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Learning and Teaching Committee

Subject: National Student Survey 2011

**Origin: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching)**

**Executive Summary:**

The National Student Survey has produced some notable successes again this year. The results at institutional level across the subject groupings place Loughborough in a strong position within the sector. However, there are marked variations in performance across the various groups of questions and between subject areas. Some subjects and programmes have exceptionally good results. In others the outcomes are very disappointing indeed.

Good performance in the NSS is being given high priority across all HEIs. For Loughborough, the outcomes of the Survey influence our claim to excellence in the quality of the undergraduate Student Experience. They underpin our high league table position and our visibility in relation to comparator universities as an attractive institution for undergraduate study. It is vital that there is a consistently high level of performance across all subject areas and that this is reflected in student views. Discussions are underway with Schools to ensure that issues of concern are addressed quickly.

This is the seventh year of the NSS and many Loughborough final year students have indicated once again their high level of satisfaction with the quality of their degree programmes. The outcomes for the University demonstrate the collegiality that underpins learning and teaching and that our student community values this. The response rate of seventy-three per cent is slightly lower than last year (76%) but it remains among the highest in the sector and well above the national response rate of 65%.

On the basis of Question 22, ‘students’ overall satisfaction with your course’, the results place Loughborough seventeenth equal in the UK among comparable publicly funded institutions. This calculation is based on the percentage of students rating their course as ‘four’ or ‘five’ on a five-point scale. The outcome marks a drop in absolute and relative terms since last year and demonstrates the competitive nature of the exercise across Russell Group and 1994 Group universities.

Table 1 lists the top 20 universities ranked on question 22, using the same calculation. Also shown is the percentage of positive responses across the different question groups. The final column, which summarises the results across all questions, is an indicator of institutional performance in the Survey as a whole. On this important measure Loughborough ranks in third equal place. This is a similar position to last year. Of particular note are the very positive responses on Academic Support, Organisation and Management, and Learning Resources. They reflect and highlight the outstanding commitment of many different kinds of staff within the Schools and across the Support Services, to teaching, student learning and broader student support.

At subject level the results are more variable and these affect our institutional position. Across the 10 Schools a total of 30 subjects appear in the published results. Taking question 22 only, Table 2 records for each subject (grouped by School) the percentage of students rating their course as ‘four’ or ‘five’ on a five-point scale. Some outcomes are exceptionally good with two subjects ranked 1st and a further 12 producing a score that is within the top 20th percentile in their subject area. In the case of other subjects the percentile position is disappointingly low.

In order that the outcomes can be interpreted carefully the Planning Office has supplied all Schools with programme level detail (below subject level) across all questions. Colleagues in the Teaching Centre are analysing the qualitative comments and their findings will be circulated to Schools shortly. Table 3 summarises some themes that are emerging from the qualitative analysis. Clearly on all groups of questions students in some programmes are identifying what they regard as good practice. The negative comments demonstrate that the reverse is also the case among some students on certain programmes.

It is now an established practice at Loughborough that the NSS results are integral to the broader processes of annual teaching and learning evaluation. Furthermore, NSS target setting is enshrined in School development planning. It is essential that there is a consistently high level of NSS performance across all subject areas and programmes. Discussions are underway with Schools to ensure that issues of concern are addressed quickly. Actions underway will be reported to Learning and Teaching Committee and followed up in Annual Programme Reviews and School Development Planning.

