

Summary of National Student Survey (NSS)/ Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) Results for the Department of History, 2015-16

Overall

The Department did well again in the NSS for 2015-16, with an overall satisfaction rating of 97% compared to 98% the year before. The Department compares well to others across the Faculty and University, and is placed 9th in the country overall.

Many thanks to all of our final-year undergraduates from 2015-16 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 are enthusiastic about their subjects, always willing to help and care about their students'. This fits in with the high score (92%) to the question on whether 'Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching'. Another said, 'The environment within the History Department is always friendly and welcoming'. Other students also singled out the quality of teaching, the range of courses available, and the interest of the modules and topics. There were also many comments about the high level of support given to students, feedback on written work, and general friendliness and approachability of staff. One student praised: 'The availability of the lecturers, their feedback and the quality of the teaching'. Overall, students seemed happy with teaching, specifically the range of modules on offer, and the quality of lecturers and their lectures ('enthusiastic' and 'engaging' were key words here).

There has also been an increase in scores relating to learning resources with the library being seen as increasingly adequate for the needs of students (a rise from 86% to 91% 2014/15 and 2015/16).

Areas for improvement

We, of course, need always to improve what we do.

Feedback. Although there has been a rise in the response relating to promptness of feedback (from 65% to 70% between 2014/15 and 2015/16), there is still room for improvement. Feedback remains a standing item at SSLC and we have ongoing discussions with our student reps 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). This will be a priority in the coming year.

Comments from the SSS

This general picture was also mirrored in the Essex Student Satisfaction Survey. Some students felt that feedback was too slow but others were positive about the History Department. One returning student for example, commented on, 'How easy it is to contact a member of staff and how quickly they respond and the support advice they offer. The detail of the feedback we receive from our coursework. The passion of the lecturers within the Department.'

Professor Edward Higgs, Head of Department