

## **Summary of National Student Survey (NSS) Results for the Department of History, 2012-13**

### **Overall**

The Department did well again in the NSS for 2013, but not quite as well as in the previous year, with an overall satisfaction rating of 91% compared to 97% for 2012. The Department generally compares well to others across the Faculty and University. We were pleased to see improvements in the areas of Academic Support and Learning Resources in particular. This also meant that we improved in terms of our ranking in comparison to other history departments in the *Times* survey, in which we gained an overall satisfaction score of 92%.

The response rate was 63% (86 out of 137) in comparison to 57% the previous year. Many thanks to all of our final-year undergraduates from 2012-13 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 History Department is exceptional', and another just said, 'One word: amazing'. Other students singled out the quality of teaching, the range of courses available, and the passion of the lecturers for their respective subjects ('Great teaching staff!' 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: 'Whenever I wished to seek assistance with anything...I could always guarantee I would receive help'. Comments about the Independent Research Project (IRP) were also good, with several noting the levels of assistance they had received. Students said that the History Common Room was a great asset and a very useful place for meeting people, working and socialising.

Of particular note was the very positive score for teaching:

#### **The Teaching on my course (91%)**

Staff are good at explaining things (93%)

Staff have made the subject interesting (90%)

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

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 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).

Grade criteria have been re-written for coursework essays in the Student Handbook, to differentiate the first class more clearly. We have also introduced new and clearer grade criteria for the Independent Research Projects which our second-year students have just started.

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 will 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.

Dr Alison Rowlands, Head of Department