

Summary of National Student Survey (NSS) Results for the Department of History, 2013-14

Overall

The Department did well again in the NSS for 2014, improving slightly on the previous year, with an overall satisfaction rating of 93% compared to 91% for 2013. The Department generally compares well to others across the Faculty and University. We were pleased to see improvements in most areas, and particularly in Learning Resources. This also meant that we improved in terms of our ranking in comparison to other History departments in the *Times* survey

The response rate was 66% (91 out of 138) in comparison to 63% the previous year. Many thanks to all of our final-year undergraduates from 2013-14 who took the time to complete the survey.

Areas of particular strength (based on scores and comments)

There were some extremely positive comments. One very satisfied student said, 'The teachers have been exceptional', and another said, 'I changed degree course after my first year, I wish I had chosen my current one instead because I love it so much'. Other students also singled out the quality of teaching, the range of courses available, and the passion of the lecturers for their respective subjects ('Teachers have been very enthusiastic' for example). There were also many comments about the high level of support given to students, feedback on written work, and generally friendliness and approachability of staff. One representative student comment was: 'Extremely approachable lecturers'. Comments about the Independent Research Project (IRP) were also good, with several noting the levels of assistance they had received.

Of particular note was the very positive score for teaching:

Staff are good at explaining things (97%)

Staff have made the subject interesting (92%)

Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching (93%)

The course is intellectually stimulating (96%)

Overall, students seemed very happy with teaching, specifically the range of courses on offer, the quality of lecturers and their lectures ('enthusiastic' and 'engaging' were key words here), and the facilities.

Areas for improvement

We can, of course, always improve what we do. Since the start of the 2013-14 academic year, and this year, we have made the following our priorities:

Feedback remains a standing item at SSLC and we have ongoing discussions with our student reps about to ensure that our students get the most from their feedback, in whichever form they receive it (verbal comment; written feedback on coursework;

discussion in office hours etc). There have been some improvements in the promptness of feedback (a rise from 68% to 77% between 2012/13 and 2013/14). But plainly more needs to be done.

Contact hours have been increased on the Independent Research Project so that each student has five IRP workshops in the autumn term of their final year (in addition to their one-to-one supervision) in order to ensure that they receive as much support as possible on their IRPs.

We continue to work closely with our History Subject Librarian to maintain the excellent provision of resources in the main University library, and to offer additional library and online resources by means of the Departmental Library, our Online Resource Bank, and the Listen Again lecture-capture service. There have been some marked improvements here with library resources being seen as better for the needs of students (a rise from 80% to 95% between 2012/13 and 2013/14). Access to IT resources also improved from 80% to 91%.

Professor Edward Higgs, Head of Department