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Deal or no deal? Expectations and experiences of first-year students in Art and Design

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Executive summary

This report, commissioned by the Higher Education in Art and Design (HEAD) Trust and funded by both the Trust and the Art, Design, Media Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy, follows a number of studies relating to students' experiences in Art and Design. The focus of the present report is on a survey of the 'match' between students' expectations of higher education and their actual experiences of their first year. With the introduction of substantial changes to the funding of institutions and students, and the Governmental emphasis (in England) of putting the student experience at the heart of higher education, the report is particularly timely.

The rationale for a survey of the first-year experience was related to a question that stemmed from previous studies: were the weaknesses noted in respect of scores on the National Student Survey reflected in the early stages of higher education? The answer to the question might have implications for the full span of students' experiences of studying Art and Design, and have potential value in enhancement-oriented activity. Students' perceptions of the first year in Art and Design would be influenced by experiences prior to enrolment as well as of the first year itself. Accordingly, the survey covered four main aspects of first-year students' experience:

- influences on their choice of programme and institution;
- expectations that they had had regarding study in higher education;
- their opinions regarding their first-year experience;
- background demographic data.

Twenty institutions took part in the survey. For data protection reasons, invitations to students to participate were emailed to students from their home institutions, and anonymity of both individuals and institutions was guaranteed. In exchange for participating in the survey, institutions were promised (and have received) a statistical digest of 'their own' dataset against the overall findings.

The survey attracted usable responses from 778 first-year students. While this number is only a small fraction of the potential maximum, the data generated provide institutions with a number of indications of where enhancement-oriented activity might be addressed.

The students were predominantly young, white and British. Female students outnumbered males by four to one. One respondent in eight had declared a disability: the disability most frequently mentioned was dyslexia. One in three was the first member of their family to enter higher education. A majority had taken a course specifically preparing them for higher education in Art and Design, often in addition to A-level studies. For the vast majority, it was their first experience of a higher education environment. Fewer than half of the respondents were undertaking part-time employment to help fund their studies.

The majority of responses to the various survey questions were positive. However, as the statistics and the quotations from students showed (the latter sometimes vividly), minorities of various sizes expressed dissatisfactions with the quality of provision that cannot easily be brushed aside.

Four in five respondents had secured a place at their most preferred institution. A similar proportion had visited the preferred institution prior to making their choice. The three

most potent influences on the choice of institution were its location, the visit, and the portfolio interview. However, there was no clear pattern to the reasons respondents gave regarding the importance to them of location. The institution's prospectus was widely influential, albeit only moderately strongly.

A majority of those visiting the institution had been satisfied with the accuracy of the information they had been given. A majority had found pre-enrolment information informative about the nature of first-year study. Seventy per cent had gained an appreciation of what the institution expected of them, and what they could expect of the institution.

Potential future career and lifestyle were strongly influential on the choice of course. More than half of the respondents indicated that employability had figured in their first-year curriculum.

Over all the respondents, perceptions of the 'match' between expectations and experience varied – in declining order of strength of match: assessment methods; learning environment; teaching quality and course organisation. Students' perceptions of their experience varied quite widely in respect of these four broad areas: statistical data are illuminated by the inclusion of comments – in some instances, forceful – made by respondents. An analysis of the data by institution suggested that some institutions were being more successful than others in establishing a close match between student expectation and experience.

Two-thirds of respondents had attended an induction programme, and a majority of these had found it of value in orienting them to first-year study.

The provision of feedback on work has become a general issue following consistent findings from the National Student Survey that the assessment and feedback scale attracts the least positive level of response from final-year students. On this scale, Art and Design comes out relatively well. The present survey showed that students received feedback in various combinations of three main ways (discussion with tutors, written comments, and 'crits'), supplemented for about half of the respondents by informal feedback from peers. Nearly 70 per cent indicated that the feedback they had received had helped them to understand the standards expected of first-year work.

More than 80 per cent of the respondents had regular access to practical workspaces. The need to make prior bookings of equipment was acknowledged by half of the respondents: of this fraction, a quarter had been surprised to find that this was the case. The support provided by technicians was highly regarded.

The survey found, in a substantial minority of responses, weaknesses in course organisation and management similar to those exposed in the outcomes of the NSS. Some of these weaknesses seem readily amenable to rectification, given a student-centred focus on provision.

This and other studies have shown that students vary considerably in both background and what they want from their higher education experience, and what gives them satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In other words, there is no magic paint that can be brushed over curriculum design and implementation to guarantee students' delight in their experience.

However, the chances of creating a satisfying experience for students in Art and Design are increased when:

- potential students have a clear understanding of the nature of 'the deal' that the institution is offering them;
- potential students have the opportunity to engage with the institution in various ways (eg through visits and portfolio interviews – and, particularly for those more distant from the institution, accurate documentation regarding what is on offer);
- the institution gives students from minority groups parity of attention (the word 'minority' covers more than ethnicity – for instance, part-time and overseas students are encompassed here);
- study accommodation and resources of various kinds are of a high standard ...;
- ... and readily available;
- there is good technician support in workshops;
- course organisation is effective and efficient;
- students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them (this applies with particular force to expectations regarding assessment);
- staff manifest their commitment to student success in a range of ways, including:
    - the quality of teaching in both formal and informal situations;
    - tutorial engagement, including formative feedback on work in progress;
    - prompt feedback on submitted work;
    - feedback that not only evaluates submitted work but also points to ways in which the student might develop it further ('feedforward');
    - supportiveness, which includes sensitivity to the emotional impact of assessment outcomes on students.

And, last but far from least:

- students appreciate that their course represents good value for the money that they have to lay out in order to achieve their personal aims.

These pointers are set out in the report as an enhancement-oriented template[1] of matters that course providers in all parts of the United Kingdom need to address if they are to be successful in the new environment for higher education.

[1] The template is presented as Table 45 towards the end of the main report.

