



**University of Portsmouth  
Students' Union  
Student Submission  
for the QAA 2014**

Published December 2014

University of Portsmouth Students' Union  
Cambridge Road  
Portsmouth  
PO1 2EF

This Student Written Submission was planned and written by Clare Pitkin (Student Voice Coordinator), Brendan McCarthy (Student Experience Manager), Zulfa Kaseruuzi (Vice President for Education & Democracy 2013/14) and Kayleigh Teague (Vice President for Education & Democracy 2014/15). We would also like to thank our team of student staff who helped us conduct our research and all of our colleagues for their support in the production of this report.

Any questions regarding the Student Submission should be directed to the Student Voice Team on email: [studentvoice@upsu.net](mailto:studentvoice@upsu.net)

Website: [www.upsu.net/quality-assurance](http://www.upsu.net/quality-assurance)

Copyright © 2014 University of Portsmouth Students' Union

## *Contents*

Chapter One: Introduction.....	4
Research Methodology.....	5
Chapter Two: Update since the last report .....	6
Chapter Three: Academic Standards.....	8
Chapter Four: Learning Opportunities .....	21
Chapter Five: Enhancement . . . . .	35
Chapter Six: Information.....	39
Chapter Seven: Employability (Thematic Element).....	43
Reference List .....	467

## Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose and scope of the Student Submission is to highlight areas of concern and best practice with regards to the student experience and to explore the processes and procedures and how these operate in the 'real' experience of a Portsmouth Student.

In preparation for this piece of work the Union did some initial research which was published in our Annual Quality Report (AQR) in July 2014. This document features much of the information provided in the AQR along with a snapshot of the progress made since.

The relationship between the University and Union is growing stronger and the AQR is a great example of where the University has embraced student feedback and is working with us to better the student experience.

The AQR was submitted and actioned at many University's senior committees. The new Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Student Experience is also meeting monthly with elected Sabbatical Officers to address the recommendations highlighted in the AQR.

Through this an action plan is being developed to look at the recommendations and as such we have refrained from making too many more or different recommendations in this report.

In the lead up to the writing of this document we have been given greater access to data which will help us with writing future reports, however the truly rewarding part of this progress has been collating the firsthand accounts and going out on the ground and asking questions to students face to face. To hear the experiences, good and bad, from students helps cement the findings of this report and allows us to work with the University to ensure that students get the best experience whilst here.

Whilst we clearly recognise that the experience of students, like any institution, does vary from faculty to faculty and between courses, we hope that this document gives a clear indication of the experience of a student at this institution.

We strongly recommend you take a look at the AQR in tandem with this document as it outlines a few points not highlighted in this report. This can be found at <http://upsu.net/representation/quality-assurance.php>

We hope you enjoy reading this report and we look forward to working with all key stakeholders to ensure our areas of best practice and areas for improvement can be highlighted and actioned.



*Commendations appear throughout the report and are identified by a star icon, celebrating good practice demonstrated by the University.*



Kayleigh Teague, Vice President Education and Democracy 2014/15

## Research Methodology

The key issues outlined in this report were identified through the Union's own consultation with students, in addition to a consideration of the data provided through the National Student Survey. The main research bases used to compile this report were:

### “Question of the Week”

This series of mini consultations looked at a “Question of the Week” over two six week periods. In total, 1,465 participated and gave a response to at least one question. These were collated both online and via face-to-face consultation with students at different locations around the University campus.

### The Student Voice Survey

The Student Voice Survey was launched on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014, with questions linked consistently to the key themes of the Student Submission, but also formulated based on some of the key indicators identified in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education provided by the QAA. In total, 515 responses were given by students. Please note that the graphs included in this report are from the Student Voice Survey data summary, unless stated otherwise.

### National Student Survey Results 2013 & 2014

Our Student Voice Team spent time following the publication of the results in August 2013 collating key data, in addition to time analysing some of the qualitative data provided by students. In Chapters Three and Four where much of the content has been taken from the Annual Quality Report we have provided a brief update on improvements or areas to improve based on feedback from the 2014 results.

### Student Led Teaching Award nominations from students (May 2014)

We are pleased to be able to draw on the extensive feedback provided by students at the University of Portsmouth to identify examples of good practice when nominating academic and support staff at the institution for the annual awards.

### Student participation across University committees, projects and work streams

Progress has been made during the 2013/14 academic year relating to representation of students on University committees, with our Sabbatical Officers providing valuable input and support to University staff across different areas of work.

### Other Secondary sources

In order to formulate our recommendations we have tried, where possible, to take into consideration University of Portsmouth committee meeting minutes and reports, as well as University policy documents.

## Chapter Two: Update since the last report

The 2008 report outlined three recommendations for action.

2.1 The audit team advised the University to:

- ensure that its policies for the management of the submission, security and return of student coursework are followed consistently

In the 2008 audit students felt that feedback was valuable but felt there was an inconsistency in both quality and the timeliness of this feedback.

We believe this commitment is now demonstrated by the University and that this is demonstrated in the Examination and Assessment Regulations<sup>1</sup>.

The document outlines that:

*'Feedback will be provided for all forms of assessment, including examinations. It should provide an indication of the extent to which the work has met the assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes. The minimum requirements for summative feedback are:*

- Major strengths of the work
- Ways in which the mark could have been improved
- Original mark and any penalties that have been applied (where appropriate)

This is more explicitly stated to students in the Student Handbook.

*'We will support you by providing information on assessment arrangements and deadlines for assignments and will provide clear, timely, constructive and quality feedback on your work'<sup>2</sup>*

Recent feedback from students suggests that generally feedback is received on time, however the same feedback suggests that not all feedback has been helpful for future work and that overall feedback should contain more detail. This is discussed in section 3.3.

2.2 The audit team stated it would be advisable to:

- revise the external examiner report form with prompts for more detailed comment, in particular about learning opportunities, in order to strengthen the enhancement value of these reports.

We believe the University has now met this recommendation by providing a comprehensive form template for use by external examiners. The guidelines in 'Section E: Written Report' give clear indication on how best to make comments. This includes a strong focus on *Student Performance; Marking and Assessment and Teaching, Learning and the Curriculum*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Examination and Assessment Regulations - Marking & Feedback, 2013

<sup>2</sup> Student Handbook 2012

Reports are made available at Board of Studies and student reviewers who attend Periodic Programme Reviews (PPRs) have access to the external examiners reports. Whilst there is still a difference between the detail and amount of comment given by External Examiners where this does occur, particularly at PPRs, feedback is given from staff to examiners that more detailed comments are needed.

2.3 The audit team recommended the institution to

- ensure that before postgraduate research students undertake teaching duties, they are trained for that role in accordance with the University's requirement

In response to the 2008 recommendation, the institution has launched the Graduate Students Professional Development programme (GPROF). Alongside this the Department of Curriculum and Quality Enhancement (DCQE) run a number of development workshops, a number of which feature direct student input.

## Chapter Three: Academic Standards

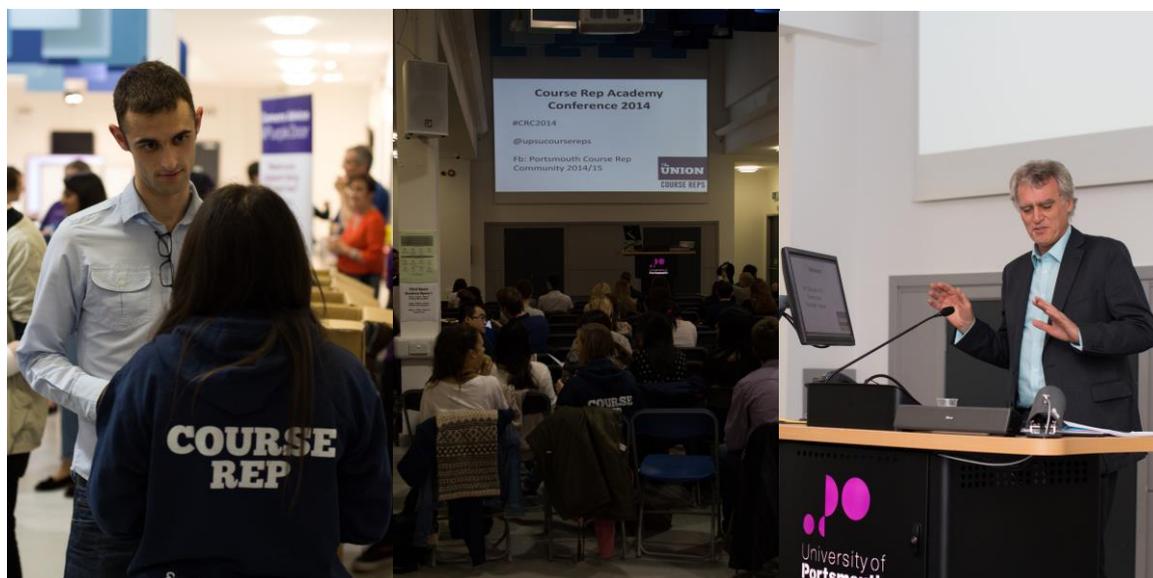
### Student Involvement in the Quality Assurance Process

#### 3.1 Senior Committees

3.1.1 The University of Portsmouth involves students at a number of key levels of institution decision making. The five Sabbatical Officers of the Students' Union split themselves between fourteen senior committees.

3.1.2 In 2012/13 additional places for other students to sit on these committees were created. Generally these additional students tend to be sourced from Part Time Officers or Faculty Reps of the Union. The team at DCQE have worked alongside staff at the Union to deliver a comprehensive training session to equip officers with the correct skills for these meetings.

