

**Royal Holloway Students' Union
Department Rep Briefing**

Department: Mathematics & Information Security

For the Academic year: 2024-25

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Background

Department briefings are prepared annually, collating the data from the Staff-Student Action Meeting (SSAM) and the outcomes of the National Student Survey (NSS). The briefing aims to give an understanding of the student opinions of the activities within the department.

Commentary

The comments section for Electronic Engineering students did not meet the minimum threshold for the 2024 NSS. All the below commentary came from the combined undergraduate and postgraduate SSAM action logs for the 2023-24 academic year and is not reflective of their student experience. The Information Security SSAM minutes were only about postgraduates and have been identified in the comment box separate from Mathematics.

Students from this cohort experienced a marking and assessment boycott in their second year of study as well as disruptions from UCU strike action during their first and second year of study.

Key Themes	Commentary	
	Things working well	Areas for improvement
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maths Society restarted and What's App Group for Mathematics exists. These pages were linked to Moodle page in 2023-24 ▪ Pizza with professors event in Term Two ▪ EPMS network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low engagement as students balance work with study during cost-of-living crisis (Info Security)
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moodle sometimes confusing and challenging (Info Security)
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delayed feedback ▪ Would like more varied assessments (Info Security)
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online suggestion box created ▪ Considered ways to engage better with students at the start of the academic year (Info Security) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪

Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few events were advertised. One was on AI and another was on Maths and Private Equity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would like more careers support (Info Security)
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NSS

The National Student Survey (NSS) is a nation-wide survey of all final year undergraduate students studying at institutions across the UK and is managed by the Office for Students (OfS). The survey has run on annual basis since 2005. In 2020 the OfS undertook a significant review of the survey questions with an aim to refresh the NSS with questions that are more direct using positivity measure with a four-point scale to gain more accurate insight into the undergraduate student experience at UK universities.

The NSS 2024 questionnaire had 25 core questions which were grouped into six categories, or scale questions around themes like teaching, resources, academic support and there is a specific question about Students' Unions which is a part of the Student Voice category. Each of the six scale questions are composed of multiple questions which explore various elements of this theme in more detail. There were two additional questions included around mental health and freedom of speech, of which the second was offered only to students in England, and Royal Holloway included these questions in 2024.

Below is a table of the scores the Department received following the 2024 NSS. This can help you inform areas that may working on and monitoring. This data can also inform the comments provided above. The term 'positivity measure' means the proportion of respondents who gave a positive answer.

		2024	2023
Response Rate (%)		81	78
Questions (% Agree)			
1	How good are teaching staff at explaining things?	100	71.88
2	How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?	72.73	59.38
3	How often is the course intellectually stimulating?	86.36	90.63
4	How often does your course challenge you to achieve your best work?	95.45	87.5
5	To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?	95.24	68.75
6	How well does your course introduce subjects and skills in a way that builds on what you have already learned?	100	87.5
7	To what extent have you had the chance to bring together information and ideas from different topics?	95.45	68.75
8	To what extent does your course have the right balance of directed and independent study?	90.91	71.88

9	How well has your course developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?	86.36	62.5
10	How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?	81.82	74.19
11	How fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?	95.45	90.63
12	How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?	86.36	81.25
13	How often have you received assessment feedback on time?	95.45	84.38
14	How often does feedback help you to improve your work?	77.27	62.5
15	How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?	90.91	93.75
16	How well have teaching staff supported your learning?	95.45	68.75
17	How well organised is your course?	86.36	84.38
18	How well were any changes to teaching on your course communicated?	90.91	53.33
19	How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?	95	90.32
20	How well have the library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?	95.24	82.76
21	How easy is it to access subject specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software) when you need them?	95.45	80
22	To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your course?	81.82	59.38
23	To what extent are students' opinions about the course valued by staff?	76.19	46.88
24	How clear is it that students' feedback on the course is acted on?	68.18	40.63
25	How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests?	81.82	56.67
26	How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services?	77.27	70.97
27	During your studies, how free did you feel to express your ideas, opinions, and beliefs?	77.27	63.33

NSS Categories (% Positivity Measure)		2024	2023
1	The teaching on my course	88.64	77.34
2	Learning opportunities	92.95	71.88
3	Assessment and feedback	87.27	78.59
4	Academic support	93.18	81.25
5	Organisation and management	88.64	70.31
6	Learning resources	95.45	82.29
7	Student Voice	75	48.96
8	Students' Union	81.82	56.67
9	Mental wellbeing services	77.27	70.97
10	Freedom of expression	77.27	63.33