College of Arts L&T Plan 2018 - Summary

The information in this document is extracted from (a) the College of Arts NSS and Student Experience Strategic Plan 2018-2021, approved by Arts CMG and SMG, and (b) a summary of NSS 2018 results, produced as a supplement to the strategic plan and presented to Arts CMG and Arts College Council. Full documents are available on request.

In autumn 2017, Schools in Arts developed two-year NSS action plans: these are currently (October 2018) being updated following the results of NSS 2018, and dovetail with the College plan.

1. NSS 2018 Headlines

In terms of overall satisfaction, the College of Arts achieved 86.3%, down 5.1% on 2017 and falling below the KPI target of 91%. Scores are down in all sections compared with 2017, and on most questions, although scores for Teaching and Assessment & Feedback remain high compared with the GU averages. There is a slight increase in 'Marking and assessment has been fair'. There are particularly large decreases in 'The course is well organised and running smoothly', 'I feel part of a community of staff and students', and 'I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course'.

The pattern was similar in Schools, with sizeable decreases in Overall Satisfaction and a general downturn in results, a trend bucked only by Culture and Creative Arts which made improvements in most sections. One Subject achieved 100% Overall Satisfaction, Theology & Religious Studies (which also ranks first equal in the UK and in the Russell Group), and two further Subjects exceeded the University's KPI of 91% on Overall Satisfaction: Classics (96.8%, ranking second in the UK and Russell Group) and Celtic Studies (which included Scottish Literature, 95.7%, ranking second in the Russell Group). Five plans (out of the 20 Arts plans for which there are available data) exceeded the University's KPI of 91% on Overall Satisfaction: History/Politics MA (100%); English Lang (95.7%); Music BMus (92.9%); English Lang/English Lit (92.3%); English Lit/History (91.7%).

Reviewing the NSS open comments for Arts as a whole, positive and negative comments on the following topics are particularly striking:

Positive: enthusiastic teaching staff; course content; supportive staff; availability of resources; sense of community; study abroad; intellectual stimulation; student feedback valued and responded to; support during dissertations; detailed feedback; drop-in hours; group work and practical work

Negative: feedback detail; feedback timeliness; emphasis on exam assessment; support for student mental health; course organisation; enrolment system problems; impact of industrial action; lack of sense of community in some areas; overcrowding; slowness in responding to student feedback; coinciding deadlines; support during year abroad; disruption from credit changes

2. Summary of actions for 2018-19

The following are areas on which we will focus in the current session. Those responsible for leading on actions are identified in the main strategic plan.

2.1 Learning Opportunities

- Increase the number of placement opportunities for students within courses.

- Maintain focus on international opportunities for students: establish international internship opportunities to support students in developing an international mindset and enhance employability; develop and where appropriate expand existing institutional and subject-level international partnerships to place greater emphasis on UG and PGT mobility; grow and diversify opportunities for both shorter and longer-term international student experiences.

Wendy Anderson, Dean of Learning and Teaching, College of Arts

- Enhance student development of Graduate Attributes, including problem-solving as a means of applying learning.

2.2 Assessment and Feedback

- Work with the University Assessment and Feedback Transformation Project to enhance processes related to assessment and feedback.

- Work with Schools to increase clarity and accessibility to students of criteria used in marking.

- Work with Schools to enhance communications around feedback times, e.g. through Feedback Calendars, and where relevant to increase promptness of return, including through review of second marking/moderation practices.

- Through Board of Study, increase visibility of and keep under review the guidance on assessment loads. Work with Schools to adjust or reduce assessment loads where appropriate.

2.3 Organisation and Management

- Develop role guidance on course/programme convening for academic staff.

- Through Senior Learning and Teaching Administrators' forum, share good practice in the administrative aspects of course organisation.

2.4 Learning Community

- Carry out data analysis to identify high and low-scoring areas ['feeling part of a community'], follow up with relevant areas to identify some of the factors that may lead to a strong feeling of community, and share practice as appropriate, e.g. through workshops on 'Enhancing the learning community', 'Active Learning / Technology-Enhanced Active Learning'. Review data and activities on an annual basis.

- Review College, School and Subject induction activities.

- Maintain and enhance VPAL activity for first-year students.

- Carry out data analysis to identify high and low-scoring areas ['work with other students as part of course'], follow up with relevant conveners to identify types of groupwork and other course activities that may lie behind these results. Disseminate guidance on groupwork and encourage take-up of successful models.

2.5 Student Voice

- Work with Schools to ensure that actions made in response to student feedback (e.g. through SSLCs and EvaSys) are communicated clearly and promptly.

2.6 Other L&T matters

- In collaboration with CAPS, run Mental Health training sessions at least annually for staff, including GTAs.

- Carry out a review of Board of Study processes and work to streamline processes, with a particular focus on consultation requirements, administrative processes and ensuring rigour. Monitor processes annually.

- Hold blended learning workshops for staff, annually.

- Support and encourage ongoing and new initiatives in e-learning (including blended and online learning).

- Continue work on exam board processes.

- Maintain and enhance L&T Moodle site.

Wendy Anderson, Dean of Learning and Teaching, College of Arts