#### 3.2 Course Representation



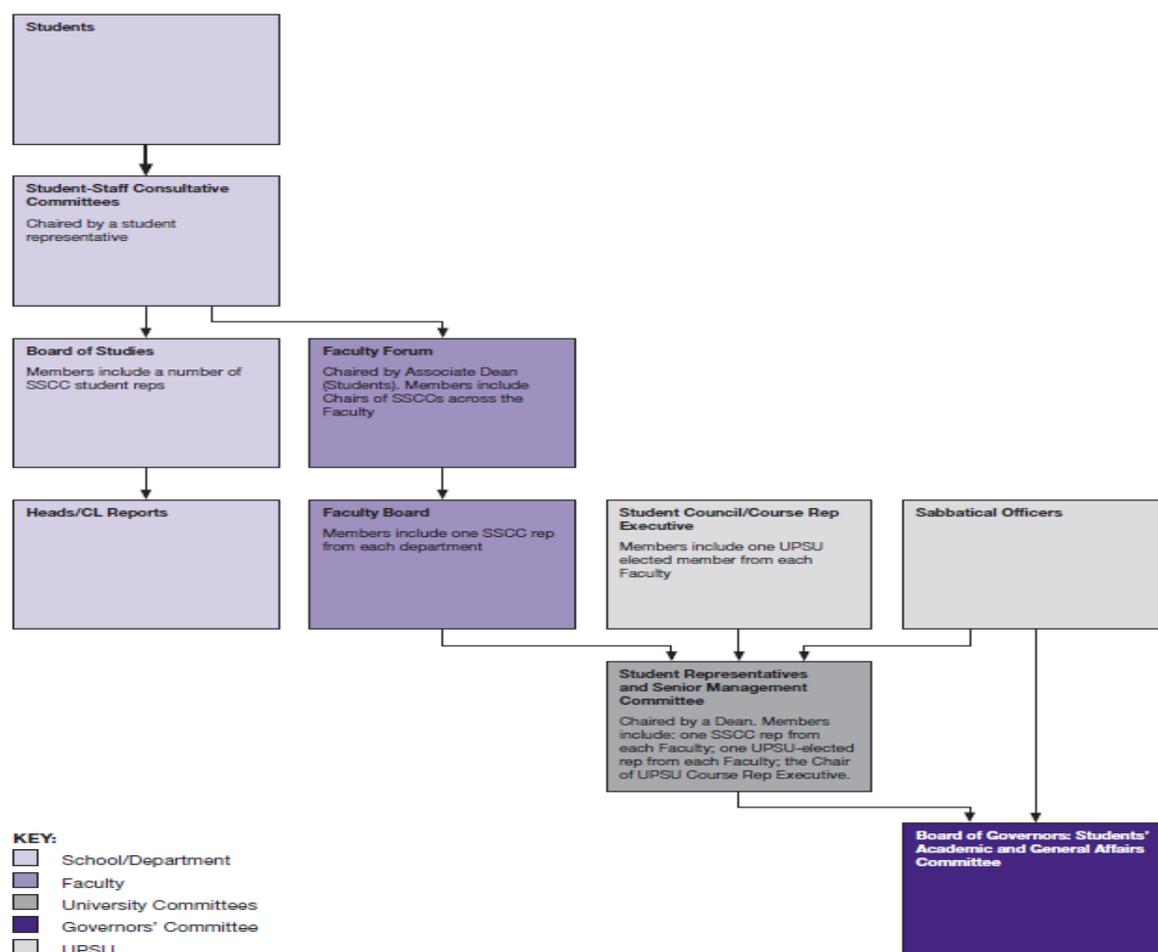
3.2.1 In 2012 the Policy for Listening and Responding to the Student Voice was launched. The policy outlines clearly how the Course Representative structure should operate. This document is reviewed regularly by the Student Voice Group of which the Union are key members. As part of the policy, two staff members titled the Student Voice Coordinator and Administrator have been identified in each department. This role promotes the Course Rep system and is the key person to liaise between departments and the Union. Both parties are in regular contact ensuring details of reps are up to date, minutes of key meetings are shared and information about training is given.

3.2.2 Course Reps attend Student Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs) three times a year. Best practice is demonstrated here with students being required to act as chairs of the meetings and increasingly in a number of areas as minute takers, thus helping their employability skills.

3.2.3 Reps are also invited to attend a number of other committees including Board of Studies and Faculty Boards.

3.2.4 The Union is responsible for electing a Faculty Representative for each of the five faculties. These reps sit at Faculty Board and raise issues on behalf of reps at a 'grass root' level. There are then two channels these issues can be addressed via issues from Faculty Board are taken by the chair to the various Academic Committees at a senior level. The second channel allows Faculty Reps to meet as part of the Union Course Rep Executive to take issues higher via Sabbatical Officers who can then raise any concerns at an even higher level.

(Below) Diagram Showing the Course Representation Structure<sup>3</sup>



3.2.5 The Union run an introduction training session for new reps and next steps training for those with more experience. Alongside this a yearly conference organised by The Union is held in October where the Head of DCQE and the Pro Vice Chancellor Education & Student Experience delivers a plenary outlining the importance of being a rep with a number of University professional services (including the Department of Employability and Academic Registry) delivering workshop sessions.

<sup>3</sup> Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice 2012

3.2.6 Since 2012/13 the Union has worked closely with the DCQE Academic Professional Excellence Programme (APEX). The programme regularly runs workshops and training for academics. The Union works closely with the programme to get Course Reps attending these workshops, having input on some content delivery in areas including best teaching practice, unit design and excellence in feedback.

3.2.7 Since 2012 the Union has increased its support and training opportunities for reps by expanding staff in its Student Voice Team and committing to 'Empowering the Student Voice' in its new Strategy.

3.2.8 In 2013/14 the Union had the details of 792 Course Reps. This has increased as of November 2014 to 923. In 2013/14 the Union trained 298 reps. The Student Voice Policy only outlines that each course should have a minimum of one rep per year of study with no maximum. From looking at the number of departments who have yet to send details for the current academic year it is estimated that there are approximately 950 Course Reps.

3.2.9 Feedback shows that 82% of Course Reps feel that the training and support they are given is sufficient. 35% of students who are not reps indicated that they felt their rep was well supported, however, 57% of students asked identified that they did not know who their rep was and lacked understanding of what the role was about.<sup>4</sup>

3.2.10 The Union has been working with the institution to increase the visibility of reps. In August 2014 a grant for hoodies for Course Reps was agreed by the University. This follows similar successful schemes at other institutions. The roles of the rep were also reviewed by a sub group of the Student Voice Group that will make the role definition clearer and more accessible to all students.

3.2.11 There is an increasing demand from students and the institution to provide online training content for representatives. An online training programme was launched using moodle in September 2012 however after complaints about its usability this was removed and replaced with the NUS standard 'skills of a rep training'. The Union is seeking to work with the University to find more usable platforms to roll out online rep training.

3.2.12 In September/October 2014 the Union delivered a rep training session to Course Reps on courses at two collaborative providers; St Vincent College and Southampton City College. The Union is also looking to hold a similar session with reps at Alton College.

### **3.3 Periodic Review and Course Approval**

3.3.1 The institution reviews the courses of each department once every six years. As part of this process student feedback is sought. A panel convenes, made up of reviewers external from the department. There is a student representative on each panel. These representatives receive comprehensive training from the University, delivered in October and November on how to undertake a review.<sup>5</sup>

3.3.2 Part of the panel process is to meet with a representative group of students who study on the course. This allows the panel to ask the students questions about their course and helps to gain an understanding of any issues. This part of the process is also carried out prior to the panel meeting the staff team from the course which then allows any issues that have not emerged from the paperwork to be raised and discussed.

---

<sup>4</sup> Data from Question of the Week 2014

<sup>5</sup> Programme Monitoring and Review Operational Handbook 2013 Update

3.3.3 In August 2014 it was agreed that the Union would now select the panel members for each review and assist with providing the training. This will have the additional benefit that the Union can archive reviews making future quality reports more robust. A support package will also be offered for those attending a review to meet with a Union staff member or Sabbatical Officer to assist with looking through paperwork and answer any concerns prior to them attending a review.

3.3.4 All periodic reviews are noted and recorded at Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) on which a Sabbatical Officer and a student representative sit, allowing an extra layer of Quality Assurance.

3.3.5 There is a commitment by the institution to have students on Course Approvals. Due to the regular and sometimes short notice period of these events it can be very difficult to get representatives to attend. The 'Approval, Modification and closure of Academic Provision' outlines this process. At present, input from students comes at stage 1 of the process via Curriculum Committee which features student members and at the final stage approval by Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). This process does however mean there is often a gap with students only involved at the initial course proposal stage at the start with further involvement only at the 'rubber stamping stage' of QAC.

3.3.6 Whilst the Union feels confident the correct processes are in place for reviews we feel the communication of these processes could be made clearer. When asked 'Have you been involved in the review process of your course?' 19% indicated they had been whilst 81% of respondents indicated they had not been.

'I got to meet external members of review board where generalised questions were asked. We provided them with good and bad points about the course'

Year 2, Humanities & Social Sciences Course Rep

### 3.4 External Examiners

3.4.1 When asked 'Are you aware of the external examination process in relation to your assessments?' 57% students agreed they were aware, whilst 43% felt that they did not know about the process<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup> Student Voice Survey 2014

### 3.5 Assessment & Feedback

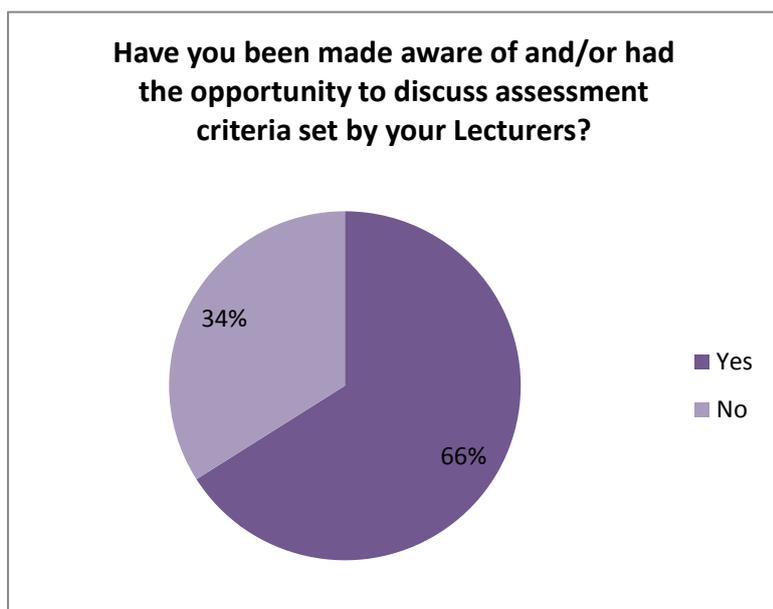
3.5.1 The University of Portsmouth outlines in its introduction to Examination and Assessment Regulations that it has incorporated, as far as is practical, recommendations from the National Union of Students Charter on Feedback and Assessment.