Introduction

Data from the National Student Survey (NSS) have prompted providers of higher education programmes in Art and Design to 'get underneath' the statistics in order better to understand students' perceptions of their experiences. An initial exploration of institutional reactions to the NSS was undertaken in the report *I can't believe it's not better: the paradox of NSS scores for Art & Design* (Vaughan and Yorke, 2009), which was set up by the Group for Learning in Art and Design and funded by the Higher Education in Art and Design (HEAD) Trust and the Art, Design, Media Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy. That report analysed the statistics from providers of studio-based programmes and drew on discussions with a group of key staff from a representative sample of institutions.

The NSS, however, seeks responses from students towards the end of their programmes. It asks students about the whole of their programmes, but there is emerging evidence that students do not always take the whole of their programme into account and instead give greater weight to their final-year experience. Eley (2001) noted, in respect of the rather similar Course Experience Questionnaire administered to recent graduates in Australia, that students could focus when responding on the recency and salience of their experiences, rather than taking a whole-course perspective.

The NSS, by its nature, cannot survey students who (for a variety of reasons) have left their programmes before their final year. It is questionable whether it can adequately capture much about the first-year experience which, for some, is a critical determinant of whether they persist with their programme or leave. The first-year experience has been given particular attention in Australia, with surveys being run quinquennially (McInnis *et al*., 1995, 2000; Krause *et al*., 2005; James *et al*., 2010). Yorke and Longden (2007, 2008) undertook, in a study funded by the Higher Education Academy, a survey of the first-year experience in a cross-section of UK higher education, in which Art and Design was one of the subject areas represented within the broader heading of Creative Arts and Design. Belying the roughly average scores given to Art and Design in the NSS, respondents to the HEA survey perceived feedback (in relation to promptness, detail and assistance to learning) in this subject area to be relatively strong compared with others. Paradoxically, Creative Arts and Design showed relatively poorly in respect of the supportiveness of the teaching respondents had experienced. Respondents in this broad subject area also tended to show up relatively weakly in respect of their capacity to understand academic demand (Yorke and Longden, 2007). Phase 2 of the HEA study focused on students who had left their institution without completing the programme for which they had originally enrolled. A retrospective look at the study undertaken a decade previously by Yorke *et al.* (1997) showed that, in respect of Art and Design, there were similarities in the reasons students gave for their early withdrawal:

For Art and Design, the findings are fairly consistent over the decade ... [Students] have been consistent in saying that the programme was not as they had expected it to be; in expressing dissatisfaction with the teaching they have received, and with the organisation of their programmes. (Yorke and Longden, 2008, p42.)

Thomas *et al*. (2007) undertook a collaborative project in the north-west of England that collected responses from 529 students, the bulk of whom were in their first year of higher education. Findings from this project are included at appropriate points in the present report.

With changes to the funding regime (differential across the UK) in the offing, the nature and quality of the student experience will gain a prominence that it has hitherto lacked (see BIS, 2011, particularly chapters 2 and 3).

A positive teaching and learning experience, according to the National Student Forum, should enable students to say:

- 'Before I arrived, I knew broadly what to expect';
- 'I feel supported in my learning';
- 'My lecturers are trained, supported and incentivised to teach me well';
- 'I feel inspired and challenged';
- 'Assessment and feedback are used to improve my achievement in future, not just [to] judge my performance to date'.

(National Student Forum, 2010, p. 38: the points are elaborated in succeeding pages.)

While the third bullet point would be problematic in the case of first-year students, the other four surely ought not to excite controversy. The Forum's points align fairly well with the dimensions of quality discussed in Gibbs' (2010) report for the Higher Education Academy. Gibbs noted the importance of the following *inter alia* for the quality of the student experience:

- class size;
- contact with academics;
- student engagement[2];
- formative assessment and feedback;
- quality of the teaching staff.

Gibbs' emphasis on student engagement counters the possibility of interpreting the National Student Forum's key points as indicative of students as passive recipients or consumers of what is being provided. The final point is particularly pertinent to Art and Design where there is a considerable reliance on part-time teachers who are often practising professionals in their field (see comment in Gibbs, 2010, pp. 16-17). However, the engagement of part-time staff militates to some extent against the level of student contact possible with those who are teaching them.

Against the rapidly evolving context of higher education in the UK, the HEAD Trust had sponsored focus group discussions that had been conducted by Trust members and involved 16 students across two different institutions. The discussions covered four broad areas of interest:

- the students' reasons for electing to study Art and Design and the climate of influence, and the relevance or not of prior qualifications;
- the relationship between students' expectations and experience;
- what would have significantly improved participants' experience of studying Art and Design in higher education;
- what the best thing was about studying Art and Design and what might have improved the student experience.

The HEAD Trust also commissioned the authors to conduct a survey focusing on the expectations that students had had regarding undergraduate study in Art and Design, and on

[2] There is some evidence for a relationship between engagement and intellectual achievements associated with 'deep learning' (Pascarella *et al*., 2008).

their experiences during their first year of study. This survey was also supported financially by the Art, Design, Media Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy.

Methodology

The survey was set up on a proprietary software platform, and focused on four main aspects of first-year students' experience:

- influences on their choice of programme and institution;
- expectations that they had had regarding study in higher education;
- their opinions regarding their first-year experience;
- background demographic data.

The survey was informed by the preceding focus group discussions that had been conducted (see above) and by members of the HEAD Trust. As with all exercises of this sort, there were more questions suggested for inclusion than could be accommodated within even a fairly lengthy questionnaire. The final version represented a compromise between comprehensiveness of content and the likely willingness of students to complete the survey.

Twenty institutions (25, with disaggregation in the case of one institution that had multiple components) undertook to participate in the survey. For data protection reasons, the invitation to students to participate had to be circulated by the participating institutions themselves. The invitation explained what the survey was seeking to achieve and why it was important to institutions offering programmes in Art and Design. It also indicated that the survey was voluntary and how any interested student could gain access to the report of the study when it was published. An email contact was provided for any student who wished to obtain further details of the study: in practice no student took up this offer. The invitations to participate in the survey were sent out in April 2011 (at the beginning of the summer term), and the survey was left open until the beginning of July. Some institutions were able to send out reminders to their students.

