

# Academic Services Quality Reporting Cycle: Qualitative Feedback 2007

## 1. SCOPE OF QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

Academic Services receives qualitative feedback from many different sources including:

- Suggestion scheme available within The Sir Michael Cobham Library and Bournemouth House Library (BH);
- Staff and student impact of e-resources study, free text comments;
- Staff comment and evaluation on MAAP course and myBU training programme;
- Student feedback from Teaching Learning and Assessment Survey/Annual Unit Evaluation (SUE) for the Languages Programmes, the annual evaluations of the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme and study support workshops;
- Comments made in the myBU Implementation Group and Project Management Board and consultancy meetings;
- Staff and student feedback on new services, eg surveys about myBU
- School programme team meetings and Annual Reports on Programme Monitoring (ARPM);
- School Committees;
- Academic Services and IT Student Advisory Group (ASITSAG) minutes;
- Student Union Student Representative Synoptic reports;
- University reports received including submissions as part of the QAA Developmental Engagements and Institutional Review;
- Unsolicited comments and testimonials.

## 2. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION?

The relevant section, Educational Development Services, International Programmes, Learning Support, or Library, responds to all qualitative feedback and then it is gathered centrally for triangulation to assist in assessing the strategic implications for service-wide improvements. When qualitative feedback praises aspects of our services this is passed on to the staff concerned and is used in publicity if appropriate.

## 3. ILLUSTRATIONS OF ENHANCEMENT FROM 2007

### 3.1 Additional Learning Needs

#### 3.1.1 Making appointments:

- Student comment.

A student's experience of a DSA assessment resulted in the comment "Very hard to make an appointment as I couldn't speak directly to the assessment centre". An appointment was arranged with this student to clarify the reason for the feedback. Partly as a result of this, the way appointments are made is being reviewed in collaboration with the new askBU service.

### 3.2 Educational Development Services

#### 3.2.1 myBU review:

- Minutes of the VLE Implementation Group, myBU Project Management Board and consultancy meetings;
- staff and student feedback surveys.

myBU has been the main focus of Educational Development Services over the last year. Before the two remaining school VLEs, BMS and BS were migrated into myBU an extensive

consultancy exercise was undertaken which enabled the lessons learnt from the first year of operation and the concerns and anxieties of the two new Schools to be assessed.

Typical comments considered were:

“It has taken some time to navigate and I still find things I didn’t know were there. Possibly further instruction on how to navigate myBU would be useful...”

“In the beginning it was difficult but now I enjoy using myBU, thank you very much.”

“Accepting that Blackboard is a new interface for many users and time is needed to iron out the rough spots, its potential seems good...”

“Difficult to begin with but I feel that it is a real bonus now.”

Following the consultancy and evaluations, the following enhancements were made:

- visions for both use of Community and Content System;
- improved and streamlined interface;
- enhancements to the display of units;
- upgrade to myBU Blackboard (now 7.2)
- Active Directory integration to enable staff to log-in with their PC usernames/passwords;
- changes to terminology;
- new Library tab with federated search integration and subject specific blogs;
- new Portal News feed for both staff/students;
- links from the student portal moved to myBU;
- links to other useful resources, eg AskBU

### 3.2.2 Staff Assignment System – Interface to myBU:

- Staff comment.

To improve ease of access for staff a new interface was set-up to facilitate the information fed to myBU, including systematic approaches to assigning staff, commonising units in myBU for delivery and various tools to empower assigners to look up more information from Unit-e and the Personnel system. This was achieved by working closely with Information Systems.

### 3.2.3 Staff training programme:

- Staff training session evaluations.

Although the extensive training programme offered was appreciated and received praise there was comment that it was frustrating when sessions were cancelled due to insufficient numbers being pre-registered. The EDS has developed more online support materials including video clips to help those unable to attend a training session.

## 3.3 Language Centre

### 3.3.1 Accessing the Language Centre:

- Suggestions Scheme;
- Programme team meetings.

Pressure on the availability of the Language Centre for curriculum study continued. An identity card was issued and more student advisors were employed and trained to help manage the space as effectively as possible. The timetable for 2007-08 has been adjusted to lessen the overcrowding.

### 3.3.2 Use of Podcasts:

- Student evaluation.

Many students commented that they would like to have more podcasts available and that they would like longer and more complex listening comprehensions.

We would hope to add to the podcasts this year and will be looking at ways of producing longer and IT challenging audio files for higher level students.

## 3.4 Library and the Learning Spaces

### 3.4.1 Needing to improve further the study environment in The Sir Michael Cobham Library and BH Library:

- Suggestions Scheme;
- ASITSAG;
- Student Union Student Representative Synoptic Reports;
- Student comment.