The University of Portsmouth's guidance includes:

- a) Formative assessment and feedback should be used throughout the programme;
- b) Students should have access to face-to-face feedback for at least the first piece of assessment each academic year;
- c) Receiving feedback should not be exclusive to certain forms of assessment;
- d) Feedback should be timely;
- e) Students should be provided with a variety of assessment methods;
- f) There should be anonymous marking for all summative assessment;
- g) Students should be supported to critique their own work;
- h) Programme induction should include information on assessment practices and understanding marking criteria.<sup>7</sup>

3.5.2 In consulting students our main considerations related to whether or not students were consistently receiving details of the marking criteria in advance and how this had been conveyed to them, this was in addition to the volume, timing and nature of the assessments being set. In considering feedback we explored whether or not it had been received by students within the 20 working day time period as outlined in the Examination and Assessment Regulations it was also explored by the institution in September 2013 as to whether or not the comments received by students had been detailed and helpful in clarifying aspects of the work students had not understood, as well as detailing how to achieve a higher grade in the future. This is explored further in this chapter.

### 3.6 Assessment criteria



3.6.1 During the Student Voice Survey 2014 we asked students to identify whether or not they had been made aware of and/or had the opportunity to discuss assessment criteria set by their Lecturers.

The graph shows the responses given by students, with 66% indicating that they had been made aware of the assessment criteria, with 34% indicating that they hadn't been.

<sup>7</sup> University of Portsmouth, (2013), *Examination and Assessment Regulations*

During our Question of the Week consultation we asked students how they had been made aware of the assessment criteria for their work. 60% of those students who took part identified that the assessment criteria was made available to them online via Moodle. This was consistently alongside the information being provided in a unit or course handbook (37%), in addition to information being provided during lectures/seminars or tutorials (28%).

3.6.2 Despite the majority of students consulted identifying that they had been made aware of the criteria, we would argue that 34% of respondents is a concerning figure; potentially indicating a lack of understanding by students about how they are being marked when completing their assessments.

*This is a very underdeveloped part of my course. Some lecturers don't tell us what they look for and simply tell us to "read the handbook"*

Humanities & Social Sciences Student,  
Year 2, Student Voice Survey 2014

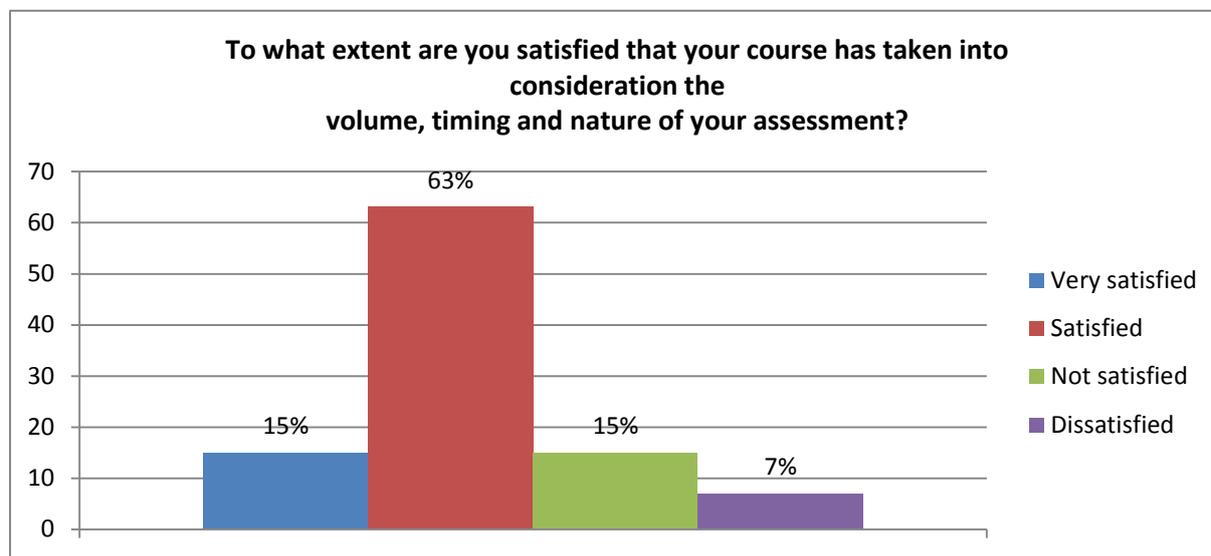
*It's not clear enough. It's very subjective; they say things like "you have to be very good" but that doesn't mean anything.*

CCI Student, Year 2,  
Question of the Week 2014

3.6.3 Although the majority of qualitative responses given during the Student Voice Survey indicated a general willingness among lecturers to discuss the assessment criteria in further detail outside of scheduled University sessions, some participants did indicate that there was inconsistency in the support offered by different lecturers and that some were more readily available to establish a dialogue than others.

### 3.7 Volume, timing and nature of assessments

3.7.1 We consulted with students to find out to what extent they were satisfied that the volume, timing and nature of their assessments had been taken into consideration by their course.



(Above) A graph to show student satisfaction relating to assessment

3.7.2 The graph above shows that 63% indicated that they were satisfied these factors had been taken into account, with 15% of respondents indicating they were not satisfied, and a further 7% reporting that they were dissatisfied with their course in relation to these aspects of their assessment. <sup>8</sup>

3.7.3 Students were also invited to identify any issues they had experienced. The most frequent issue identified by students linked to the timing of assessment deadlines, with the majority of respondents noting that unfortunately they had experience of deadlines being clustered together, making their workload difficult to manage and adding to the pressure and stress they experienced. In some instances this was also true in terms of exams being held in a short period of time, or sometimes on the same or consecutive days. Alongside this, students identified that they believed the solution to this issue could be better communication between lecturers, internally within departments, and between Schools where Joint Honours programmes were being delivered, to plan out deadlines effectively.

3.7.4 These issues were also reflected in comments given by students taking part in the NSS 2013 who were on the courses identified as the least satisfied in relation to assessment and feedback. Students reported that coursework could be spread out more throughout the year, rather than deadlines falling at the same time. Some assessment deadlines were falling too close to the deadline for dissertations or major projects and students believed there had been a lack of effective communication between unit coordinators to ensure that student needs are met in relation to scheduling assessment deadlines.

<sup>8</sup> Data from the Student Voice Survey 2014

*Coursework for various subjects were all to be given in on the same day. I ended up with 7 pieces of work due in on one day; perhaps these could have been spread out?*

Humanities & Social Sciences Student,  
NSS data, 2013

*Deadlines often fall all at the one time, so it can feel like we spend a lot of time doing nothing then everything comes at once and we can spend a lot of time catching up.*

CCI Student, NSS data, 2013

*High levels of stress due to disorganised deadlines dates.*

Science Student, NSS data, 2013

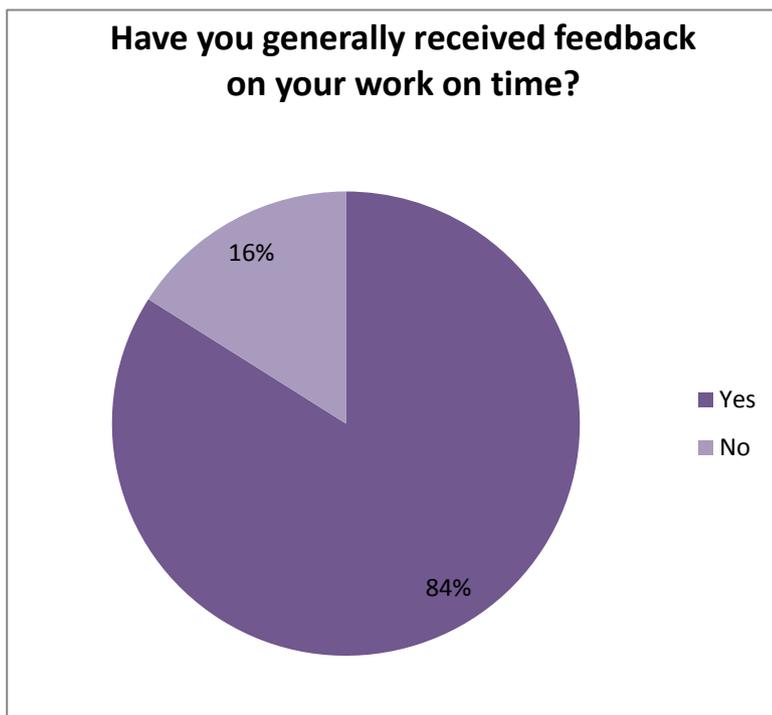
#### **Update since the Annual Quality Report 2014/15**

3.7.5 The NSS 2014 results show that there has been a 2% increase in the satisfaction with Assessment & Feedback overall (71% 2013; 73% 2014). The clarity of the marking criteria remains the same as the previous year (78%). The institution remains 1% above the sector average for satisfaction with Assessment & Feedback (72% National; 73% UoP).

### 3.8 Timing of feedback

3.8.1 84% of students asked in the Student Voice Survey identified that they had received feedback on their work on time, with just 16% indicating that this had not been the case<sup>9</sup>. Some of the issues that had been raised by the 16% of respondents who had not received their work on time are highlighted below:

- Frustration had been caused by late returns of their work.
- There was inconsistency between staff members with some of them ensuring work and feedback was returned on time, whilst others did not meet the 20 working day return policy.
- The longest period of time reported, referred to waiting for feedback for 8 weeks during the second year of a students' study, with others reporting up to 2 weeks after the 20 working day period had passed.