The number of responses received was 799, of which 21 were excluded from analysis since they did not fit the requirement that they should relate to undergraduate study (at foundation degree or Bachelors degree level) in Art and Design. Some of the excluded responses came from students on foundation diploma programmes, others were received from students on Masters degree programmes, and there was a scattering of responses from undergraduate programmes such as English and Psychology. The number of responses analysed was therefore 778. However, some 100 of these students did not complete the full survey, presumably because of its length, and so the number of responses to the later questions was lower. Nevertheless, the data from the incomplete responses were of value, and have been included in this report.

Reading the analyses

Before the analyses and commentary are presented, it is necessary to make a few points about how the data need to be approached.

Although the number of usable responses was 778, these are spread unevenly across the participating institutions. As a consequence, the various 'total' figures in the statistical tables are unavoidably biased. There are some minor discrepancies between tables because of differential non-response, and the percentage totals in some tables and figures do not sum to 100 because of rounding.

In interpreting the tables, there is also a need for considerable caution because the proportion of respondents compared with the number who might have responded is not high. Hence the data may not be representative of student views in general. They may reflect local and perhaps temporary circumstances in institutions, such as a redesigned curriculum or a move to a new building. **What the data can do, however, is to act as prompts for questions about the student experience, and thoughtfulness about how it might be enhanced.**

As will be seen, the majority of responses to the various survey questions were positive. However, as the statistics and the quotations from students show (the latter sometimes vividly), minorities of various sizes expressed dissatisfactions with the quality of provision that cannot easily be brushed aside. Negativities typically offer more of a prompt to enhancement than do positivities: institutions do, however, need to weigh the evidence and judge where enhancement-oriented activity might best be focused.

A lot of the data are presented in the form of percentages. Using percentages implicitly overstates the weight that should be given to the figures since they are in a number of cases based on small numbers. However, percentages provide a basis for comparison that is readily intelligible: the necessary caution is to look at the raw figures on which the percentages are based.

A number of the results are expressed in relation to scales. Many of the scales run from 0 to 4 with the actual results lying somewhere in between. So, on a 0-4 scale a result of 3.03 (say) can be regarded positive, and one of 1.67 as weak. The same general approach applies to scales running from 0 to 2, or 0 to 3. On all scaled data, 'higher is better'. In a number of tables, shading is used to indicate whether the mean response score is higher (green), or lower (pink), than the mean of all respondents: the caution regarding bias in the mean values, noted above, needs to be kept in mind. Dark green and red are occasionally used to indicate rather large deviations from the mean.

Supplementary statistical tables from many analyses have been made available at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/disciplines/art-and-design in order to avoid clutter in the main text, where only the essence of such analyses has been reported. These tables are prefixed by SS in the text (eg Table SS.1). A number of subgroup analyses showed only trivial differences between groups and have not been included in this report.

The students: a brief profile

The characteristics of the students who responded are summarised here, in order to give readers a general sense of their backgrounds. A detailed analysis of the demographic data is provided in Appendix 2 to this report.

- a large majority of respondents were aged 25 or under;
- four in five respondents were female;
- white British students formed a large majority;
- one respondent in eight had declared a disability (dyslexia being the most prominent);
- the vast majority of respondents had not previously studied at degree level;
- more than a third of respondents were the first in their family to enter higher education;
- the majority of respondents had A-level entry qualifications, predominantly relevant to Art and Design;
- roughly two-thirds of the respondents had undertaken a preparatory course other than A-level, with foundation diplomas dominating;
- nearly half of the respondents had combined A-levels with a preparatory course;
- almost all respondents were studying full-time;
- just over half of the full-time respondents said that they were in receipt of some form of grant support. Whether a grant was received made no difference to the likelihood that the student was undertaking employment to support their studies.

The part-time students have been included in the analyses that follow, since there are a few points in this report where the part-time experience merits particular mention.

Choice of institution

Four in five respondents had secured a place at their most preferred institution (Table 1).

Table 1: Success in enrolling at the respondents' first-choice institution

Was this your first choice of institution?	N	Per cent
No	134	17.3
Yes	642	82.7
Total respondents	776	100.0

There was an association, albeit not particularly strong, between the gaining of a place at the first-choice institution and having visited it (Table 2). Sub-analyses hinted that greater informativeness about the course was also associated with having gained a place at the first-choice institution.

Table 2: The relationship between enrolment at, and prior visit to, the institution

		First-choice institution?		
		No	Yes	Total
Visit to institution?	No	40	116	156
	Yes	94	523	617
Total		134	639	773

Four in five respondents had visited the institution at which they enrolled prior to making their choice (Table 3).

Table 3: Visiting prior to choosing the institution

Did you visit the institution before making your choice?	N	Per cent
No	156	20.1
Yes	619	79.9
Total responses	775	100.0

When the data were disaggregated by age, the 21-25 age group of respondents showed a much lower level of visiting (57 per cent) than did younger and older students (82 and 85 per cent, respectively): the reason for this discrepancy is not readily apparent.

Of the 619 who did visit, a large majority found the advice they had received about their choice of course and/or institution to have been accurate (Table 4). However, a substantial minority claimed that they had not received accurate advice.

Table 4: The accuracy of information about course and institution

Was the advice you received about your choice of course and/or institution accurate?	N	Per cent
No	78	12.6
Yes	443	71.7
No advice received	97	15.7
Total responses	618	100.0

Institutions are central to the provision of information to students about their courses. Respondents indicated the extent to which the information that they had received from their institution had helped them to understand what their first-year experience would be like (Table 5). It is probably unrealistic to expect that every student would gain, before enrolling, a full appreciation of what they were about to engage in, but it is a matter of some concern that three in ten appear not to have had as much information as they might have

done. (In passing, it is worth noting that the impending Key Information Sets[3] cannot be expected to offer much in this respect.)

Table 5: The informativeness of pre-enrolment information as regards the nature of the first year of the course

In general, to what extent did the pre-enrolment information provided by the institution (eg in the prospectus; on its website) help you to understand what the first year of your degree course would be like?	N	Per cent
Not at all	31	4.2
To a very limited extent	196	26.7
To a moderate extent	277	37.7
To a considerable extent	207	28.2
Completely	23	3.1
Total responses	734	100.0

A similar question asked of those who had visited the institution, but this time focusing on the whole course produced a very similar pattern of responses (Table SS.1).