Despite the past two year's increase in group learning space by over 80 places, the request for yet more group space as well as maintaining silent study areas continued. Our successful move to e-resources (journals and reference works) once again created the opportunity to reduce the volume of shelving and allowed a further transformation on both campuses.

In The Sir Michael Cobham Library another 20 seats were added in a mix of small group clusters on the ground and first floors. An additional 60 power points were installed to increase the usability of our learning spaces for lap top users.

Bournemouth House Library: another four group seats with the possibility of another 4 at Christmas 2007.

### 3.4.2 Enhancement to accessing help and advice:

- Staff and student impact of e-resources study;
- Student comment.

With the increase in access to e-resources from off-campus access to and help in using these services also needed to evolve utilising the Library tab on myBU and web 2.0 technologies.

The Library tab now has a number of blogs led by our Subject Librarians and resource experts. Recent topics include getting the best from mySearch, our new federated search tool and advice on citing references; the Library's ASK service is being updated and merged into the new University virtual advisor service and we are exploring co-browsing and Wiki technologies.

Students have commented on their wish to be shown in a tour where the books for their studies are located. Doing tours disrupts the silent zones and misses the importance of e-resources. The Skills programme includes how to access all resources and MP3 podcasts have been developed to enable students to walk around our buildings quietly to explore where all our resources are located.

### 3.4.3 Comments about heating and lighting in our buildings:

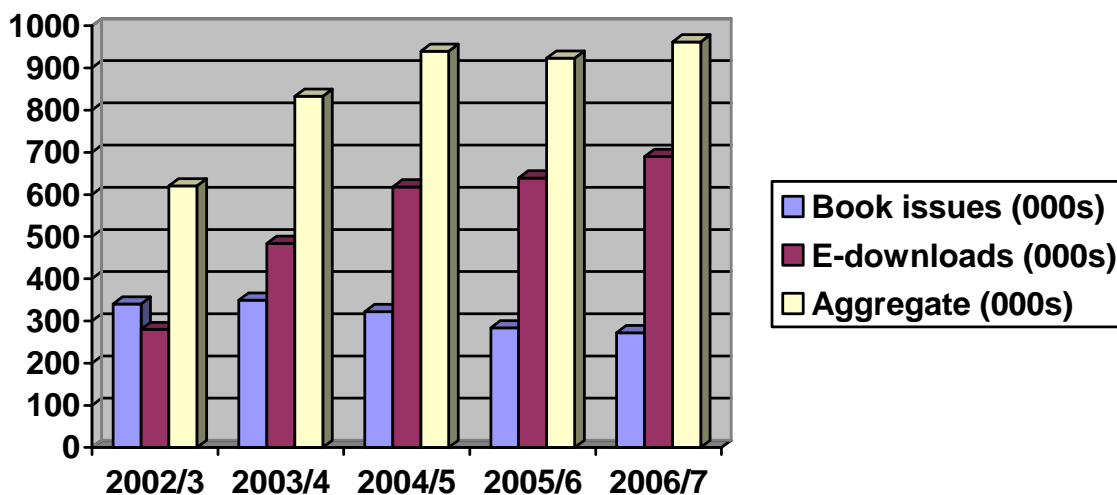
- Programme team meetings;
- Suggestion scheme.

We have designated a member of staff to work with the Energy Officer in the Estates Group to ensure our service is as environmentally friendly as it can be. A review of the lighting levels has already begun.

#### 3.4.4 Continued dissatisfaction with the availability of library text books:

- Suggestion Scheme
- Programme team meetings;
- ASITSAG;
- Student Union Student Representative Synoptic Reports.

Despite this being a perennial comment which will never be eradicated, this year we have continued our emphasis on finding e-solutions that will increase access whether the library buildings are open or not. We now have over 29,000 e-journals and report series and 40,000 e-books. Use of e-resources has dramatically increased and the number of loans has steadily decreased over the last four years as can be seen on the following graph. The aggregate of e-downloads and print borrowing is increasing overall.



The first year of our Copyright Licensing Agency agreement to scan eligible key articles and book chapters from the short loan collection has resulted in over 280 high demand items now being in the myBU e-reserves collection. From September 2007 all Schools have their reading lists linked to the units in myBU so that all the resources whether print textbooks or e-books and journal articles, recommended by lecturers are easily accessible to every student. It is hoped this will increasingly meet the needs of over 80% of students who tell us they now access resources from home.

### 3.6 Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)

#### 3.6.1 Annual Evaluation:

In order to evaluate the five stated aims of PAL, first-year PAL students were asked whether they thought that PAL sessions had helped them

- integrate more quickly into university life;
- get a clearer understanding of course direction and expectations;
- develop their study and learning strategies;
- improve their understanding of the subject matter of their course;
- prepare themselves better for assessed work and examinations.