(Above) Chart to show percentage of students who feel feedback comes back on time.

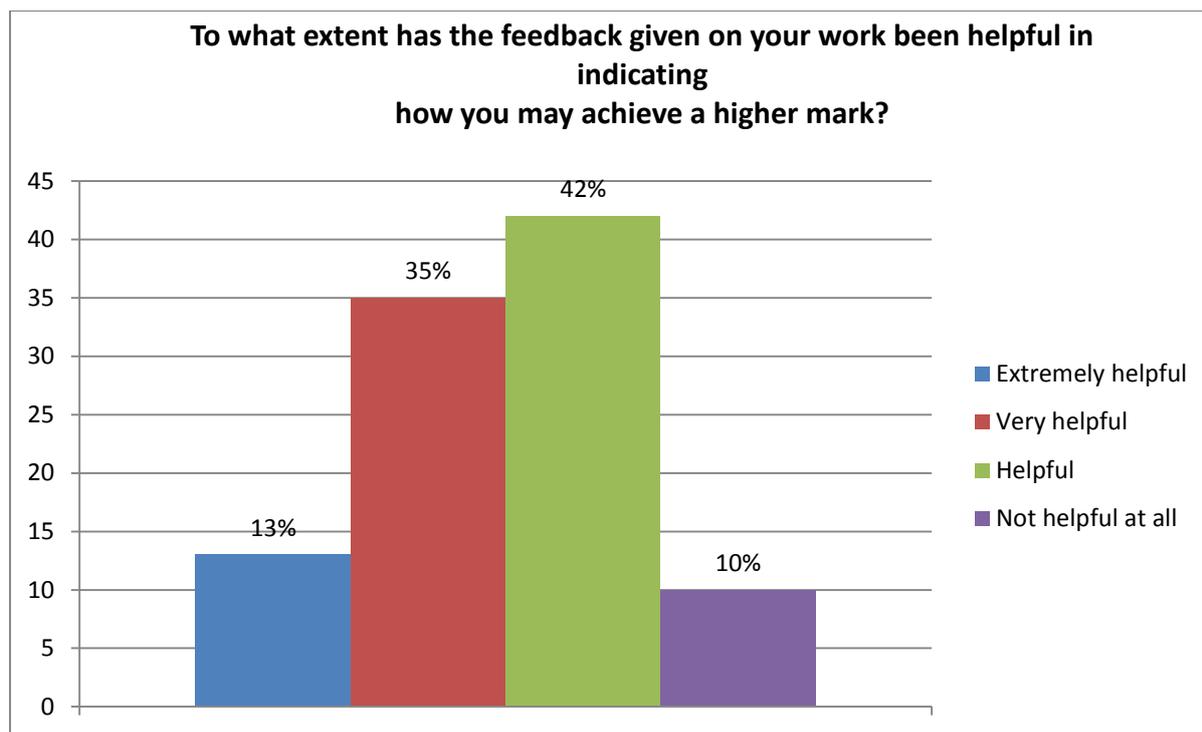
#### Update since the Annual Quality Report 2013/14

There has been a 2% increase in student satisfaction with the promptness of feedback (67% 2013; 69% 2014). The data shows that 69 courses still fall below the University average score of 69%.

### 3.9 Helpfulness of feedback

3.9.1 The NSS results 2013 show that the University of Portsmouth fell below the sector mean relating to whether or not students felt that the feedback on their work had helped them to clarify things they had not understood. During the Student Voice Survey 2014 we also explored the helpfulness of feedback by asking students to what extent the feedback they had received on their work had been helpful in indicating how they may work towards a higher mark in future. The graph on the next page shows students' responses to this question:

<sup>9</sup> Student Voice Survey 2014



*(Above) Graph to show the extent that work has helped students improve*

3.9.2 10% of students identified that they had not found the feedback they had received helpful. These students indicated that:

- The criticism offered in the feedback was generalised and not specific enough to their individual work, with multiple respondents identifying that the feedback had been vague, including comments that they did not feel were helpful, such as “expand more upon this”, “needs to be clearer”, “more detail”, rather than offering ideas about what content could be included.
- There was inconsistency in the standard of the feedback given by different Lecturers within Departments, with some giving clear and constructive feedback, whilst others felt that the quality of feedback was poor and inconsistent, requiring more detail and description.
- Other students who achieved high or reasonable grades had felt frustrated that there was not feedback included that suggested how they could move into the next grade bracket.



Whilst there is still some way to go with regards to feedback we have found via the nominations given by students for the Best Feedback award category at the Student Led Teaching Awards examples of good practice in relation to giving helpful feedback. Students described the winning candidates below:

*[They] created YouTube videos of themselves working through questions and FAQs to make them fun and engaging whilst still covering everything necessary to get across.*

Humanities Student & Social Sciences,  
Student Led Teaching Awards 2014

*[Their] feedback is outstanding where they give you a choice of a meeting, a 10 minute sound bite of them commenting on your work, or just written feedback, meaning you can learn the way you find best.*

Humanities & Social Sciences Student,  
Student Led Teaching Awards 2014

3.9.3 In order to gather some student ideas about how feedback given on academic work might be improved we invited students participating in the Student Voice Survey to outline their suggestions. The majority of respondents to this question outlined that they would like feedback to be more descriptive and detailed and indicated that it should include:

- Examples of what could have been included
- Examples of how the work could be improved
- How to apply the feedback to future assessments
- Specific feedback, relevant to the work of the individual student

Further suggestions included:

- Ensuring that feedback is legible by providing typed-up feedback that could be made available online through Moodle.
- Being able to make appointments/have face-to-face feedback sessions and/or tutorials to seek clarification on anything they were unsure of within the feedback provided.
- Structuring feedback in line with the assessment criteria and marking scheme, so that it is clearer about how they could reach the next grade bracket.
- Highlighting positive aspects and strengths of the work, as well as identifying at least two areas for improvement.

### Update since the Annual Quality Report 2013/14

3.9.4 The NSS 2014 highlights that there has been a 3% increase in response to the question 'Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand' (64% 2013; 67% 2014). Whilst there was a 2% increase in the number of students saying I have received detailed comments on my work (71% 2013; 73% 2014).

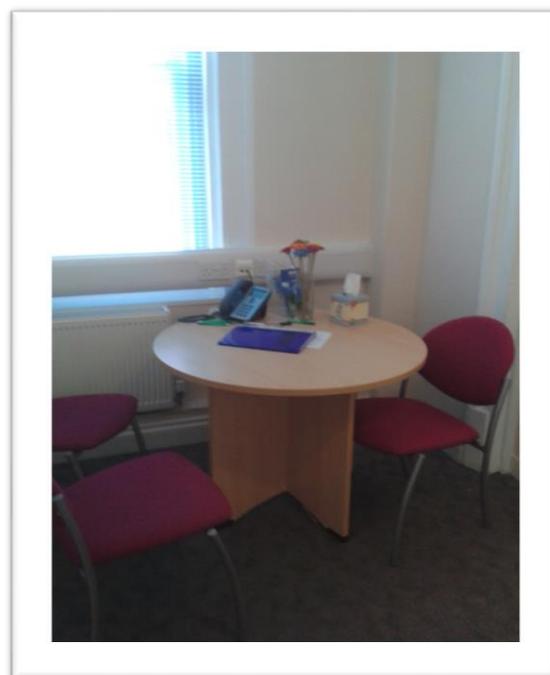
#### Recommendation:

1. With some of this feedback in mind, and taking into consideration the information provided by the NUS through their 'Assessment and feedback benchmarking tool'<sup>10</sup> and Charter, we propose that the University, in partnership with Union representatives, establishes a working group of students across University Faculties to review and identify priority areas relating to assessment and feedback.
2. We propose that this review should contribute to the development of a specific University of Portsmouth charter relating to assessment and feedback, in order to increase the visibility of the principles to students across the University.

### 3.10 Complaints & Appeals

3.10.1 '*The Student Complaint Procedure*' outlines the process a student should take if they wish to make a complaint. This procedure is for complaints about course management, facilities and services of the University. Appeals and complaints against other students fall under a different procedure. Current practice has recently been reviewed and updated to further encourage departments to informally deal with complaints where possible.

3.10.2 The above procedure is consistently reviewed at senior committees where Sabbatical Officers and students have an input. More recently the procedure was reviewed to allow more departmental ownership dealing with complaints at an informal stage.



<sup>10</sup> National Union of Students, (2013), *Feedback and Assessment Benchmarking Tool*

3.10.3 The Union Advice Service provides support for students who wish to make a complaint or appeal and can support students through processes such as form filling. Professional staff from The Union can provide support for students in meetings they may find challenging and will offer representation and support at disciplinary meetings.

3.10.4 Feedback from the advice service suggests that more could be done to reassure students that the complaints process is not a 'scary' process and inform them that staff are expected to maintain a professional attitude if a complaint is made against them.

3.10.5 A Sabbatical Officer is invited to sit on all disciplinary panels to ensure the decisions made are fair. Whilst the Sabbatical Officers recognise that this is good practice there has been concern raised from officers that this role may conflict with their representational duties with the officers expressing an interest in taking more of an observer role rather than a decision making one as part of these panels. This is something that the current officers will be raising this year.

## Chapter Four: Learning Opportunities

This section borrows heavily from The Annual Quality Report 2013/14. We have provided an update at the end of the chapter since the report was published in August 2014. In identifying students' 'Learning Experience' as one of our report themes we wanted to explore what contributes to a positive experience for students at Portsmouth, with a focus on teaching quality.

### 4.1 Teaching quality

4.1.1 The University identify in their University Strategy that they aim to 'enhance [their] position as a leading modern university through the delivery of excellent teaching' and that they aim to be 'known for outstanding, innovative and inspiring teaching'.<sup>11</sup>

4.1.2 The results of the National Student Survey 2013 show that overall 88% of students who took part in the survey were satisfied with the teaching on their course, which was above the sector mean of 86%.



The standard of teaching at the University is something that the Union chooses to celebrate each year through the Student Led Teaching Awards. This event aims to recognise and reward University staff who are committed to delivering excellent teaching and support to their students. This year the Union received an incredible number of entries from students with nearly 1,000 nominations across the six award categories.



