**POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PTES)**

This is an opportunity for all of our Masters students to express their views on every aspect of their experience at Essex. There are questions about the degree -- teaching, assessment, feedback and so on -- but also about student support, campus facilities and life at Essex in general. In 2012-13, disappointingly few of our students took the opportunity to give their opinions: 24 out of 63 completed the survey, a response rate of 38%. Nonetheless, the survey provides some useful insights.

The headline figure is very positive: in response to the statement “Overall I am satisfied with the quality of my degree”, **92%** agreed (and two thirds of those agreed strongly). There were similarly large proportions agreeing with positive statements about the effectiveness (83%) and quality (96%) of teaching, the intellectual stimulation of the course (83%), and the impact of the course on students’ employment prospects (87%). In all these cases (and many others), the Government at Essex responses are significantly better than the average for PGT students at British universities (see <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/postgraduate/PTES_Report_2013_Final.pdf>). Even where our students were more ambivalent, on key matters like the promptness of feedback (75%) and the organisation of the course (76%), the comparison is still favourable with elsewhere.

However, there are two particular areas in which responses were less positive, both in absolute and relative terms. One of these is the support facilities. Complaints about the library are a perennial of these surveys and Essex – across departments – is clearly outperformed by other British universities. There is a limit to what we can do about the overall resources available but staff have been urged to focus reading lists on materials available on-line. (Simply moving key materials into the short-loan collection makes things only marginally more convenient for students, especially in the digital era.) There were also complaints about the lack of lab and other IT facilities, a university-wide problem exacerbated by the clash between the Essex Summer School – which occupies many labs – and the main period of dissertation work. We will therefore make specific lab bookings for PGT students during the summer school in 2013-14 and future years. The second area of lukewarm responses is in marking criteria, with only 58% agreeing that these are sufficiently clear (below a national average of 73%). These responses are echoed in staff-student liaison committees and were also noted by the recent Periodic Review panel. It is clear that we need to move beyond the generic marking criteria published in the PGT Student Handbook and for individual staff to provide more specific guidance about what they are looking for in assignments for their module.