Do a mini proposal stating what can be done if you were given the money.

PK: we have asked students who they want to see come in as a guest lecturer.

EM-W: there has been a huge drop off on personal development.

Students doing NSS questionnaire have been on placement so Personal Development is high, whereas SOS scores are lower because it is first and second years doing the questionnaires.

There was discussion about some of the excellent examples of external work that has involved students, and allowed them to develop. KP mentioned ShipWrex, which was something that one of the reps had taken part in, and he noted that it had been an excellent experience, but often there was not enough awareness of such projects.

Updates

Each team was asked to provide updates on the following areas.

- Anonymous marking – is happening for appropriate units.
- Registers and attendance - happening
- Academic Advisers – Timetabled.
- Assessment teams
- Peer observation
- MUSE

Therefore, the notes below capture the key points of discussion, rather than each area in turn.

Anonymous marking group. There needs to be clarification that the systems allows it. Need to figure out how it can work with regards to ALS stickers and mitigating circumstances. Anonymous marking is only when it enhances student experience.

The committee asked where it had come from, as it appeared to come from nowhere. The issue had come up from SOS questionnaires.

The rep said other reps are cautious about raising things in case it comes back on them and their work. The issue came up in SOS questionnaire. EMW: it is protecting staff and students. It removes the perception of bias.

Rep: some students are worried about not getting personal feedback. EMW advised they can still go to the Unit Leader and ask for further feedback.

From a systems perspective, this term is already set up. The aim is to look to do anonymous marking in the second semester, where possible, for example it can not be done for presentations

The learning technologist is currently saying it is not possible; it has not been tested properly.

HoEs are suggesting units to PP.

Academic Advisers

RS allocated group to members of staff. It is timetabled and gives opportunity for student to see staff one to one. It was noted that every department complies with the BU policy, but that, in addition, each has submitted detailed and specific plans on how they implement AAs and on guidance.

It was suggested that those detailed plans to come to next agenda, so that we can consider good practices and suggest any particular enhancements.

Action: Agenda Item for next FESEC on Academic Advisers

Attendance

Computing are using MyBU for tracking of attendance, and students enter a code in their mobile devices in the lecture. [Computing students do all have these]. If it goes below 80% the Academic Advisor is contacting students immediately and so they know there are being tracked. Students have also reported that visually seeing your attendance is a good thing and students like this [reps agreed].

A discussion of the induction followed, and there were comments that it is a transition from school, and so giving them good practice. Tracking can drop off for second and third year

PK: AAFS monitor programme seminar and practicals, not lectures. The nature of the course is more focussed on 'practicals' so they are tracking engagement.

TR: the power worries me, if the students think they are not being tracked then they do not have to be there, are you making them dependent. He also asked what happens to that data. It will be held on turnitin until it runs over to the next year.

You empower people by making them more self responsible

Assessment teams – team based

Set of people with a similar sets of knowledge, there is a specific MUSE questions on assignment brief. The rep said as students we spent time in seminar going through brief.

PS: if the marking criteria is not clear there can be an issue because feedback does not relate to it.

Feedback – where there is ambiguity NSS marks are low

If there is ambiguity tell students, they can then do it

If students know they can make mistakes it is ok.

Peer observation – all new staff will now have a mentor, and will have an observation.

Units that need developmental support will also have observation

Changes that have been made are good

There is a tab on myBU that needs to be populated so everyone can see what good things have happened

EMW it would be good to have a catch up with HoEs. Tell students of innovations
SIMON – new SOS (Student Opinion Survey). It is a Simple online tool. It is a lot simpler to use.
Holds focus groups , and records what is said. It can be anonymous. More face to face with rep
The reps are more interactive.

It was brought up that Turnitin assignments from last year are deleted, meaning Staff/students don't have feedback. Turnitin says it is gone. PH was advised to contact Kathryn Cheshir
Next meeting – get an update on this.

Next meeting - Discussion on MUSE, impact and whether we might make enhancements.

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETED / ONGOING
Provide list of Heads of Education and Heads of Department to SUVP Education	HL	
Provide update on Turnitin at next FESEC – Is the data retrievable from previous years?	PH	
Agenda Item for next FESEC on Academic Advisers. Department statements to be made available.	HL	
MUSE – KP to speak to AM to see if it is feasible for students to state what course they are on so this can be checked before surveys are sent off for scanning	KP	
Agenda Item for next FESEC on MUSE (RP to send a paper).	HL & RP	