<sup>11</sup> University of Portsmouth, (2012), *Education Strategy 2012-2017*

4.1.3 Students nominating staff for the 'Most Innovative Teacher' category cited excellent examples of how academic staff at the University are developing their approach to teaching delivery:

*In regard to media, [...] utilises all of the learning tools on offer; Moodle, video, PowerPoint, records the lectures, transcripts [...]. They are an innovative chameleon; if it does not work it will change.*

Humanities & Social Sciences Student,  
Student Led Teaching Awards 2014

*[...] doesn't just tell you how it is done, or how to do it. [They] sit with you, showing you step by step how it should be done, and always asks if there is any problem during that process.*

CCI Student,  
Student Led Teaching Awards 2014

4.1.4 The winner of the Overall Impact award, chosen based on them excelling across all award criteria, was described by a student as 'engaging all their students at the highest level with their charismatic method of teaching, and never failing to make everyone laugh. [They] engage their students in seminar discussions with [their] wealth of information and ability to carry a room.' Provided by a Humanities & Social Sciences Student for the Student Led Teaching Awards 2014.



(Above) A selection of the winners from this year's Student Led Teaching Awards

4.1.5 Some inconsistency was found in the levels of satisfaction in relation to some individuals' experiences of teaching. When asked 'To what extent has your course met your expectations?'<sup>12</sup>, those who indicated that this had not been the case listed issues with the quality of some of the teaching they had experienced on their course.

These issues included:

- Students not feeling that the standard of teaching had been high enough for Higher Education;
- That the quality and enthusiasm of some lecturers had been disappointing;
- That teaching delivery and feedback on essays had been inconsistent.

*The quality and enthusiasm of the lecturers was disappointing. A lot of lecturers do not seem to put much effort into their work, they just make a quick power point presentation and talk about it for an hour sometimes adding pointless aspects to the lectures that we could do at home just to run out the clock.*

Portsmouth Business School Student, Year 2,  
Student Voice Survey 2014

4.1.6 Similar concerns were expressed when asked 'What would be the main reason for not attending a planned University session, such as a lecture or a seminar?'<sup>13</sup> 19% of students who took part in the consultation indicated that they would not attend a session that they felt was uninteresting or not relevant to their assessment; with 16% of respondents reporting issues relating to lecturers simply reading off of the slides; students lacking confidence in their lecturer; and lecturers being monotone.

*Lecturer is unengaging, either by reading off of a PowerPoint, a dull/monotone voice.*

Humanities & Social Sciences Student,  
Year 2, Question of the Week 2014

*Lecturers do not make lectures exciting enough.*

CCi Student, Year 2,  
Question of the Week 2014

<sup>12</sup> Data from Question of the week 2014

<sup>13</sup> Data from Question of the week 2014

4.1.7 When considering this feedback, it is possible to identify in the NSS 2013 results below which areas require improvement. In identifying the five least satisfied courses across four of the five Faculties it is possible to see the inconsistency in some aspects of teaching delivery being experienced by students.

*(Below) Table showing the University programmes least satisfied with the teaching on their course from the National Student Survey 2013*

University Course	Staff are good at explaining things	Staff have made the subject interesting	Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	The course is intellectually stimulating	Average
Business Enterprise Development	68	57	57	71	63.25
Music & Sound Technology	80	64	80	40	66
Applied Languages	65	74	74	61	68.5
Civil Engineering	70	68	72	77	71.75
Hospitality Management	80	67	73	67	71.75

4.1.8 The Students' Union has been involved in the institutions Academic Professional Excellence Framework programme (APEX) and is aligned with the University's Education Strategy. This programme offers the chance for University staff to partake in continuing development opportunities that link to the UK Professional Standards Framework developed by the HEA.<sup>14</sup> This will be explored further in Chapter 5 *Enhancement*.

#### Update since the Annual Quality Report 2014/15

4.1.9 The NSS results from 2014 in regards to the satisfaction of 'The Teaching on my course' remains 88%. There has been a 1% increase in satisfaction with staff enthusiasm (90% 2014; 89% 2013).

4.1.10 Of the sample courses highlighted in the above table all courses had significantly improved. The biggest increases were in BA (Hons) Applied Languages (30% increase in average satisfaction to 98%) and BSC (Hons) Music and Sound Technology (25% increase; 91% 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Higher Education Academy, (2011), *The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in Higher Education* <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf>

4.1.11 Only five courses in the 2014 results fell below the 71.75% average. Business Enterprise Development was the only course that from those outlined fell below this, with a slight improved 68% satisfaction score.

4.1.12 The institution is 1% ahead of the national average (87%) with regards to Teaching Quality as outlined by the NSS.

### Recommendation:

3 Whilst we acknowledge the work being carried out by DCQE and across the University, we do wish to encourage the inconsistency in teaching quality experienced by students to be addressed. We would like to see the development of a charter - potentially encompassed in the Student Charter itself - that defines what University of Portsmouth students can expect of their learning experience in terms of teaching standards, with reference to the UK Professional Standards Framework.

4. In line with the above, we would recommend that the University works with the Union to develop mechanisms to disseminate the good practice examples identified through the Student Led Teaching Awards, in addition to other case studies arising throughout the academic year.

## 4.2 Learning Resources



Respondents generally acknowledged the positive aspects of the facilities available to them, highlighting the University Library; support provided by University Library staff; 24/7 access to the University Library; and specialist facilities linked to specific courses as enhancing their study experience.

*24/7 library opening time has definitely led to an increase in the quality of my work, evidenced in my marks. I struggle to work during the day and at home. Hence I can work through nights in a good working environment. I think this should be a year-round policy as there are a number of assessments in the first semester for a number of students.*

Humanities & Social Sciences Student, Year 3, Question of the Week 2014



Students who agreed that they had been given an 'equal and effective opportunity to achieve' identified a number of resources made available to them by the University that had enabled this to happen. These responses frequently cited the support provided via learning support within Departments; accessibility of resources through the University Library; and specific areas around the University that had benefitted their learning. Those specific areas included the resources department available to Humanities students in Milldam Building; the high quality equipment available through CCI for both University-related and extra-curricular activities; the learning resource centre in Park Building; and the new IT suite in Burnaby building.



*(Above) The new layout for the University library*

4.2.1 In response to some of the feedback received through the National Student Survey and internal University surveys the University Library has committed to investing in the current building. This has recently involved a renovation of the ground floor seeing the introduction of over 200 study spaces added, some of which will host computers; an expansion of the Library café; and provision of a shared service point on the ground floor for students to address library and IT queries. The project has also taken into consideration the need for social learning spaces, including more bookable study rooms.<sup>15</sup>

### 4.3 IT Facilities

4.3.1 Respondents generally noted that there was reasonable access to IT facilities, however, they did also identify that these can be limited during exam and assessment periods. The availability of computers and IT facilities across the campus was raised consistently by other students as a potential area for development, including in some of the feedback given by students through the NSS 2013 on the ten least satisfied courses relating to Learning Resources.

*Computer access, particularly during exam period it is difficult to get a computer.*

Humanities & Social Sciences Student,  
NSS data, 2013

*Facilities are not always free when needed, such as computers with certain programmes on.*

Science Student, NSS data, 2013

<sup>15</sup> University of Portsmouth, (2014), Information about the ground floor refurbishment & the floor plan image found at: <http://www.port.ac.uk/library/home/refurb/>

4.3.2 A common issue reported related to the quality of IT facilities available. This included specialised software and programmes necessary for learning and coursework consistently not being available on computers across the University campus.<sup>16</sup>

*Access to certain software at critical times during the study semesters sometimes hinders the opportunity to complete work at your own pace. As a distance student I find this an issue due to unavailability or limited access.*

Science Student, Year 3,  
Student Voice Survey 2014

*There are not enough resources such as computers in the library that have the software needed for dissertation or coursework.*  
Technology Student, Year 3, Student Voice Survey, 2014

### Recommendation:

5. The Union would encourage a review of the programmes currently available on computers across the University campus to ensure that these have adequate software installed for use by students across a range of discipline areas.

### Update since the Annual Quality Report 2013/14

There has been an increase in satisfaction with Learning Resources by 2% in the 2014 NSS Survey (84% 2013; 86% 2014). The response to 'Library resources and services are good enough for my needs' saw an increase by 2% (87% 2013; 89% 2014). The question 'I have been able to access general IT resources when I need to' has also increased by 1% (86% 2013; 87% 2014). Learning resources overall are 1% above the national average (85% National; 86% University of Portsmouth).

<sup>16</sup> Student Voice Survey 2014

## 4.4 The Studying Experience<sup>17</sup>

The next section focuses on the experiences of different demographics.

### Disabled Students

4.4.1 In 2012/13 1,879 students were recognised as having some form of disability. Data and feedback on the views of disabled students outlined by the NSS are broken down into two key categories. These are:

**Category A:** Those with a specific learning disability (dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD)

**Category B:** Other disability (excluding the above listed)

4.4.2 In many areas these students differed very little from their peers in terms of studying experience. The areas where these students felt less satisfied included:

- **Assessment & Feedback:** 71% for category A & category B students compared to 73% no known disability.

- **Organisation & Management:** Those in category A were 5% less satisfied than those with no known disability, category B students were 1% more satisfied than no known disability.

- **Personal Development:** Those students in category A were 10% less satisfied (74%) than those with no known disability (84%).

### International & EU Students

4.4.3 International Students rated their experience far better than home students in a number of areas. Assessment & Feedback (77% International; 73% Home) and Academic Support (84% International; 83% Home) were rated highly by this group compared to home students. EU students rated Academic Support even higher with 85% of these students satisfied with support.

4.4.4 These students also significantly rate Organisation & Management higher than home students (84% International; 79% Home).

4.5.5 The majority of positive comments from these students reflected a high rate of satisfaction with the Teaching quality, particularly the friendliness and helpfulness of staff.