The youngest students were more positive than others about their pre-enrolment information and (for those who visited the institution) about the information value of the visit (Table SS.2). British students were more positive than non-British about pre-enrolment information and (for those who visited the institution) the information value of the visit (Table SS.3).

What had influenced students' choice of institution? A number of possible influences were listed, and the respondents had an opportunity to add other influences that were not on the list. Respondents were invited to tick one of three possibilities against each influence: not influential; moderately influential; and very influential. These possible levels of influence were scored 0, 1, 2 respectively and the mean score per influence calculated (Table 6).

Table 6: The influences on the choice of institution

Influences on the choice of institution	N	Mean
Location of the institution	772	1.50
Visit to the institution	774	1.46
Portfolio interview	755	1.23
The institution's prospectus	768	1.14
Recommendation from student(s) already studying there	764	0.94
Recommendation from teachers at school or college	765	0.93
Recommendation from friend(s)	757	0.76
'League tables' (rankings) of institutions published in the press	761	0.74
Recommendation from family member(s) – include partner as family	759	0.66
Recommendation from careers service at school or college	754	0.50
Comments on social networking sites (eg Facebook)	758	0.46

[3] See: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/publicinfo/kis/.

A breakdown of the raw data is provided in Table SS.4, and shows that the prospectus gained its elevated position in the list because of the large number of 'moderately influential' responses. Sub-analyses by institution (each institution was sent an analysis setting data from its students against the overall figures) showed that the profile of influences tended to vary with institution. For example, 'league tables' tended to figure more strongly in respect of institutions tending to rank highly in them.

Analyses by subgroups of the respondents showed that there were some differences of emphasis.

The various possible influences seem to have consistently exerted a slightly greater effect on female students rather than males (Table 7).

Table 7: Influences on choice, by gender

Gender	N range	Prospectus	Visit	Portfolio interview	Teacher recommend	Careers recommend	Student recommend	Friend recommend	Social network	Family recommend	League tables	Location
Male	128-130	1.00	1.38	1.16	0.77	0.38	0.82	0.72	0.39	0.57	0.58	1.42
Female	498-514	1.19	1.47	1.27	0.96	0.53	0.95	0.77	0.46	0.69	0.77	1.53
Total	626-644	1.15	1.45	1.25	0.92	0.50	0.92	0.76	0.44	0.67	0.73	1.51

British students were more influenced by engagement with the institution (through visit and/or portfolio interview) and the institution's location than were non-British students (Table 8). Part of this difference is likely to be due to the difficulty that any students whose domicile lay outside the UK would have had in getting to the institution prior to enrolment. The same kind of reasoning might explain the greater influence of 'salient others' in respect of the choices made by students who were not British.

Table 8: Influences on choice, by ethnicity (dichotomised)

	N range	Prospectus	Visit	Portfolio interview	Teacher recommend	Careers recommend	Student recommend	Friend recommend	Social network	Family recommend	League tables	Location
British	504-488	1.15	1.56	1.28	0.90	0.45	0.91	0.73	0.40	0.67	0.66	1.55
Not British	270-261	1.13	1.28	1.13	0.98	0.61	0.99	0.82	0.58	0.65	0.88	1.41
Total	774-754	1.14	1.46	1.23	0.93	0.50	0.94	0.76	0.46	0.66	0.74	1.50

In comparison to the bulk of the respondents, the small number of disabled respondents seem to have been more influenced in their choices by the institution's location and by recommendation from other students (Table 9). They were markedly less influenced by recommendations from careers personnel, through social networking and by 'league tables' of institutions.

Table 9: Influences on choice, by disability declaration

Disability	N range	Prospectus	Visit	Portfolio interview	Teacher recommend	Careers recommend	Student recommend	Friend recommend	Social network	Family recommend	League tables	Location
Not Declared	550-567	1.15	1.45	1.26	0.94	0.52	0.92	0.77	0.46	0.67	0.76	1.48
Declared	68-72	1.11	1.45	1.12	0.87	0.37	1.00	0.69	0.31	0.63	0.55	1.68
Total	618-639	1.15	1.45	1.25	0.93	0.50	0.93	0.76	0.45	0.67	0.73	1.50

The older respondents were, as one might predict, more influenced in their choices by the institution's location, and less by recommendations from careers staff, social networking, family and by 'league tables' (Table 10). The relatively low level of influence on students aged 21-25 of visit to the institution is puzzling.

Table 10: Influences on choice, by age band

Age	N range	Prospectus	Visit	Portfolio interview	Teacher recommend	Careers recommend	Student recommend	Friend recommend	Social network	Family recommend	League tables	Location
Under 21	454-467	1.18	1.53	1.28	0.95	0.55	0.95	0.78	0.48	0.74	0.81	1.49
21-25	91-94	1.05	**1.05**	1.11	0.91	0.53	0.92	0.78	0.56	0.62	0.66	1.47
Over 25	82-88	1.02	1.44	1.21	0.75	**0.18**	0.74	0.61	**0.11**	**0.30**	**0.35**	1.60
Total	627-649	1.14	1.45	1.25	0.92	0.50	0.92	0.76	0.45	0.67	0.73	1.50

The comments made by students showed that there was a wide range of aspects related to an institution's location, and there was no consistent pattern. The diversity of perspective is exemplified in the selection of comments below[4]:

- 'Close to home';
- 'Close to London';
- 'Chance to move away from home';
- 'The town has a reputation of being fun with lots of different things going on: concerts, festivals, exhibitions, club nights etc, high percentage of graduate employment';
- 'The university's reputation, facilities and the content of the course I wanted to study';
- 'It's a highly specialised course, so there was limited choice, this [place] was the best location for me';
- 'They offered a different type of course than most schools with a promise of getting in with industry professionals';
- 'When visiting seeing how the staff and students engage with each other';
- 'The end of year shows I visited';
- 'Support for disabled students';
- 'Quick response from University after I applied';
- 'Success of people who have attended'.

Students were asked how strongly (a) a possible future career and (b) a possible future lifestyle featured in their choice of course. Both questions generated strongly positive responses, career somewhat the stronger of the two (Table 11).

