

## **NSS and SSS results for the History Department (2011-12)**

The National Student Survey (NSS) is completed by final-year undergraduates; the SSS is the internal, University of Essex survey that we ask all of our non-final-year students to complete every year. Both surveys provide us with immensely useful feedback from a large number of undergraduate students which helps inform our thinking and planning about curriculum design, teaching and assessment methods, and the student experience for the following year.

### **Headline results of 97 and 93%**

We are pleased to report that the Department of History scored **97% for overall student satisfaction in the 2011-12 National Student Survey** completed by final-year undergraduates; this is an improvement on our 2010-11 score of 95%. **In the 2011-12 SSS we achieved 93%** in response to the statement ‘overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my degree’; this is also an improvement on our 2010-11 score of 90%.

### **‘It is simply brilliant!’: Free-text comments by students**

Some of the free-text comments about the range of modules on offer, the enthusiasm and expertise of the academic staff, and the opportunities for personal development were particularly pleasing; for example:

‘I’ve had heaps of feedback; there’s a small class. The content of the course has been really good’.

‘Staff are very friendly and efficient, they go out of their way to help you in achieving what you wish to achieve. Feedback is very good and sets out clear points you need to address in your next piece of work’.

‘I like that the University has a great range of professors who are experts in their field and so enthusiastic and passionate about what they are teaching.’

‘A wide range of topics to study on my history course’.

‘Developing my life skills whilst doing a course I thoroughly enjoyed’.

‘Enthusiastic professors. Easy access to support’.

‘I think the university as a whole is fantastic. The teaching, the atmosphere as well as the social life it possesses is tremendous’.

### **How we are responding to student feedback**

We do not, of course, intend to rest on our laurels. We’ve considered and discussed the survey data at Departmental, Curriculum Committee and Staff/Student Liaison Committee Meetings, and in consultation with our student reps **we have already:**

Improved communication about grade criteria for coursework;

Extended the opening hours of our Departmental Library with the help of a new student volunteer scheme, organised by our student reps;

Undertaken a major new communication initiative (both within the Department and on e-mail and social media) to better inform students about how we respond to their feedback and comments;

Re-organised the way we supervise undergraduate research projects in the Department by the introduction of more final-year project workshops.

Introduced new second-year research skills modules which will help students prepare for their research projects.

Made it possible for Joint Honours students to apply to enrol onto final-year Special Subjects.

**We are planning to:**

Supplement the existing information we provide about grade criteria with additional grade criteria for top first-class marks;

Supplement our existing provision (through handbooks, staff office hours and module fairs) of information about module choices for students through the use of our student mentor team;

Use a pilot project ongoing on HR111 to reflect on use of Moodle for online module resources;

Launch in 2013-14 new departmental initiatives which will embed employability and transferable skills even more prominently in the curriculum.

Further improve the student experience by offering more trips and off-campus visits to places of historical interest.

Extend the range of assessments that we ask students to undertake that help them to improve their independent research skills.

**Last but not least: THANK YOU...**

...to all of our students, past and present, who took the time to fill in the surveys in 2011-12. Your thoughtful responses are much appreciated.



Alison Rowlands, Head of Department  
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