

Summary of National Student Survey (NSS) Results for the Department of History, 2014-15

Overall

The Department did well again in the NSS for 2014-15, improving considerably on the previous year, with an overall satisfaction rating of 98% compared to 93%. The Department compares well to others across the Faculty and University, and is placed 7th in the country overall. We were pleased to see improvements once more in most areas, and particularly in the area of Personal Development.

The response rate was 65% in comparison to 65% the previous year. Many thanks to all of our final-year undergraduates from 2014-15 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 enthusiasm of the staff from the History Department is simply remarkable'. This fits in with the high score (96%) to the question on whether 'Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching'. Another said, 'The course has helped me in developing important skills which are key in any career path'. 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 comment was: 'The staff I have encountered have all been very useful and encouraging with their advice and feedback'. Comments about the Independent Research Project (IRP) were also good, with several noting the levels of assistance they had received.

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).

Areas for improvement

We need, of course, always to improve what we do. We need to the following our priorities:

Feedback Although there has been a rise in the proportion of students finding feedback detailed and helpful in clarifying their understanding, there has been a marked drop in the promptness of feedback (from 77% to 65% between 2013/14 and 2014/15). 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 have to be a priority in the coming year.

Provision of resources There has been a marked decline here, with library resources being seen as less adequate for the needs of students (a decline from 95% to 86% between 2013/14 and 2014/15, although this was still higher than the 80% in 2012/13). Access to IT resources also declined slightly from 91% to 88%. We will continue to work closely with our History Subject Librarian to maintain and improve the resources in the main University library, and to offer additional library and online resources by means of Moodle, and the Listen Again lecture-capture service.

Professor Edward Higgs, Head of Department