

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

**Department:** Music

**For the Academic year:** 2024-25

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**Created By:** Dr Elise Thornton, Research and Insight Coordinator

**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 following data is a summary of some of the key themes discussed in the 'Negative' and 'Positive' student responses to the NSS survey open-text question, 'Looking back on your experience, are there any particularly positive or negative aspects you would like to highlight?' Comments have been cross-referenced with minutes from the SSAMs which ran during the same academic year. Any topic solely discussed during SSAMs and not in the NSS have been clearly identified in the table as (SSAM).

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"> <li>▪ Extracurricular activities</li> <li>▪ Chapel Choir</li> <li>▪ Students requested common room to be open on weekends was actioned to be investigated (SSAM)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Royal Holloway Symphony Orchestra is poorly organised</li> </ul>
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good facilities and room booking system is organised</li> <li>▪ Performance opportunities</li> <li>▪ Radiators in Woodlands practice room malfunctioned but have been fixed (SSAM)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Difficult to book a place in woodlands practice rooms and inconvenient with 30 minute slots (i.e. book x 3 for the max 90 minutes)</li> <li>▪ Music score area of library disorganised was actioned (SSAM)</li> </ul>
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Staff are engaging</li> <li>▪ Wide-range of modules</li> <li>▪ Good balance of academic and practical studies</li> <li>▪ Students had 1-2-1 sessions with professors (SSAM)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Want more practical elements of course</li> <li>▪ UCU and marking ban</li> <li>▪ Students would like shared second- and third-year units, esp joint honours students (SSAM)</li> </ul>

Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback is detailed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would like more varied assessment options (i.e. different exams or more coursework)</li> <li>Delayed feedback</li> <li>Deadline stacking (SSAM)</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lecturers are approachable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor department communication</li> </ul>
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Had careers support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More support for students with disabilities</li> <li>More wellbeing support</li> </ul>

## 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 2023-24 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
<b>Response Rate (%)</b>		81	76
<b>Questions (% Positivity Measure)</b>			
1	How good are teaching staff at explaining things?	73.33	93.55
2	How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?	83.33	96.77
3	How often is the course intellectually stimulating?	73.33	87.1
4	How often does your course challenge you to achieve your best work?	76.67	93.55
5	To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?	90	87.5
6	How well does your course introduce subjects and skills in a way that builds on what you have already learned?	73.33	87.1

7	To what extent have you had the chance to bring together information and ideas from different topics?	73.33	80.65
8	To what extent does your course have the right balance of directed and independent study?	66.67	71.88
9	How well has your course developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?	70	71.88
10	How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?	70	65.63
11	How fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?	83.33	84.38
12	How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?	83.33	87.5
13	How often have you received assessment feedback on time?	72.41	90.63
14	How often does feedback help you to improve your work?	60	78.13
15	How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?	83.33	90.63
16	How well have teaching staff supported your learning?	93.33	90.63
17	How well organised is your course?	60	81.25
18	How well were any changes to teaching on your course communicated?	63.33	71.88
19	How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?	75	86.67
20	How well have the library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?	93.10	93.75
21	How easy is it to access subject specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software) when you need them?	80	90.63
22	To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your course?	80	81.25
23	To what extent are students' opinions about the course valued by staff?	72.41	77.42
24	How clear is it that students' feedback on the course is acted on?	55.17	51.61
25	How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests?	50	70
26	How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services?	71.43	68.75
27	During your studies, how free did you feel to express your ideas, opinions, and beliefs?	89.66	96.77

<b>NSS Categories (% Positivity Measure)</b>		<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
1	The teaching on my course	76.67	92.74
2	Learning opportunities	74.67	80
3	Assessment and feedback	74	81.25
4	Academic support	88.33	90.63
5	Organisation and management	61.67	76.56
6	Learning resources	82.22	89.58
7	Student Voice	68.33	70.83
8	Students' Union	50	70
9	Mental wellbeing services	71.43	68.75
10	Freedom of expression	89.66	96.77