---

<sup>17</sup> All Data for this section is taken from the National Student Survey 2014 and Evasys

*"The quality of the teaching is wonderful. All the lecturers are extremely helpful and supportive."*

Final Year International Student

NSS 2014

*"My Course leader is one of the best teachers/lecturers I have ever had. Will be graduating and working in an area that I find completely awesome. I started the course with zero self-confidence but now take no nonsense from people, especially when I know I'm right"*

Final Year International Student

NSS 2014

4.5.6 The majority of comments on improvement were focused on facilities and specifically on the library. Many students commented on the lack of computers.

*"Library resources were very busy and they didn't really have other places as everywhere was fully booked. I Ended up in quiet area because they don't have any other options"*

Final Year International Student

NSS 2014

4.5.7 The biggest concerns from EU students were with regards to Organisation and Management. 79% of EU students said they were satisfied overall in this area. This is on par with home students. The majority of the negative student comments Were focused on this area. Themes such as 'lack of clarity on units', 'poor organisation of units' and 'lack of unit choice' highlighted concerns about units for these students.

*"In my second year, there was one unit Toolkit. It was poorly structured and the assignments were not clear."*

Final Year International Student

NSS 2014

*"A positive for me was the fact that I could study abroad and familiarise myself with a different culture, improve my language skills and meet new friends. Lecturers have always been there when needed"*

Final Year International Student

NSS 2014

4.5.8 These students did however highly rate the teaching staff and studying experience at Portsmouth.

## Postgraduate Students

### Taught<sup>18</sup>

4.5.9 Overall the most recent data available shows that Postgraduate students are generally more satisfied with their experience than undergraduates. These students rated their overall experience at 90% (2% higher than undergraduates). They also highly rate career and professional development (92%) as well as personal development (91%). Learning Resources are also positively noted (91%).

4.5.10 Key concerns from Postgraduate students focused on 'teaching methods' (84%), the 'usefulness and timeliness of feedback' (83%) and 'course organisation and management' (78%).

4.5.11 A specific question on 'promptness of feedback' yielded a low satisfaction rating of just 60%. When asked the question 'The Virtual Learning Environment supported my learning' only 62% of students agreed. It should be noted that a new VLE has been implemented since this survey was undertaken.

### Research

4.5.12 In PRES<sup>19</sup> 2013 78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the overall experience of their research programme. Student responses indicated a generally average level of satisfaction compared to the whole HEI sector.

### Joint Honours Students

4.5.13 Though there is no specific research into Joint Honours students we have filtered through comments from the NSS and the AQR and highlight their experience in this section.

4.5.14 From the small sample of student comments on this area there appears to be overwhelming dissatisfaction with Joint Honours Courses.

These students highlight that often one of their courses is far more supportive than the other and that there is little or no communication between these courses. Every student comment on this topic highlighted communication as a concern.

*"There doesn't seem to be much communication between schools (when Joint Honours), as lots of deadlines quite frequently fall on the same date."*

Final Year International Student

NSS 2014

*"The communication between different faculties needs to be clearer to those who are doing a Joint Honours degree. As often there is miscommunication"*

Final Year International Student

NSS 2014

*"As the course is a Joint Honours, it would expected that equal help is provided, however I do feel that the 'away' department is less approachable."*

Final Year International Student. NSS 2014

<sup>18</sup> Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2012

<sup>19</sup> Postgraduate Research Survey 2014

## Recommendation

6. The institution to review the support process for Joint Honours Students and to commit to improve communication between joint honours courses, particularly where the joint courses are in different faculties.

### Practice Placement Students

4.5.15 Overall students on practice placements rated their experience positively with 98% satisfied with their placements. Students particularly highlighted the excellent level of support from their placement supervisor (96%) as well as the way their practice supervisor understood the connection between the placement and the broader requirements of the course (91%).

4.5.16 Student comments on this area were overwhelmingly positive:

*"There is an integrated programme for the practice placement part of the course and that's been very good"*

Final Year International Student, NSS 2014

4.5.17 The only 'negative' comment from these students suggested:

*"We could have done with a little bit more practice placements."*

Final Year International Student, NSS 2014

### Collaborative Students<sup>20</sup>

4.5.18 The Union has been working to increase its engagement with Collaborative partners. Officer and staff representatives both attend the Contact Forum where representatives responsible for each collaborative provision meet twice yearly.

4.5.19 The Union have also been involved in the periodic review and course approval processes at a number of these partners more recently including at Sparsholt College, International College Portsmouth and Alton College.

---

<sup>20</sup> Data from Collaborative Partner Survey 2013.

4.5.20 Each year the University launches a 'Collaborative Student Survey'. The most recent published in 2013 had a disappointing response rate.

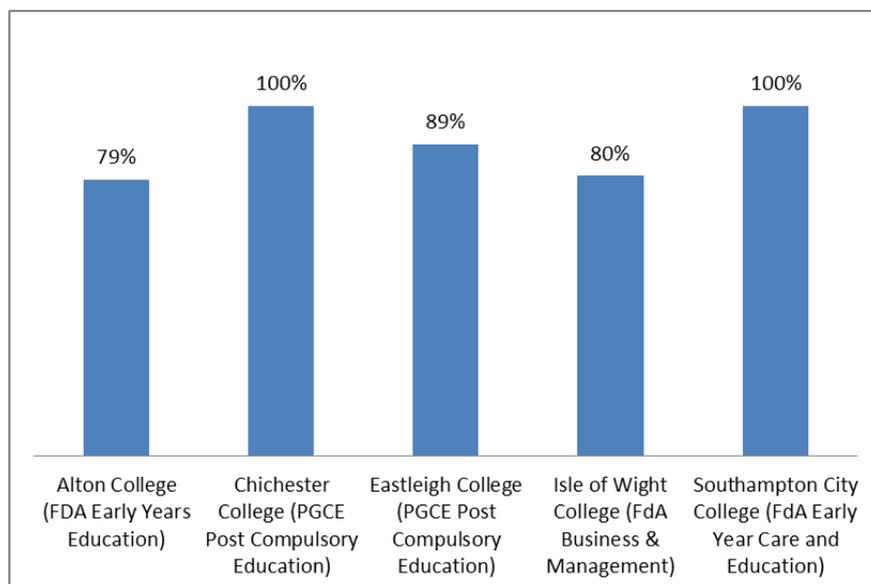
4.5.21 Through feedback on the report the University identified that the following areas were worthy of looking into further:

- Personal Tutoring
- Assessment Arrangements
- Feedback to students

4.5.22 For the purposes of this report below we have used End of Year survey responses for a sample of collaborative courses from five partners<sup>21</sup>

4.5.23 From the five sample courses the overall average satisfaction levels of first year students sits at 90%.

(Right) *Graph to show the overall Satisfaction levels of students From sample courses at 5 Collaborative Partners*



4.5.24 Of the sample courses, areas of good practice that were highlighted included access to University support services and facilities. This particularly related to lecturing spaces and classrooms.

4.5.25 The Union has also been involved in a number of Periodic Reviews for a selection of courses at Collaborative Provision throughout 2013/14. Two examples of these with key strengths and a sample of the recommendations are highlighted below.

<sup>21</sup> Sample courses are Alton College (FdA Early Years Education), Chichester College and Eastleigh College (PGCE Post Compulsory Education), Isle of Wight College (FdA Business and Management) and Southampton City College (FdA Early Years Care and Education)

## Sparsholt College

4.5.27 All University of Portsmouth awarded courses at the college were reviewed in January 2014 with the following data taken from the Periodic Review (January 2014).

### Key Strengths

- Differences between learner profiles (e.g. young/mature) are recognised and strategies are developed to address their different needs.
- Having practitioners on the teaching team is clearly advantageous to students.

### Recommendations

- To consider holding course specific employability events.
- To ensure all students are aware of the availability of past exam papers and their opportunity for exam feedback.

4.5.28 In July 2014 FdA Early Years Care & Education was reviewed. This course is operated at two sites. The key strengths and recommendations are highlighted below.

### Key Strengths

- Good use of the VLE to support student learning.
- Quality feedback to students and developmental opportunities offered.
- Excellent student support at both partner colleges

### Recommendations

- Explore cross-site and cross-cohort technical solutions to enable more staff and student engagement with developmental activities.
- Partner college to explore enhanced provision of HE-specific study spaces and facilities.

## Chapter Five: Enhancement

### 5.1 Commitment & Provision

5.1.1 The Department of Curriculum and Quality Enhancement (DCQE) hold responsibility for looking at the enhancement of students' education at the institution.

Examples of recent developments that have resulted from this departments' work has included:

- The launch of the new VLE Moodle and the integration of learning technologies.
- Implemented the Evasys system and given the Student Voice Team and VP Education and Democracy access so that UPSU can work with departments to highlight success.
- Developed the APEX programme; involving the the Union, Course Reps and students in the design and delivery of a number of these sessions.

5.1.2 As outlined above, the Union has been involved in the Academic Professional Excellence Framework programme - APEX - which is also aligned with the University's Education Strategy. This programme offers the chance for University staff to partake in continuing development opportunities that link to the UK Professional Standards Framework developed by the HEA.<sup>22</sup>



We have been pleased with the level of student engagement in the Foundation Pathway of the programme with current students, Faculty Reps and Sabbatical Officers participating in the workshops delivered to new lecturers. High-level student volunteers have also been involved in developing a new project encompassing a website, which aims to showcase examples of good teaching practice; allowing the University and students to celebrate innovation and enhancement.

The Union has been working to support the Student Academic Facilitator role as part of this programme and is currently supporting a project to develop a best practice website.

5.1.3 The University has also recently appointed a new Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Student Experience who meets with the Sabbatical Officers and Union Student Voice staff team once a month. The Union believe this further demonstrates the institutions commitment to working in partnership and improving the experience of students. The post holder has already worked with this group to look at addressing the issues highlighted in the Annual Quality Report.

5.1.4 In June 2014 the Union were involved in the delivery of the institutions' Annual Learning and Teaching Conference. This year's theme had a strong focus on partnership. The event had guest speakers from the National Union of Students, Student Engagement Partnership and staff from the University of Lincoln presenting their work on the 'Student as Producer' scheme.

