

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ACTION PLAN 2017/18

School	Biological Sciences
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Date of Submission	August
Date and method of distribution to staff	Faculty website, Teaching Board
Date and method of distribution to students	SSLC
Key for the lead responsibility	SA=Senior Advisor, DSA=Deputy Senior Advisor, DUG=Director of UG Studies, DDUG= Deputy Director of UG Studies, DoSo= Deputy Head of School Operations Manager

RAG rating definition [Column H]

R = Red - Problematic, high risk; **A = Amber** - Mixed, medium risk; **G = Green** - Good, low risk

Overall SMART Objective or Theme [Better support students with Mental Health issues with a view to reducing number of students taking interruption]

Item	Description of supporting Action/Activity and Source of and/or Drivers for it	Deliverables	Impact on Student Experience and how this is measured	Target Date	Person responsible	Progress Update or Final Evaluation	Status (R, A, G)	Completed (Yes/No)
1.1	Increasing numbers of students with mental health issues are presenting to staff, especially to personal advisors. We also observe increasing numbers of interruptions due to mental health problems. Members of staff often feel unprepared to support these students. In addition, a proportion of students are not seeking the support available both within the School and the University. It is possible that they are not aware of the support available.	(1) Investigate whether external training can be arranged for staff, e.g. bespoke training from MIND. A representative from the Manchester Crisis team will be attending one of the staff forums to provide guidance. (2) Update staff guide to include additional information on supporting students with health issues, including reminder of School and University support available. (3) Extend personal staff training session at beginning of academic year to discuss support. Reminders of essential course information (student support staff and central services) will be sent to all student year groups in week 3.	Increasing numbers of students receive referral to counselling and DASS registration at an earlier stage. We will investigate if this has an impact upon the number of students taking a period of interruption.	(1) December 2017 (2) Summer 2018. (3) September 2018.	SA, DSA	(2) was completed in summer 2017.	A	

Overall SMART Objective or Theme [Improve Assessment and Feedback Scores on NSS by 2% by 2019]								
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2.1	Comments from the NSS suggest that students have problems with deadlines that clash. This mirrors comments from a the previous year. A survey was undertaken in 16/17 to assess the number of assessment across all Biosciences Degree Programmes. The survey revealed that the degree programmes portfolio of assessment was variable. In 17/18 a programme of workshops will be held with Programme Directors to look at how degrees are delivered and whether assessments can be harmonised across degree programmes. The Programme team will look at whether an assessment portfolio can be established for Bioscience degree programmes.	Meetings will be scheduled with key staff and students with a view to determining whether a curriculum review is necessary for the 18/19 academic year. The number of assessments will be consistent across all degree programmes.	Students will be clear on what is expected of them and be aware of deadlines. NSS scores on Assessment and Feedback	Introduction in September 2018.	DUG,DoSo, DDUG, Caroline Bowsher		A	
2.2	This action is closely linked to 2.1. Following a recent workshop with Programme Directors it was agreed that there was an opportunity in 17/18 to review SBS programmes. Programme Directors will review programme specifications and assess whether the units deliver the ILOs of the programmes. This is an opportunity for Programme Directors to review the programme delivery and decide whether any major amendments are required.	Meetings will be scheduled with key staff and students with a view to considering whether curriculum review is necessary for the 18/19 academic year.	Programmes will be fit for purpose. New and innovative ways of delivering content will be explored.	Introduction in September 2018.	DUG,DoSo, DDUG, Caroline Bowsher		R	

