Dear colleague,

Welcome to this first edition of the 'Education Matters' monthly newsletter. Over 500 members of staff have registered to receive the newsletter, which is an excellent response. The newsletter will provide you with information on forthcoming University consultations on changes to Codes of Practice, creation of new policies, recent developments at University Education Committee and Quality Assurance Committee, opportunities to participate in projects, and updates on major University initiatives. We will also provide links to national developments on HE policy matters and briefings on recent activity at HEFCE, HEA and the QAA.

In this edition of the newsletter you will find information on the NSS and League Tables, KIS, an update on Curriculum Review and details of a survey conducted jointly with the Guild of Students on 'Education for Sustainable Development' (ESD).

We have also included links to recent publications and announcements by national bodies.

We hope that you will find the newsletter interesting and informative. If there are topics that you would like us to include in the future editions, please contact Claire Teeling.

Best wishes,

Jeff Bale
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)

University of Birmingham

- NSS and League Tables
  The most recent Guardian League Table placed the University 15th, 15 places higher than last year. Much of this improvement springs from our NSS performance in 2012; a rise of 3% in our Overall Satisfaction score to 88%, and our best-ever scores in 19 of the 22 questions. The University is now in the top 20 in all league tables published in 2013. We will find out our NSS scores for 2013 in August, but we can already celebrate achieving our highest ever response rate of 71% this year, 4% higher than last year. While this compares well with most of our peers, some institutions do better. We will therefore be reviewing our approach to publicising the NSS next year. Anyone wishing to contribute should contact Valeria.
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Paul Ashby, Head of Market Research

- **KIS**
  We are now in the process of compiling this year’s Key Information Sets (KIS), comparable sets of information about undergraduate courses which are published online and are designed to meet the information needs of prospective students by collating information such as student satisfaction, graduate outcomes, learning and teaching activities, assessment methods, tuition fees and student finance, accommodation and professional accreditation. The first KIS data was published last year and whilst much of the information has been “rolled through” to this year, we are currently in the process of checking and revising where appropriate the figures on assessment and scheduled teaching. These data have been compiled based on student module registrations in the current academic year, which are used to produce a “typical student pathway”. These pathways are currently being checked by programme leads and Heads and Directors of Education to ensure that we are returning figures that are representative of our programmes. Our data return, signed off by the Vice-Chancellor, must be submitted by 22 August.

- **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**
  ESD was the subject of a workshop organised in conjunction with the Guild of Students in February 2013, attended by academic staff from a number of Schools and Departments across the University. In order to develop our approach to this topic, it is important for us to gain an understanding of the extent to which ESD topics are currently taught, either as the main emphasis of programmes, in modules within programmes, or as lecture/seminar topics within modules. To this end, a short survey was recently sent to Heads and Directors of Education in all Colleges, for completion.

- **Curriculum Review Update**
  A Curriculum Review Implementation Group has been established, and had its second meeting on 27 June to discuss progress on the different strands of this major initiative. Phase 1 of the Undergraduate Curriculum Review is largely completed and under review. **Transition Review** has been implemented and is under review; **Personal tutoring and Small Group Teaching** had a £250k investment and its evaluation is underway, with some funds available for continuation in 2013-14; and the **Academic Skills Centre** was a great success in its first year, with an investment of £200k per annum for 3 years - part of the ‘OFFA spend’.

**Assessment Review** (Phase 2) is a major review of assessment and feedback in UG programmes, being undertaken using the **TESTA** (transforming the experience of students through assessment) methodology. This involves an audit of assessment in each year of the programme (e.g. number of summative and formative assessments), use of an assessment evaluation questionnaire (AEQ) completed by students, and several focus groups with students. A report incorporating the evidence from these
three strands is then considered by the programme teams in order to inform any changes that might be needed to ensure that assessment and feedback is coherent and balanced across the programme. The aim of the project (BALI – Birmingham Assessment for Learning Initiative) is to improve the quality of provision for students and also to reduce the assessment load for staff. Fifteen programmes will have been reviewed by the end of July and a list of good practice and top tips will be produced to circulate to Schools.