Table 11: The level of influence of future career and lifestyle on the choice of course

	Career		Lifestyle	
Response	**N**	**Per cent**	**N**	**Per cent**
Not at all	40	5.2	31	4.0
Weakly	78	10.1	94	12.1
Fairly strongly	287	37.0	360	46.5
Very strongly	371	47.8	290	37.4
Total respondents	776	100.0	775	100.0

Subgroup analyses relating to these two aspects of choice show some differences.

Architecture and Fashion/Textiles evidenced a relatively strong career orientation on the part of respondents, whereas career orientation was much weaker for Art including Fine Art (Table 12). It is perhaps surprising that Graphic Design did not show up strongly as regards career orientation. Lifestyle choice was noticeably stronger in respect of Architecture than the other subject areas (which were close to the overall mean).

[4] Minor typographical and grammatical errors have been amended in the quotations used in this report, in a spirit of generosity to students who may have been pressed for time when responding and/or may have suffered from dyslexia. In no case has the essential 'message' been affected.

Table 12: The level of influence of future career and lifestyle on the choice of course, by subject area

Subject area	N	Career choice	Lifestyle choice
Architecture	17	2.76	2.53
Art, including Fine Art	111	1.77	2.07
Applied Arts	78	2.24	2.14
Design (miscellaneous)	34	2.38	2.12
Fashion/Textiles	197	2.53	2.20
Graphic Design	133	2.30	2.22
New Media	86-85	2.31	2.13
Photography	71	2.21	2.23
Creative Arts (general)	17	2.41	2.24
Total	744-743	2.29	2.18

Older respondents gave less emphasis to a possible future career or personal lifestyle in making their choice of programme (Table 13). (Not shown is the very sharp cut-off in mean rating at age 36 for career choice.)

Table 13: The level of influence of future career and lifestyle on the choice of course, by age band

Age in 3 bands	N	Career	N	Lifestyle
Under 21	466	2.30	465	2.19
21-25	94	2.38	94	2.19
Over 25	89	1.87	89	1.99
Total	649	2.26	648	2.16

Female respondents were a shade more career-oriented than the males (Table 14).

Table 14: The level of influence of future career and lifestyle on the choice of course, by gender

Gender	N range	Career	Lifestyle
Male	131-130	2.15	2.12
Female	514	2.28	2.17
Total	645-644	2.25	2.16

There was negligible difference between British and non-British respondents regarding the influence of future career and future lifestyle on their choice of programme and institution. Where students had declared a disability, future career

and future lifestyle played less of a part in their choice than was the case for the other students (Table 15).

Table 15: The level of influence of future career and lifestyle on the choice of course, by disability declaration

Disability	N range	Career	Lifestyle
Not declared	567-566	2.29	2.20
Declared	72	1.97	1.89
Total	639-638	2.26	2.16

Expectations and experience

Over all the respondents, perceptions of the 'match' between expectations and experience varied in positivity, being high in respect of assessment methods and lowest in respect of course organisation (Table 16).

Table 16: Level of match with expectations, by four broad areas of the student experience

	Match with expectations			
N range (high-low)	Teaching 5-point scale 0-4	Assessment methods 3-point scale 0-2	Learning environment 5-point scale 0-4	Course organisation 5-point scale 0-4
626-620	2.26	1.52	2.52	2.09

For female respondents, there was a slightly higher level of matching between expectations and experience than there was for males (Table SS.5). There was also some slight evidence that students from British backgrounds, in comparison to their non-British peers, found a closer match between expectations and experience as regards curricular issues. Disabled students seemed to evidence a lower degree of match between expectations and experience as far as the learning environment was concerned (Table SS.6). When age was collapsed into three bands, the 21-25 age group showed the lowest match between expectations and experience, as far as teaching, assessment methods and the learning environment were concerned (Table SS.7). The difference is most marked in relation to teaching. There were no age-related differences of note in respect of course organisation.

As one would expect, those with no prior experience of study at degree evidenced a lower match of expectations and experience than did those who had had prior experience (Table SS.8). However, the differences between the two groups are small, with the largest difference being related to teaching.

Two-thirds of the respondents said that they had attended an induction programme at the start of their degree course (Table 17). Only four of the 31 part-time respondents said that they had not attended an induction programme.

Table 17: Attendance at an induction programme

Did you attend an induction programme at the start of the degree course?	N	Per cent
No	242	33.2
Yes	488	66.8
Total respondents	730	100.0

Of the 488 who did attend an induction, a considerable majority found that it helped in gaining an understanding of the nature of first-year study, but nearly one in five took a contrary view (Table 18).

Table 18: The informativeness of the induction programme regarding the first-year experience

To what extent did the induction programme help you to understand what the first year of your degree would be like?	N	Per cent
Not at all	23	4.7
To a very limited extent	72	14.8
To a moderate extent	179	36.9
To a considerable extent	167	34.4
Completely	44	9.1
Total respondents	485	100.0

Although the proportion of the youngest students attending induction was a little lower, the value that those who attended placed on the process was greater than that accorded by the others (Table SS.9). The proportion of British and non-British students attending induction was very similar at around two-thirds, and the groups valued the induction experience similarly (Table SS.10).

Issues for all who engage in higher education are their rights and responsibilities: what is expected of the student, and what the student can expect of the institution. This is sometimes codified in the form of a student charter following the initiative of the Major administration in the early 1990s. Whereas 70 per cent of respondents indicated that they had gained a clear appreciation of the expectations of both parties to the implicit contract (or what might in commoner language be called 'the deal'), 30 per cent felt that this had not been the case (Table 19). There is a broad accord with the findings of Thomas *et al.* (2007), whose student respondents generally commented favourably on their experience of induction.

Table 19: Information received by respondents regarding mutual expectations

Did you get, before or during induction, a clear indication of what the institution expected of you as a student, and what you could expect of the institution?	N	Per cent
No	196	29.7
Yes	465	70.3
Total respondents	661	100.0

The students were asked to rate their attendance at their institution. The vast majority (85 per cent) reported that their attendance had been good or very good, with very few (4 per cent) indicating that their attendance had been poor or very poor (Table 20).