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| **Table 1** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Full Service Traditional Universities only - excluding specialist colleges and University of Buckingham and Open University** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Overall Satisfaction** | **Teaching** | **Assessment & feedback** | **Academic Support** | **Organisation** | **Learning Resources** | **Personal Development** | **Average over all 7 areas** |
| **Institution** | %age Positive | %age Positive | %age Positive | %age Positive | %age Positive | %age Positive | %age Positive | %age Positive |
| Cambridge (University of) | 94 | 93 | 75 | 87 | 85 | 94 | 79 | 87 |
| Oxford (University of) | 93 | 93 | 72 | 85 | 84 | 95 | 85 | 87 |
| St Andrews (University of) | 93 | 95 | 69 | 83 | 89 | 70 | 83 | 83 |
| Bath (University of) | 92 | 89 | 65 | 83 | 86 | 87 | 86 | 84 |
| Durham (University of) | 90 | 89 | 70 | 80 | 88 | 86 | 79 | 83 |
| East Anglia (University of) | 90 | 91 | 69 | 83 | 82 | 79 | 85 | 83 |
| Exeter (University of) | 90 | 92 | 71 | 82 | 82 | 75 | 84 | 82 |
| Glasgow (University of) | 90 | 91 | 65 | 81 | 81 | 89 | 85 | 83 |
| Sheffield (University of) | 90 | 89 | 65 | 80 | 82 | 88 | 82 | 82 |
| Aberystwyth University | 89 | 89 | 70 | 82 | 84 | 83 | 82 | 83 |
| Hull (University of) | 89 | 89 | 68 | 81 | 79 | 82 | 82 | 81 |
| Keele University | 89 | 91 | 68 | 82 | 83 | 79 | 84 | 82 |
| Leicester (University of) | 89 | 89 | 72 | 82 | 84 | 90 | 83 | 84 |
| Newcastle (University of) | 89 | 89 | 66 | 82 | 86 | 82 | 80 | 82 |
| Sussex (University of) | 89 | 91 | 67 | 81 | 87 | 73 | 79 | 81 |
| Reading (University of) | 89 | 88 | 64 | 80 | 83 | 79 | 83 | 81 |
| Kent (University of) | 88 | 87 | 66 | 79 | 82 | 81 | 80 | 80 |
| **Loughborough University** | **88** | **87** | **72** | **82** | **88** | **89** | **81** | **84** |
| Warwick (University of) | 88 | 89 | 61 | 79 | 81 | 84 | 81 | 80 |
| Aberdeen (University of) | 88 | 88 | 66 | 79 | 80 | 85 | 84 | 81 |
| **Sector Average** | **82** | **83** | **66** | **75** | **73** | **80** | **79**  | **77** |
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| **Table 2****Analysis of responses to Question 22, Overall Satisfaction.**  |  |  |
| **First Degree (Full Time)** |  |  |  |  |
|   |   | **Loughborough University Ranking** |
| **School** | **JACS Subject Group** | **% agree** | **Ranking based on % agree** | **Percentile** |
| Aeronautical, Automotive, Chemical and Materials Engineering | Aerospace Engineering | 88 | 8 out of 19 | 42% |
| Aeronautical, Automotive, Chemical and Materials Engineering | Chemical, Process and Energy Engineering | 94 | 3 out of 16 | 19% |
| Aeronautical, Automotive, Chemical and Materials Engineering | Materials and Minerals Technology | 83 | = 5 out of 9 | 55% |
| Business and Economics  | Accounting | 97 | = 3 out of 75 | 4% |
| Business and Economics  | Economics | 84 | = 31 out of 57 | 54% |
| Business and Economics  | Finance | 91 | = 17 out of 47 | 36% |
| Business and Economics  | Management studies | 94 | 3 out of 57 | 5% |
| Civil and Building Engineering | Building | 91 | = 1 out of 25 | 0% |
| Civil and Building Engineering | Civil Engineering | 97 | 2 out of 39 | 5% |
| Design / The Arts, English and Drama | Design studies | 83 | = 13 out of 71 | 18% |
| Design | Others in Technology | 75 | = 3 out of 15 | 20% |
| Electronic, Electrical and Systems Engineering | Electronic and Electrical Engineering | 96 | = 2 out of 29 | 7% |
| Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering / AACM | Mechanical, Production, Manufacturing Eng. | 90 | 12 out of 47 | 25% |
| Science | Chemistry | 97 | 4 out of 37 | 11% |
| Science | Computer Science | 88 | = 18 out 98 | 18% |
| Science | Information Services | 93 | 1 out of 6 | 0% |
| Science | Mathematics and Statistics | 81 | =48 out of 55 | 87% |
| Science | Physics and Astronomy | 90 | 21 out of 33 | 64% |
| Social, Political and Geographical Sciences | Human and Social Geography | 96 | = 4 out of 40 | 10% |
| Social, Political and Geographical Sciences | Media studies | 88 | = 11 out of 78 | 14% |
| Social, Political and Geographical Sciences | Physical Geography and Environmental Science | 91 | = 22 out of 53 | 41% |
| Social, Political and Geographical Sciences | Politics | 86 | = 43 out of 64 | 67% |
| Social, Political and Geographical Sciences | Social Policy | 90 | = 4 out of 19 | 21% |
| Social, Political and Geographical Sciences | Sociology | 71 | 82 out of 85 | 96% |
| Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences  | Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology | 97 | = 8 out of 43 | 19% |
| Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences / Mech Eng | Sports Science | 87 | = 26 out of 66 | 39% |
| Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences / Social, Political and Geographical Sciences / Design | Psychology | 72 | = 103 out of 109 | 94% |
| The Arts, English and Drama | Drama | 85 | = 28 out of 49 | 57% |
| The Arts, English and Drama | English studies | 93 | = 22 out of 101 | 22% |
| The Arts, English and Drama | Fine Art | 74 | = 33 out of 49 | 67% |
| **Note: All Institutions participating in the NSS are included in the rankings** |  |  |  |

**Table 3**

**2011 NSS Results**

Key points from preliminary analysis of qualitative comments (After each sub-heading points are listed in order of significance, those with highest resonance appearing first.)

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|  | **Positive** | **Negative** |
| Teaching on the course | Engaging/enthusiastic/ knowledgeable teaching; placement/ work experience/study abroad/field trip opportunities; the practical application of theory in class; laboratory work; small group work/interaction in class | Not enough contact hours/value for money/ tuition fees too high; English language capacity of certain staff; delivery/subject matter/material not necessarily contemporary enough; staff prioritising research; inconsistent teaching experience of joint honours students |
| Assessment and Feedback | Clear explanations of what is required; deadlines spread out; practical work; relevance; working in groups; constructive/ timely feedback | Inappropriate workloads; bunching of deadlines; slow coursework return; inconsistent/subjective marking; clearer assessment criteria needed; impact of group work on individual marks/ illegible/limited/ unconstructive feedback; lack of exam guidance; late release of exam timetables; no individual feedback on exams |
| Academic support | Approachable/available/contactable/ encouraging/enthusiastic/helpful staff; open door policy; good staff-student communication/interaction; support from dissertation/project supervisor and/or Personal Tutor | Staff being too busy for students; staff not responding to e-mails; staff being unhelpful; uneven support by joint honours students |
| Organisation & management | Challenging/interesting/organised/well-structured programmes; choice/range of module options; appropriate timetabling; links to industry/ employability | Not enough module choice; disorganisation on degree programmes; poor timetabling; studies and sports conflicting; organisational/management issues for joint honours students |
| Learning resources | Good IT facilities/support; ready access to information/materials on Learn; Library opening hours/resources; MEC/MSLC; in-class resources; well-equipped laboratories; study areas across campus/in their School/Department | Not enough computers for students/ information on their whereabouts; lack of certain computer software; not enough Library resources; lack of space in Library/ alternative study spaces; inconsistencies with materials being placed on Learn |
| Personal development | Applicability of degree programme to career/ employability; transferable skills (e.g. communications, team-work, etc); confidence | Lack of transferrable skills opportunities/ structures/support; difficulties with the practical application of an academic qualification |