Feedback given in the 2006/7 evaluation was even more positive than that provided during the 2005/6 survey, whose figures are in brackets. (180 first year students e-mailed responses to the online survey.)

Expressed as percentages:

- 68% (59%) responded that PAL helped them integrate more quickly into university life;
- 81% (82%) responded that PAL helped them get a clearer understanding of course direction and expectations;
- 66% (61%) responded that PAL helped them develop their study and learning strategies;
- 71% (66%) responded that PAL helped them improve their understanding of the subject matter of their course;
- 82% (77%) responded that PAL helped them prepare themselves for better assessed work and examinations.

The team will continue to reflect on programme delivery and introduce enhancements to the training programme when appropriate.

### **3.7 Project and Business Development**

Academic Services produced a schools learning package, The New Smugglers, for Key Stages 3 and 4 as part of the Dorset Coast Digital Archive development. It was cited by the funders, Museums, Libraries and Archives South West and the Department for Education and Skills, as an example of best practice and as a result we were invited to apply for the next round of funding. The application was successful and the new programme, Diversity and Citizenship in the Countryside, (Key Stages 3 and 4) is currently being developed.

### **3.8 Study Support**

In response to increased demand for study support, enhancements to the service this year included the negotiation of an online support package under licence. This can be accessed through myBU in the new academic support community.

## **4. PRAISE HAS BEEN RECEIVED ABOUT A WIDE RANGE OF INDIVIDUALS AND SERVICES FROM ALL AREAS OF ACADEMIC SERVICES DURING 2007**

What follows are just some of the many examples:

### **4.1 Additional Learning Needs**

The following is typical of the testimonials received from grateful staff and students each year:

Feedback on staff development events:

“Very informative. Good speaker. Made it fun.”

“Learning about the different disabilities. Understanding that all students have individual learning needs. Well given lecture which was concise and informative.”

Staff e-mail – final degree classification of an ALN student:

“I thought you would like to know that xxx successfully completed the programme and has been awarded a 2.1. (I have asked if I could share this information.) The team would like to thank you for your help and support in our attempts to facilitate xxx through the programme.”

Various student e-mails – thanking the ALNS for support:

“I have not sent this email to haunt you!!! I just wanted to say a big thank you to you and your team for all your support, you have all been amazing. Thank you so much from a much appreciative social worker...soon to be ASW (cross fingers for 6<sup>th</sup> Aug).”

“Please except this as my personal thank you for all the help and support you have given me over the past three years and since being diagnosed dyslexic. I believe that your support has played a valuable part in my gaining a 2.1 BSC (Hons) in Adult Nursing. You are a valuable support team and do a great job, for which many students have and hopefully will continue to benefit from. I believe that many of us may have failed our courses without your help and support and for that I am eternally grateful.”

“Hello, regardless what happens now I have the absolute joy of thanking all the staff in the Additional Learning Needs department for all your amazing help and advice and encouragement I have just received my results for clinical sills...really good ones too! I know for certain if it was not for all of the staff in the ALN department there is no way I would have passed (last year is proof of that!) I am so incredibly grateful I really am. Thank you.”

“due to me being in total shock at the moment I may have not expressed how grateful I am to each and every person in the ALN department. Thank you.”

“if I pass this year which looks hopeful now I will definitely need the continual help because the help, advice, encouragement and positivity as been amazing!”

“I just wanted to express my thanks to yourself and everyone who helped with Kate last Thursday. It is really appreciated and Jason the tutor for the unit has said that Kate’s paper looks good so the struggle was worth it! Many thanks again.”

“It has helped me notice the mistakes I make when writing an essay which in turn has helped improve on them. It has as well taught me useful skills.”

## **4.2 Educational Development Services**

At the Learning and Teaching Development Committee in January, Barbara Newland and her team were thanked for all their work over the last year as well as colleagues from the Implementation Group including IT and Registry staff.

The staff and student survey on myBU included praise and what follows are typical examples:

“It’s a great learning tool to have and is clear and easy to use.”

“I like the way that each course I’m doing has its own materials, and that everything is set up in the same way – once you get the idea of where things are for one course, it will be the same for another module.”

Comments made after the enhancements made during the summer of 2007:

“Just had a look at the new 7.2 Blackboard – the changes vastly improve the environment – less tabs, better library page, less clutter. When the new course console and related content boxes are working that will really help – but the EDS team has done some great work.”

The introduction of the new staff assignment system received several positive endorsements:

“The new system is fantastic; it is so much easier than how we had things last year.”  
“I would say again that the system is so much better than the way we did it last year.”