Table 20: Self-reported attendance level

How good has been your attendance at the institution so far?	N	Per cent
Very poor	5	0.8
Poor	19	2.9
Fair	76	11.6
Good	172	26.2
Very good	384	58.5
Total respondents	656	100.0

Asked whether they thought that there was a connection between attendance and their achievement to date, a majority thought that there was: however, a substantial minority thought otherwise (Table 21).

Table 21: The perceived connection between attendance and achievement

Do you think that there is a connection between your attendance and your level of achievement to date?	N	Per cent
No	152	23.2
Not sure	129	19.7
Yes	373	57.0
Total respondents	654	100.0

Those who saw their attendance as 'very good' were most positive about an association between attendance and achievement (Table 22). This is unsurprising.

Table 22: The perceived relationship between attendance and achievement, by self-reported attendance level

	Relation between attendance and achievement			
Attendance level	No connection	Not sure	A connection	Total
Fair or worse	29 (29%)	26 (26%)	45 (45%)	100
Good	59 (35%)	43 (25%)	69 (40%)	171
Very good	64 (17%)	60 (16%)	258 (68%)	382

(Percentages are by row.)

The Over 25 age group showed up as the strongest as regards attendance (Table SS.22). The higher attendance level reported by the Over 25 age group may be accounted for (at least, in part) by a stronger belief in the connection between attendance and achievement (Table SS.23).

Though reported attendance levels are essentially the same, with both male and female respondents claiming a similar high level of good or very good attendance (85 per cent), males showed a marginally higher level of doubt about the link between attendance and attainment (Table SS.24). Whereas reported levels of attendance by students from British and non-British backgrounds were broadly similar (around 85 per cent claiming good or very good attendance), students who were British tended to perceive a link between attendance and achievement to a greater extent than did their non-British peers (Table SS.25).

Was there a connection between a student's undertaking of employment and their attendance level? The responses suggest that the pattern of attendance is, in general, unaffected by employment to support studies (Table 23).

Table 23: The relationship between attendance and the undertaking of part-time employment

	Attendance level			
Employment?	Fair or worse	Good	Very good	Total
No	57 (15%)	101 (26%)	231 (59%)	389
Yes	41 (16%)	69 (26%)	151 (58%)	261
Total	98	170	382	650

There were no differences of note, comparing those who had declared a disability with those who had not, in reported level of attendance; perception of the connection between attendance and achievement; and the need to undertake employment while studying.

Where students needed to draw on learner support services (such as support for study skills, dyslexia support, or English language tuition), these services were readily available to the vast majority (Table 24). This question was perceived as applicable to just under 40 per cent of those who responded. Nine out of 67 disabled students

reported that what they needed was not available: however, the numbers involved are very small and have to be interpreted with considerable caution.

Table 24: The availability of learner support services

If you have needed to draw on any of them, have learner support services (such as support for study skills, dyslexia support, English language tuition) been readily available to you?	N	Per cent
No	29	11.5
Yes	224	88.5
Total respondents	253	100.0

Four key aspects of the student experience

The preceding data set the scene for analyses of the extent to which key aspects of the student experience (teaching; assessment methods; the learning environment; and the organisation of the course) matched up to the students' prior expectations. The four aspects are treated separately to begin with, then follow a set of subgroup analyses in which the four are treated together in the interests of economy in presentation.

1. Teaching

There was a fair match of teaching as experienced with prior expectations; however, the level of match was low for a quarter of respondents (Table 25).

Table 25: The level of match between expectations and the teaching experienced

To what extent has the teaching on your course matched your expectations?	N	Per cent
Not at all	63	8.8
To a very limited extent	107	15.0
To a moderate extent	214	30.0
To a considerable extent	249	34.9
Completely	80	11.2
Total respondents	713	100.0

What the students said about teaching

The comments interspersed throughout this report have been grouped roughly according to broad themes, but it is readily apparent that some comments span more than a single theme. The considerable number of comments (typically 300 to 400 per main question) means that only a few can be incorporated in this report. **The selected comments cannot be taken as representative**: rather, they have been chosen to illustrate matters that readers might find useful as they seek to enhance the quality of course provision.

Teaching quality

Issues relating to teaching quality were raised in a large number of comments. In some instances the teaching was perceived as excellent:
The teaching has been excellent because everything that is expected has been clearly defined and how they teach is great with good communication.
[Name] ... speaks and teaches in a way I find hugely interesting and beneficial. Her style of teaching could benefit the whole college.
It's based on the practical work, they demonstrate, let you have a go and allow you to make your own mistakes and are there to positively point out when you do make one.
The diversity of teachers' experiences, our research teacher is VERY good. It is a strong support throughout all parts to the course.

A few commented on the passion and enthusiasm that teachers had for their work:
Some of the tutors are incredibly enthusiastic about what they are teaching, also they are all very knowledgeable in their field, you never feel like you are being taught by second-rate teachers.
The staff are dedicated, inspirational and extremely helpful. The quality of the modules and the resources available is the best.

... or their knowledge:
I think the best thing is how much knowledge my tutors have in my chosen field, and more importantly [about] the current state of my possible career path.

Visiting lecturers can bring additional expertise:
[W]e have two core lecturers but also lots of visiting ones, which keeps it exciting and fresh.

For other respondents, the teaching was perceived in negative terms, sometimes laconically expressed in terms such as 'the lack of it'. Among the more expansive comments were the following:
I expected better communication and people skills from some of the lecturers and often feel, along with fellow students, that said lecturers are just repeating information to themselves that they have gone through year after year. It would be more beneficial to my learning if they showed more passion and interest in us as individual students and our learning process.
The teaching has shown me that I have to really demand information if I want it. Also that I will learn on the job rather than at university.
Some lecturers are disengaged and in a rush to deliver information without debate or discussion.

The freedom experienced in some curricula gave rise to a mixture of reactions ranging from strongly positive to strongly negative. The occasional student was happy to do more or less 'their own thing' under a fair amount of curricular freedom:
[I like the fact] *that you are free to make it your own course, when you need to be there you can be, and you can be elsewhere if you need to. It gives a really good feel of your own practice, and how you want to make work, rather than your time being dictated by a strict timetable.*
I enjoyed the freedom we had in the studio to manage our time and use/do what we wanted for each project. I expected a more strict timetable and regular lectures, but I now understand that this freedom is good preparation to our future career.