Phase 3 strands are in pilot and implementation stages. The 
**Birmingham Project** will be targeted at year 1 students, post May-June examinations; it is an opportunity for students to collaborate with peers from other Schools and Colleges, directed by members of academic or professional staff, on an enquiry-based interdisciplinary research project. Pilot projects for 60-80 students are in development for June 2014 but will not be assessed in pilot stage.

The **Reorganisation of MOMDs** strand recognises and aims to rectify problems with the current system. The intention is to revitalise MOMDs based on new criteria and principles as part of the ‘breadth agenda’ in the undergraduate curriculum. This topic was recently discussed at the University Education Committee and will be further explored in 2013-14.

Curriculum Review envisages an enhanced offer of 20 credit **Language Modules** that are currently delivered as MOMDs. Discussions are underway to identify a resourcing model that recognises the small group teaching format required for languages.

The **Review of Joint Honours** programmes had an initial focus in CAL, where 30-40 zero or low-recruiting programmes are to be withdrawn and some to be reconfigured as pathways within single honours. The standard JH structure of 60:60 credits in two subjects in each of 3 years is to be replaced by an optional 80:40 credit split in years 2 and 3 (with 60:60 or 40:80 final year options). This new JH structure will be available across all Colleges.

The **Valuing Teaching at Birmingham** proposals were derived from a CLAD-funded project. The emphasis of the project was on the perception of the importance of teaching at Birmingham. A key proposal of this strand is to establish a Birmingham Teaching Academy, to sit alongside CLAD, and this idea, together with other initiatives around the ‘teaching agenda’ will be further developed next session.

The **Placement Module** will run as DIF-funded pilot in CoSS in 2013-14 and will include a wide range of placements/internships with a flexible structure in terms of timing and duration. This will operate in year 3 in CoSS and will inform a possible ‘roll out’ to other Colleges (could occur in earlier years).

The **Transforming Teaching Delivery** strand is evaluating different formats of ‘teaching delivery’ e.g. interactive and ‘Flipped’ lectures, technology enhanced teaching and learning, and e-learning.
has strong links to the new iVLE and will also link to the ‘Alternative Modes of Delivery’ project.

*FOR INFORMATION* A Screencasting and “Lecture Flipping” Symposium is being held on 18 July, 11 am – 1.30 pm. Details of the Symposium.

Mapping of the current range of Student Volunteering opportunities is being undertaken by the Careers Network, the Guild of Students and Registry. This will lead to an integrated database across the University and the Guild of potential volunteering activities for students. This strand is linked to the development of an ‘Enhanced Transcript’ (HEAR) of student achievement. The mapping exercise will continue until the end of July. If you know of any intra- or extracurricular activity related to volunteering, we would be keen to hear about it.

Please contact Dr C.Teeling if you have information or comments, or see the Curriculum Review web pages on the University Intranet.

Higher Education news

- **Talking about quality: Degree-awarding powers**
  The fourth issue of this series presents three separate perspectives on the topic of degree-awarding powers from providers who have recently acquired them: Chris Clare of ifs School of Finance, Martin Lockett of Ashridge Business School and Chris Maguire of BPP University College.

- **Massive Open Online Courses: Higher Education's digital moment?**
  This report tracks the development of ‘massive open online courses' (MOOCs) from a small selection of specialist courses to major online platforms, offering hundreds of courses with millions of users.

- **Latest HEA Research and Policy seminar** available online. Professor Haslett, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Wales, explored links between research and teaching in higher education at the seminar held earlier this month.

- Higher Education Review will be launched in 2013-14 as the review method for all QAA subscribers in England and Northern Ireland, as well as for providers with access to funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England who are not subscribers to QAA. The handbook for Higher Education Review has now been published.

- **European Commission**
  The EU high-level group on modernisation of higher education published its first report on improving the quality of teaching and learning in universities. The group, chaired by former President of Ireland Mary McAleese, found that many higher education institutes place insufficient emphasis on teaching in comparison with research.

- **Elsevier distances itself from Open Access article**
  The publisher Elsevier has disassociated itself from an article by a trade association it belongs to that condemns proposed open-
access mandates in several US states.

- **QAA review of transnational education in China**

### Consultations

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Part A and Chapters B1, B6, B8. This consultation invites comments on the draft versions of Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards, Chapter B1: Programme design and approval, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and recognition of prior learning, and Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The [consultation](#) is open until 1 August 2013.