<sup>22</sup> Higher Education Academy, (2011), *The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in Higher Education* <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf>

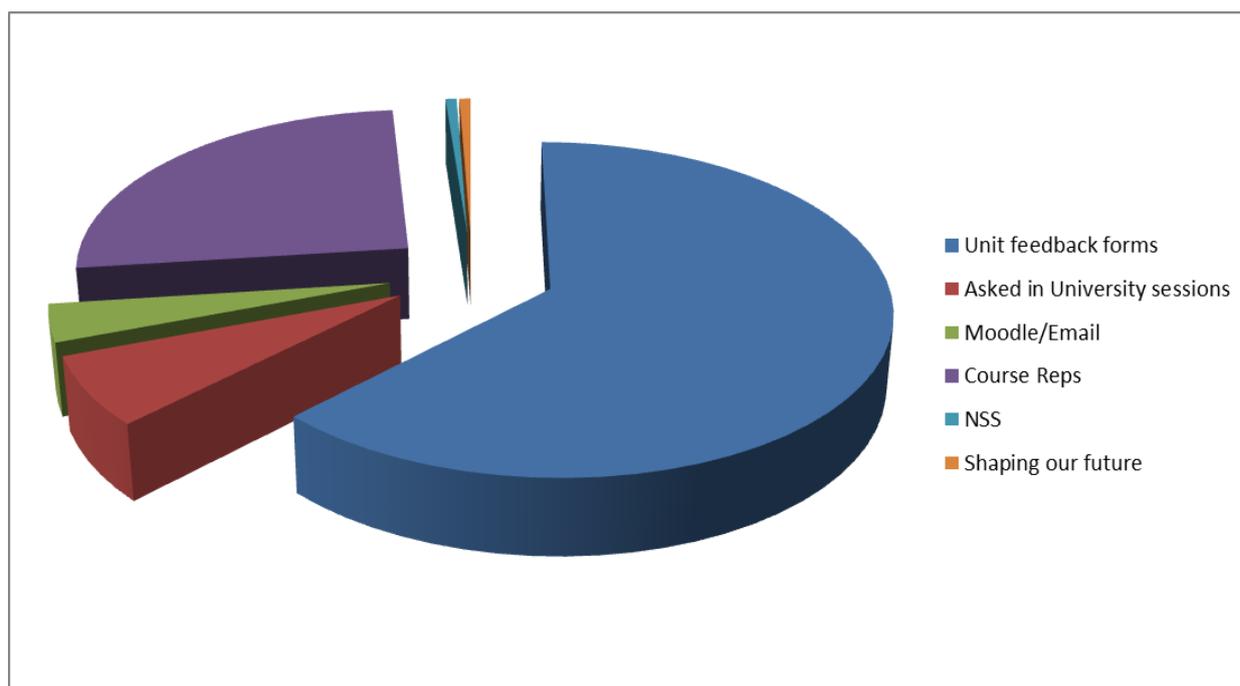
## 5.2 The Student Voice

5.2.1 The University outlines its' commitment in its' 'Policy for Listening and Responding to the Student Voice'. The policy outlines how students will be listened to? How the representation structure should operate? and where students participate in the Quality Assurance Process. This is monitored by the Student Voice Group, a committee at the University where Union representatives have a presence.<sup>23</sup>

5.2.2 In response to the question 'Do you feel your voice is heard in making change at the University?'<sup>24</sup> 61% of respondents agreed whilst 39% indicated that they did not feel this was the case.

5.2.3 The most commonly recognised ways that students felt their voice was responded to was via a Course Rep. Whilst many students saw the departmental meetings that reps attend as the place this happens, students also identified that surveys and unit feedback forms were ways they were encouraged to give feedback.

Ten respondents to the above question highlighted the recent consultation of the new University strategy 'Shaping Our Future' as an example of where they were consulted, whilst many cited the Students' Union and the elected Sabbatical Officers as a mechanism to voice their views.

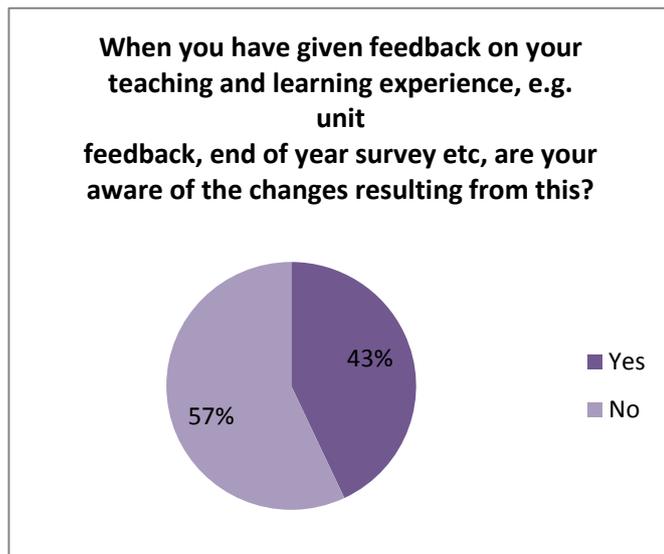


*The above chart shows the most commonly recognised way for students to give feedback*

<sup>23</sup> Policy can be found at <http://www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/curriculumandqualityenhancement/filetodownload,18293,en.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Question of the week 2014

5.2.4 43% of respondents indicated that they are aware of changes resulting from the feedback they had given, whilst 57% of respondents indicated that this had not been the case. We would suggest that 57% of this sample identifying that they had not been made aware of the changes indicates an area for development.



5.2.5 Where students had reported that they had been made aware of changes resulting from feedback the mechanisms they identified included:

- Verbal communication from lecturers about specific changes, generally during lectures or tutorials.
- Online communication, either via email or with the feedback being posted on Moodle.
- Course Reps utilising online forums to report changes, including Facebook groups.

*“We were asked to fill out feedback forms at the end of the unit and that was it. There was never a follow-up report to say what was changed based on the feedback.”*

Humanities & Social Sciences Student,  
Year 2, Student Voice Survey 2014

### ***Requirements to respond to feedback***

5.2.6 The Student Voice Policy outlines that:

‘It is necessary to ‘close the loop’ and tell students what has happened in response to their feedback. It is imperative that appropriate action is seen by students to be taken in response to legitimate concerns and issues raised through student feedback’.

5.2.7 Under the institution's commitments to students as outlined in The Student Charter it highlights that it will 'Tell you [students] what action we have taken as a consequence of your feedback'. This document highlights that students also have a responsibility to communicate their feedback.

"The Institution respects the professionalism of the unit and course owners to review and act on the feedback they receive"

Dr Valda Bunker, Former Director of University of Portsmouth Department for Curriculum Quality and Enhancement (until June 2014)

(from 'Closing the loop') <https://www.swan.ac.uk/media/Closing%20the%20Loop%20Report.pdf>

5.2.8 University Heads of Department are required to provide a response to National Student Survey results in both 'areas of success' and 'areas for improvement'. Generally this is communicated to Course Reps via the representation structure. The Union gives reps a detailed breakdown of the NSS results for their specific course and invites them to raise this at their meetings

### Recommendation:

7. We recommend that the Student Voice Group reviews the process outlined in the Student Voice Policy to ensure the development of clear mechanisms across Faculties for communicating Course Rep achievements and actions resulting from student feedback.



## Recommendation:

8. Whilst we are confident the University does upload up to date information regarding the Student Charter it does appear many students struggle to find this. We would like to recommend that the institution gives greater clarity to students on where this is located as well as the information contained within it.

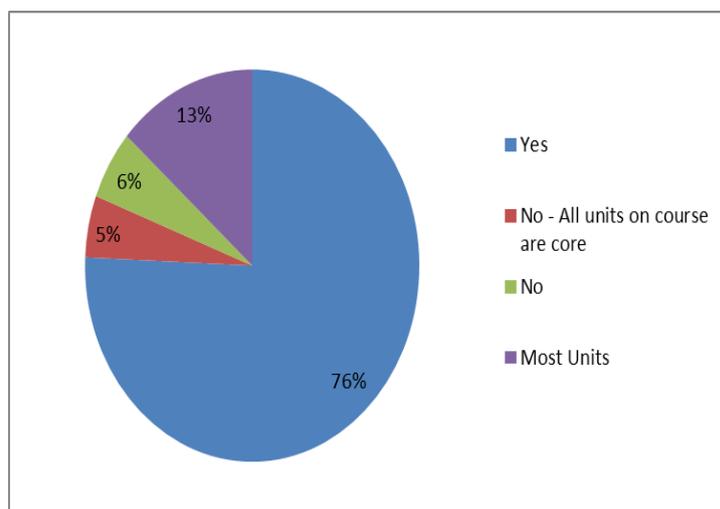
### 6.2 Unit Choice & Selection

Students were asked 'Do you feel that the Units you are currently undertaking match the description at the time you selected them?'<sup>26</sup>. The majority of students responded positively to this question saying that they did.

*"We had a meeting to discuss our units and we even had a taster session"*

Year 2 Mathematics Student

Question of the Week 2014



*(Right) A Breakdown of the responses to 'Do you feel that the Units you are currently undertaking match the description at the time you selected them?'*



The University ensures that it is clear about unit choice and selection. The majority of students feel they are well informed when making their choices.

<sup>26</sup> Question of The Week 2014

### 6.3 Online Provision

The University has now made the transition to the new VLE Moodle. Students were asked 'Do you feel that all of the relevant information that you need is available on Moodle and easy for you to access?'<sup>27</sup> The response for this was overwhelmingly positive with 83% of students saying 'Yes'. Of the 17% that said 'no' most comments referred to the layout and a want for more information such as course rep details, reading lists and journals access.

"Though not a techy student, I have found it easy to use and highly informative, especially regarding course information."

Year One, English Literature Student

Question of the Week 2014

"Most of it is but lecturers sometimes omit relevant information"

Year Two, Pharmacy Student

Question of the Week 2014

### 6.4 Public Information

6.4.1 Students were asked 'To what extent do you agree that your course has met your expectations based on the information provided by the University prior to starting?'<sup>28</sup>

The majority of respondents gave a positive answer with 57% of students solidly agreeing with the statement.