I did not know I would have so much freedom. But I take it as a positive.

Others wanted more structure to their studies:
I liked the freedom but there was too much. Students felt lost as to what to do, for me there were many possibilities but instead of broadening my practice it got me stuck. I also liked the critical studies programme but there was no direct link with studio practice, also the tutors seemed confused about what the units were.
I wasn't expecting to be left to do projects completely on your own. I was expecting more guidance with it being 1st year and I didn't know what kind of work they were looking for.

A focus on future employment was appreciated:
There is a big focus on employment, and the tutors treat us as adult, I feel I am respected as a student. My course also offers a good range of teaching, making me feel as though I am well rounded and prepared for the rest of my studies and my future career.

The experiences of both full-time and part-time staff in the world outside higher education can be enriching:
Every tutor has experienced life in the design industry and the majority of tutors are visiting designers who are still practising which aids our inspiration greatly.
How everything we do they relate to how we can take the skill we're learning at the time out of the institute's walls and into everyday life and careers.
Alongside regular tutors we also have visiting lecturers who give us insights into their work and the industry.
It is very positive to have lecturers that are currently working in industry in addition to teaching. Personally, I find this makes what they say carry more weight.

One respondent regretted that there had not been a greater involvement of visiting lecturers who were currently engaged in relevant workplaces.

An issue for some was the problems associated with teaching a group of students who had come from varied backgrounds. In addition to complaining about the amount of teaching, the following respondents drew attention to the inclusion in the cohort of some students who had undertaken a foundation diploma and some who had not:
One of the biggest disappointments about my course is how little teaching there is. Teaching, as far as I can gather from talking to 2nd and 3rd years, only really happens in the first year. While I have been inducted into all of the different skill areas, that's as far as it has gone ... I understand that I need to able to achieve a certain amount of learning and working on my own, but I think that 3 days teaching in one area is extremely limited. It really has just meant learning the most basic parts of that skill area. Most people who take a degree course in art and design are told to do a year's foundation prior to starting their degree, as I was. There is very little that has been covered in the first year of my degree that wasn't covered during my foundation. On top of that, my course has effectively only lasted for two terms. After returning from the Easter break I had one week of work and then the course ended for the year, and I've been given a summer project to do at home, where I have no access to the teaching or facilities/workshops that I've paid for, which to me is very frustrating, and feels like a waste of money.
Time wasted in repetition as not all students had done foundation course and these students [were] not prepared in terms of understanding/expectations.

Contact with academics

A key issue for many respondents was the level of contact that they had with their teachers. There are a number of angles to this, including value for money (which was raised in relation to various aspects of the first-year experience), feedback and feedforward regarding work, and general supportiveness.

Positive comments included the following:
You can see the tutors any time you want in the office and they're willing to help. The technicians have been amazing.
Always an opportunity for one to one feedback in design and sample room classes. Tutors are incredibly knowledgeable, I have yet to hear of an instance where they have said "I don't know how you would achieve this" etc.
I was very surprised at the amount of teaching on the course, and that it was at such a high level. I wasn't expecting nearly as much tuition, so this was great.

For some, however, the amount of contact with staff was insufficient:
Tutors are completely invaluable and knowledgeable, and the extra tuition – if very little – from people working in the industry unmissable! The only disappointment is the lack of hours we are able to spend being taught by the brilliant tutors!!
I want more lesson hours. What am I paying for? Nothing!
*F*** all teaching time.*
I don't get the chance to see teachers very often, only twice a week for a few minutes, I don't feel this is enough.
Tutors are not available enough for you to book to see them. I sometimes wonder what I am paying for...
[There] are too many students per teacher. Tutorials are far between because the tutors are thinly spread between us all and everyone needs or wants help. They cannot accommodate for all of us. Need more tutors or less students.
The tutors try to lecture us every time we go in on our work ethic and generally try to give us life lessons and it gets very repetitive, but we get very little skills taught. Yes we're supposed to read books on our subject but we need to be taught to understand it fully, and we're paying for contact time, which we get about 9 hours of per week and that's it.
I expected to be taught!! So far I have learnt manufacturing skills through mistakes I have made whilst working by myself, through other 2nd & 3rd yr students' advice & by going to the workshop tutor every 5 mins to check what the next process I need to use is, because there isn't a plan which I can follow. There has been very little teaching through interaction with tutors – the majority has come from library books or other students. As a 1st yr student new to the subject, I expected to be taught new techniques regularly (by the tutor!) and what content a good sketchbook should contain. I also expected to learn new drawing techniques from the tutors during 'design' lessons, none of which has happened.
... my major concern with the course is how little time we are expected to be in University. I believe that I have paid for one year when I could have done the work in half that time.

One student noted a part-time tutor's commitment to his students, which extended beyond the boundary of his contract:
We have not had enough contact time, our tutor often comes in unpaid as he feels he doesn't get to see us enough.

Support

The balance of comment relating to the supportiveness of staff was strongly on the positive side. In some instances there was an obvious correlation with the 'contact' issue. Many comments focused in one way or another on the engagement of staff with the student's work and their dedication to the student's development:

Tutors are always around to help or give constructive advice. Very professional and actually care about your outcomes.

Tailored to me – the tutors have carried out very thoughtful and mindful interventions during the course which has helped me develop in ways I never thought possible.

My tutor [name] has completely changed my outlook, made me more comfortable in practising art and helped me push what it is I am doing.

The tutors have good personal experience and happily talk to us about real life scenarios and pass a lot of valuable knowledge that is rarely taught in textbooks. They alter the teaching to the individual and help us think about our future.

The mature nature that the tutors teach you with. They really encourage you to try things, be playful, and focus on what works and what doesn't. They back you 100% of the way.

However, a minority of comments drew attention to aspects of practice where improvement would be desirable:

Some of the tutors do not treat me like an adult, it's a bit like being back at school or sixth-form, which is a bit of a shock for me having done a foundation last year when I was completely independent.