Overall SMART Objective or Theme [Increase number of higher degrees within SBS and improve scores for NSS Q8 by 6% by 2019]								
Item	Description of supporting Action/Activity and Source of and/or Drivers for it	Deliverables	Impact on Student Experience and how this is measured	Target Date	Person responsible	Progress Update or Final Evaluation	Status (R, A, G)	Completed (Yes/No)
3.1	External Examiners have recently commented that they feel that markers do not use the full marking range and this may have an impact on the number of good degrees awarded. SBS will therefore review the marking criteria for assessed coursework and exams.	Marking criteria that encourages staff to use the full marking range.	Increase the numbers of higher degrees within SBS. Increase scores on NSS Q8 by 2%. This will be monitored through moderation as well as using comparisons to average unit scores from previous years. This is done routinely in SBS examination boards in semesters 1 and 2.	2018/19 academic year	DUG, DDUG		A	
3.2	SBS continue to use viva voce to determine whether students with final marks in the borderline between two degree classes will be raised to the higher class. Although there are benefits to using the viva voce exam they are viewed as too subjective by External Examiners. In 17/18 SBS will investigate how best to facilitate mark review to replace viva vice examinations without decreasing the number of students who are promoted to the higher class.	A new process for dealing with borderline students will be introduced for those graduating in 18/19.	More objective method for considering borderline students. Students not required to return to Manchester for viva examination. Increase scores on NSS Q8 by 2%	2018/19 academic year	DDUG	DDUG has spoken to DAD for QA and is completing programme amendment.	A	
Overall SMART Objective or Theme [Improve communication channels for Biosciences Programmes and improve scores for NSS Q17]								
Item	Description of supporting Action/Activity and Source of and/or Drivers for it	Deliverables	Impact on Student Experience and how this is measured	Target Date	Person responsible	Progress Update or Final Evaluation	Status (R, A, G)	Completed (Yes/No)
4.1	There has been some confusion this year as to where final decisions are made. The responsibilities of the Education Leadership Team (ELT) are clear and the meeting functions well however it is less clear what the role of the newly established Biosciences Teaching Board is. The Board of Studies is an excellent forum for discussion amongst Programme Directors however, again, its function needs to be clarified. In addition, staff from FSE are missed from important communication channels due to how the Faculty Intranet has been developed. Scores for NSS Q17 are below average for SBS which indicates that some students do not feel that changes and decisions are communicated effectively.	Produce a flow diagram outlining the decision making process in SBS. Ensure FSE staff have access to Announcements and other important information relating to Biosciences teaching. Set up a Biosciences SharePoint site for dissemination of committee minutes and important documentation. Ensure student representation and involvement in committees. ToR are re-circulated to committee members.	Decision making is documented and there are clear lines of communication. Students are aware of mechanism for reporting and raising issues and feeding into School policy. In relation to 2.1 significant changes to the curriculum will be discussed in 2017/18 and students will be fully engaged in this process.	December 2017	DoSo, DUG		G	

Overall SMART Objective or Theme [Improve NSS Overall Satisfaction for the MSci (6%; and Organisation/Management by 20%) and Zoology (20%) degree programmes by 2018]								
Item	Description of supporting Action/Activity and Source of and/or Drivers for it	Deliverables	Impact on Student Experience and how this is measured	Target Date	Person responsible	Progress Update or Final Evaluation	Status (R, A, G)	Completed (Yes/No)
5.1	Satisfaction for the MSci programmes (having just graduated its first cohort) is currently lower than for most SBS programmes (80%). Organisation and Management scored disproportionately badly (48%) with all new activities running for the first time. To address this, we have advertised for an MSci 4th year coordinator, who will assist the MSci Academic Lead whose operational focus will be 3rd year MSci. Interviews are currently taking place and it is envisaged that someone will be in post by the end of August.	The MSci 4th Year Coordinator to a) refine MSci cohort activities (including assessments) based on their first iteration, b) prevent a repeat of building access issues (AV Hill), and c) organise PhD application workshops for the cohort in Oct & Nov and then mock interviews in December.	Improved satisfaction overall, and, Organisation & Management scores in 17/18 NSS.	01/04/18	DUG and DDUG	Appointed a 4th Year Coordinator; now in post. Currently appointing separate Student Reps for 3rd and 4th-yr MSci. Building receptions issued with clear instructions and student lists to ensure correct access level.	G	
5.2	To investigate with the Zoology Programme Director the likely cause(s) of the apparent drop in its NSS score (62% vs 95% 4-yr average), especially to determine whether this is the start of a real trend or a quirk of the boycott-affected completion rate (33%, 11 completions). Smaller programmes routinely experience larger fluctuations in their NSS scores. For example, Genetics and Pharmacology scored 82% and 85% respectively in 2016, but 100% in the latest NSS; the apparent drop in Satisfaction previously relating to only 2-3 students rather than wider cohort problems. Field Courses are amongst the most popular (and academically valuable) elements of the Organismal programmes and so to bolster Zoology teaching we have appointed an Organismal Biology biology lecturer and who has also been appointed as the dedicated Field Course Coordinator. This should improve the academic appropriateness of Field Course decision-making. Then, given our modular system (i.e. where different programmes take the same lecture units, Field Courses and practicals) and the relatively high scores of those associated programmes (90-92% e.g. Biology) we would not expect Zoology satisfaction to be different to other programmes over time. That said, the departure of Prof R. Preziosi affected a key Final-year Zoology unit (and his Field Course) and our alternate arrangement was not entirely successful. Further changes have been made for the coming academic year.	DoTL will liaise with the Zoology programme director, review the comments, and decide whether there are any required actions to increase student satisfaction. However, it is expected that the 17/18 NSS scores should correct themselves (towards the 4-yr 95% average) provided that the completion rate is much higher in 2018. Meeting with key staff on programmes to discuss issues with NSS and comments. Meeting with Zoology cohort for discussion on the programme and what could be improved.	Improved satisfaction overall for 17/18 NSS (but depending on significantly improved completion rates)	01/04/18	DUG and Zoology PD	DUG, DDUG & Head of School met recently with Zoology PD and associated staff to discuss issues	G	