The Legal Practice Course (LPC) pastoral visit included a number of endorsements to the use of technology to facilitate the use of learning resources, one of which was:

“The LPC team welcomes the move to the new VLE which will allow grater use of multi-media and also enable the course team to track student access to materials.

...the ability to 'time-release' information is seen as a great benefit to staff who will be able to upload all their materials on to the system at the start of the academic year."

### 4.3 Languages

Many positive comments were made in the Student Unit Evaluation for 2006/07 and what follows is typical:

"language centre – resources good and useful and liked." (x8)  
"language centre facilities simple and easy to use." (x3)  
"language centre programmes – great."  
"language centre useful." (x4)  
"language centre very useful, excellent learning resource to use in your own time."  
(x2)  
"language centre well equipped."  
"language centre, appreciate the facilities, help in practising the language at a convenient time to me." (x2)  
"language centre, best bit of the languages programme."  
"language centre, interactive activities, liked".(x2)  
"language centre, liked." (x5)

Podcasts were introduced and the students who used them described them as useful particularly in terms of pronunciation, listening, vocabulary and improved performance/confidence in class.

### 4.4 Library service

Comments from the *Staff impact of e-resources study* illustrate the endorsement for our e-resources and our learning spaces:

From staff in Services Management:

"an amazing and highly significant increase indeed and as you say, must reflect the increased use of an increased amount of digital resources by students. Most encouraging."

"The high volume of Athens logins must be good news and worth every penny of investment."

From staff in the Department of Law:

"I think (students) like the library as a place to come together, a place to go which gets you out of the house. If you study by yourself at your computer, it gets lonely and depressing."

"E books. I've used a few and the students love the textbooks where they can log on. The OUP Press are very good, they've got seminar questions. Students love that and it's a lot easier for me to set them that. They are also coming out with lecture help, seminar questions, exam hints and multiple choice. The publishers are really getting on board, which is fantastic for us."

"[e-resources] For a student that doesn't know where to start, that is weak on research and doesn't feel confident to go into a library, then it's invaluable. For the students that are more progressed in their research skills, they are using it to enhance their research. It's a doubled-edged sword, but it's invaluable."

"I am interested in having the chapters scanned onto myBU, I am really getting into this now. I am thinking, 'what books can I have?' and I am choosing a chapter so it all covers round."

#### **4.5 MAAP (PG Cert)**

The course team receive positive comments in the annual evaluation as well as unsolicited comments and testimonials and the following are typical of the last year:

"Being told that I had to undertake the MA Academic Practice course to obtain my PG Cert was difficult for me..., but think this proved to be the first of many positive turning points that I experienced throughout my first year. The course allowed me to 'take stock' and put things into perspective."

"...to thank you for all your advice, help and encouragement over the past three years. I have learned a great deal, and I'm thrilled – finally – to have passed the PG Cert in Academic Practice."

"Just to let you know that my application for Fellow status at the Higher Education Academy has been accepted and today I received my FHEA certificate. Linda, thanks for your help with the MAAP."

#### **4.6 Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Student feedback**

Some comments from students in the evaluation of the 2006-7 programme:

"PAL has enormously helped e both to settle into Uni and settle into my course, as well as helping me out with any troubles I have. My PAL leaders have been a tremendous support for me."

"I am extremely grateful for the PAL assistance that we have received. It has provided us with direction and given us confidence to create work that is entirely individual."

"It's good for getting to know people at the beginning of the year. It's also good for discussion of ideas and how the course is going as well as other general subjects."

"Has helped me adapt to the type of learning and independent study that takes place at University. Has helped with approaching coursework and presentations."

"PAL is good for allowing you to go over areas you may not understand. It also allows subjects to be explained in terms that are more appropriate to you."

"A relaxed atmosphere where one could discuss difficult topics with your peers, especially with regard to assignments."

"I think the PAL programme itself covers all the necessary topics needed by a first year student. It really comes down to the actual PAL leader. The PAL leader that took the seminar group I was in was brilliant."

Feedback obtained during the September/October 2007 initial training courses for PAL Leaders received in answer to the question: What, if anything surprised you about the training?

"The high quality of advice and information from experienced persons."

"The information in the PAL Manual is amazing."

“How much more confident I feel about being a PAL Leader. It thought it may have scared me.”

“Without the training I would have been lost.”

“The flexibility (of the scheme) and range of things you can do in PAL sessions.

The excellent way of delivering the training.”

#### **4.7 Project and Business Development**

The DCDA project inspired the following comment:

“Interpreting and selecting information, justifying opinions, stimulating debate, using primary evidence, relating learning to student’s own experiences and enabling them to identify the relevance of the learning to their own lives today – the DCDA promotes all this higher level thinking which is exactly what teachers should be promoting in their own classrooms.”