	Number of respondents
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	89
<b>Agree</b>	260
<b>Disagree</b>	93
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	18
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	460

(Above) Table showing the extent to which students agreed the course had met their expectations.

6.4.2 185 students gave additional comments. In areas where students disagreed the comments referred to one of the outlined areas below:

- Course content - These students highlighted lack of practical content and overlaps in the content of units.
- Lack of unit choice - This related to limited choices in unit selection or a core units not meeting expectations.
- Placement Opportunities & Study Abroad - These students felt there was not enough support in finding work placements.

<sup>27</sup> Question of The Week 2014

<sup>28</sup> Student Voice Survey 2014

6.4.3 42% of the comments left indicated that students' expectations had been met or exceeded. Many comments referred to the excellent support and professionalism of University staff.

*"Everything we were told and sold on my open day is what we have received"*

*Year 2 CCI Student*

*"My expectations of the University of Portsmouth have been exceeded based on the information provided.*

*I didn't expect the University of Portsmouth to be so open, friendly and helpful. The teachers have really shown a great inspiration and dedication to me from the day I started University and it seems to grow every passing day"*

*Year 3 Humanities & Social Sciences Student*

## Chapter Seven: Employability (Thematic Element)

### 7.1 Careers Guidance and Advice

7.1.1 Careers guidance is provided at the institution by the Department for Employability. This is more familiar to students in the form of Purple Door.

7.1.2 When asked 'How accessible do you find the careers services at the University?' <sup>29</sup> 84% of students felt that the service was accessible. The majority recognised or referred to Purple Door specifically. These students had at a minimum heard of and/or had contact from the service. The most common method of communication was email followed by class talks.



Students who indicated that their expectations about their course had been met or exceeded<sup>30</sup> identified that they had gained valuable practical experience, and networking and work experience opportunities that had contributed to both their personal and professional development. This was also consistent with our findings during our Question of the Week consultation when students were asked how their course or department had supported them in developing professional skills.

7.1.3 Participants identified career events, providing the opportunity for students to meet professionals from relevant industries/sectors, as significant to their development during their time at Portsmouth.

*“CAKE - Careers advice and knowledge event; meeting and drinks with a publisher about internships with the London magazine.”*

Humanities & Social Sciences Student,  
Year 2, Question of the Week 2014

*“We were provided with many events to meet professionals from the sector, careers fair, practical skills competition/courses.”*

Portsmouth Business School Student, Year  
2, Question of the Week 2014

<sup>29</sup> Question of the Week 2014

<sup>30</sup> Student Voice Survey 2014

## 7.2 Employability in the Curriculum

7.2.1 The majority of respondents referred to encouragement and support from their course or department in undertaking some form of work experience, placement or voluntary opportunity to increase and enhance their personal and professional skills.

Some students reported that they had received substantial support from their Faculty placement office in seeking and securing placement opportunities. When asked 'Do you feel that employability is given enough focus on your course?'<sup>31</sup> 76% of students said they felt it was.

Examples of where this is given include:

- Those whose course has placement opportunities.
- Class talks, particularly at induction.
- Through Careers Fairs.

Of those that disagreed with the statement students said:

- There was only one talk on the subject.
- A lot of self-learning was required.

7.2.2 Other students identified that the communication - emails and updates - circulated directly by different University departments was an additional way in which they were encouraged and supported to take up opportunities that would enhance their skills. Other common responses from participants reported that professional skills are embedded within the content of their course through practical workshops, implementing the skills taught as part of their programme; through site visits and field studies; and through valuable information and insight into areas of professional work being provided by guest speakers. Specific University modules were also listed by participants, such as '*Research and Professional Development*', '*Employability*', and '*Graduate Skills and Careers*'.

7.2.3 There was a less positive response, however, in regards to the lack of feedback and discussion given by students around the 'Personal Development Plan' (PDP) scheme. This is a key part of the University's Education Strategy and linked closely with the theme of employability. The University describes PDP as an '*evidence-based approach*', which requires students '*to gather and evaluate evidence of their achievements and failures*', enabling them to develop and implement plans to ensure their academic, personal and career goals (University of Portsmouth, 2014),<sup>32</sup> and is outlined further in the Curriculum Framework Document, 2012.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Question of the Week 2014

<sup>32</sup> University of Portsmouth, (2014), *University Policy on Personal Tutoring - Personal Development Planning (PDP)*, [www.port.ac.uk/personaltutoring](http://www.port.ac.uk/personaltutoring)

<sup>33</sup> University of Portsmouth, (2012), *Curriculum Framework Document 2012*

7.2.4 The University identifies PDP as a structured and supportive process, which promotes student engagement, and suggests that it links closely to the role of the personal tutor with 'timely and rigorous tutorials' enabling 'wayward students'<sup>34</sup> to get back on track and raises the aspirations of other students. Whilst the DCQE proposes that high quality PDP has advantages for the University as it supports student achievement and progression and is included in the quality evaluations completed by students, we believe that with only a small number of students citing this as an example of how they are able to develop their skills (Student Voice Survey, 2014), this may require further research into how effectively the scheme is being implemented across the University.

### Recommendation:

9. As PDP was implemented in 2012, the Union would like to see a review of students' feedback regarding PDP conducted based on the evaluations that have been completed by students to date.

## 7.3 Graduate Employability<sup>35</sup>

7.3.1 87.9% of graduates were in employment and/or study six months after completing their course. This is up from 84.8% from the previous year.

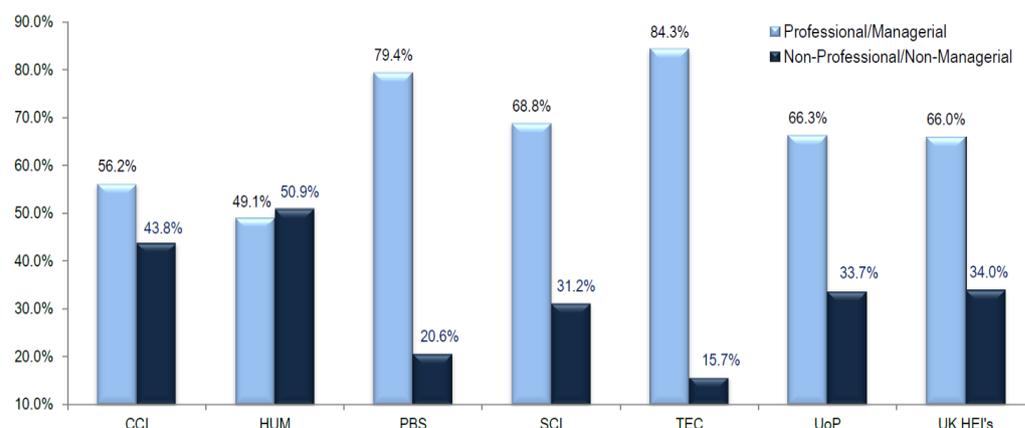
7.3.2 Graduate retention is at 12.8%, with these students remaining in the central Portsmouth area.

7.3.3 The average salary of a first degree graduate matched the national average salary of £21,000, with a median salary of £19,000.

7.3.4 66% of graduate leavers were in occupations defined as professional or managerial, which matches the national figure.

7.3.5 90% of Postgraduate leavers entered employment and study, this is a fraction lower than the national 90.7% average.

(Right)  
Graduate  
Occupation  
levels across  
faculties



<sup>34</sup> University of Portsmouth, (2014), *University Policy on Personal Tutoring - Personal Development Planning (PDP)*, [www.port.ac.uk/personaltutoring](http://www.port.ac.uk/personaltutoring)

<sup>35</sup> Graduate Destination Survey 2012/13

## Conclusion

We hope you have had the chance to read through our report carefully and consider the points raised. We will be looking to work with the institution to build and develop on the good practice highlighted and work to improve areas of concern outlined in our recommendations.

We look forward to tracking the progress made in both the AQR and the Student Submission in our Annual Quality Report in summer 2015.

**Kayleigh Teague, Vice President Education and Democracy 2014/15**

## Reference List

Higher Education Academy, (2011), *The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in Higher Education*, <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf>

Higher Education Academy and Higher Education Policy Institute, (2014), *Student Academic Experience Survey*

National Union of Students, (2011), *Charter on Feedback & Assessment*, <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/asset/news/6010/FeedbackCharter-toview.pdf>

National Union of Students, (2012), *Student Experience Research 2012, Part 1: Teaching and Learning*

National Union of Students, (2013), *Feedback and Assessment Benchmarking Tool*

Quality Assurance Agency, (2014), *UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality*

University of Portsmouth, (2010), *Student Communications Policy*

University of Portsmouth, (2012), *Curriculum Framework Document 2012*

University of Portsmouth, (2012), *Education Strategy 2012-2017*

University of Portsmouth, (2012), *Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice*, <http://www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/curriculumandqualityenhancement/filetodownload,18293,en.pdf>

University of Portsmouth, (2012), *Revised Academic Structure for 2012*, <http://www.port.ac.uk/intranet/directorate/revisedacademicstructure/>

University of Portsmouth, (2012), *The Structure of the Academic Year - final proposals for a de-Semesterised structure to be introduced in the session 2012-2013*

University of Portsmouth, (2013), *Examination and Assessment Regulations*

University of Portsmouth, (2013), *Student Charter*, [www.port.ac.uk/studentcharter](http://www.port.ac.uk/studentcharter)

University of Portsmouth, (2013), *University of Portsmouth Timetable Policy*

University of Portsmouth, (2014), *Department for Curriculum & Quality Enhancement - Personal Tutoring*, [www.port.ac.uk/personaltutoring](http://www.port.ac.uk/personaltutoring)

University of Portsmouth, (2014), Information about the ground floor refurbishment & the floor plan image found at: <http://www.port.ac.uk/library/home/refurb/>

University of Portsmouth, (2014), *University Policy on Personal Tutoring - Personal Development Planning (PDP)*, [www.port.ac.uk/personaltutoring](http://www.port.ac.uk/personaltutoring)