Having worked hard to get into University, I feel strongly let down by their encouragement towards their students, my confidence in my work has been severely knocked by my teachers as have many of my fellow students. Therefore I no longer feel as though my work is good enough for me to be employed which is not right! We are never encouraged or praised. Only ever criticised but not constructively.

Not enough student help or support, I understand I must self-teach at university, but I didn't expect it would be to this extent.

Although I understand the increase in practical work load during second semester, I don't think it's reasonable when there aren't enough tutors around to assist us when we hit a road block. After all, we're only first-years. It's impossible to learn new skills straight away, it takes time. If we had more assistance, it wouldn't be such a struggle and we might even be able to produce better work.

I expected to be taught, or mentored. Given feedback – good or bad. For lecturers to walk around occasionally and comment on work. I feel completely ignored. The workshop technicians have been brilliant – most of what I've learned has been from them. But main course lecturers have been non-existent apart from one weekly slot of visual studies where they talk about art in general, not your own personal work.

One student drew attention to a perceived weakness in communication and availability:

Some teachers do not reply to emails. Some teachers are not around or available for you to drop in and ask a question.

However, this respondent may not have differentiated between full-time and part-time staff, with the implications that their mode of employment has regarding tutor availability.

A part-time student felt that they had missed out:
Lack of support as a new student both from the university administration & individual tutors. An induction would have been invaluable and I believe others did have this. It seems as a new part-time student I simply 'fell through the cracks' and was forgotten about.

Content
Students provided a variety of 'likes' and 'dislikes' in roughly equal measure. The former included:
A good mix of practical, real world skills, and artistic skills/appreciation.
The teaching of skills that will be necessary in the future and in the industry.
I very much like that we are expected to learn presentation/graphics skills and how this [reflects] the real working place.
We have not only learned how to take great photographs ourselves, but to understand the history, philosophy and theories behind photography. I have already learned a huge amount on the course and feel that by the end of it, I will be able to apply my knowledge and skills to a whole range of careers.
The contextual professional studies module has looked at politics and future sustainability of being an artist after university to an extent that won't overwhelm 1st year students! This module is an enjoyable addition to the course overall.
I liked the introduction to digital technology. I feel this will benefit me in having a basic understanding of some of the Adobe programmes. I also thought the business side of Contextual Studies was very useful to learn and I liked the way it was delivered in a lecture.

On the critical side, some students would have liked more emphasis on practical work and demonstration:
I expected far more emphasis on the practical side of textile design. Even though I was told the course was very academic I still expected more emphasis on practical areas within the more academic modules too.
We have had very little practical tuition, which is a shame as the course itself is such a practical subject. A good course would have much more demonstrative tuition, which this lacks completely.
The majority of our studio time is unstructured and we often do not have a teacher guiding or demonstrating to us. I had expected that the course would be much better organised with a greater emphasis on demonstration.

... others on theory:
There is a significant lack of theory in my course, in my personal opinion. I wish I wrote more essays, had more lectures etc.

One student found a silver lining in a perceived lack of 'direct teaching':
I would prefer more direct teaching (on skills and art theory particularly). At times the comments at tutorials have appeared coded and left me puzzled. However, this has had the benefit of leading me to do a great deal of thinking and reading around the subject. You are certainly not spoon-fed on this course and it would be wrong if we were. Now I have reached the end of the first year I have a better understanding of the direction of the course.

One student would simply have liked to have been given more work:
I want more work so I feel like I'm getting my money's worth and learning more. Currently I feel like I barely attend university and I feel like it's a waste of time going to certain lectures

because what they are telling us is common sense – ie one lecture about the history of the internet talking to 18 year olds as if they have never seen it before. Half the class were tweeting about how boring the lecture was.

Another wanted longer semesters:
Would like the semesters to be longer. They are quite short for the money paid; especially for those who will have to pay the increased fees...

A couple of comments referred specifically to employment-related matters:
I found that the Work Based Learning module was a waste of time for the most part as it seemed like redoing work experience which I took part in in school.
The lack of focus on employability is also disappointing.

This sequence of comments ends with one of two that expressed the student's delight at their experience:
Exceeded expectations – have found the experience revelatory – never been on an educational programme that focused so strongly on developing me.

Other students

Much is gained by students from crits and informal exchanges (see later), but the opportunities for informal contact do not always arise as (presumably) hoped by course teachers:
No one ever comes into the studios to work save for a select few, this is very disheartening, the feedback and conversation with fellow students is one of the most important things in the course, and this just hasn't happened this year.
I think there is not enough engagement of the students with international students because of which they feel left out and find the course boring. There should be something done to make them communicate.

As a study by Yorke and Longden *et al.* (2008) found, part-time students are at risk of being disadvantaged by their mode of study:
Not much ability to be integrated with the full time students, so that the peer discussion process is very limited.

Given the policy thrust towards graduate employability, and the respondents' view of their higher education programme's ambitions in this respect, roughly five in eight respondents acknowledged that employability had featured at least moderately in their course (Table 26).

Table 26: The emphasis on employability in the course

To what extent, so far in your course, has the teaching emphasised your future employability?	N	Per cent
Not at all	84	11.9
To a very limited extent	176	25.0
To a moderate extent	288	40.9
To a considerable extent	157	22.3
Total respondents	705	100.0

(Note: the response category 'completely' seemed inappropriate for this question.)

Breaking this down by subject area, and including only those responses for which a subject area was reasonably identifiable, it appears that the more obviously employment-related areas (apart from Graphic Design) tend to have given rise to the more positive responses (Table 27). This is largely as one might expect. (The responses have been treated as a four-point scale running from 0 'not at all' to 3 'to a considerable extent'.)

Table 27: The emphasis on employability in the course, by subject area

Subject area	N	Mean
Architecture	14	1.86
Art, including Fine Art	104	1.31
Applied Arts	70	1.94
Design (miscellaneous)	27	1.70
Fashion/Textiles	184	1.87
Graphic Design	115	1.72
New Media	82	1.93
Photography	63	1.59
Creative Arts (general)	16	2.13
Total respondents	675	1.75

Older students seem to have a lower perception of the extent to which the teaching had emphasised employability (Table 28), but this could be a consequence of their life experience 'setting the bar higher' in this respect. They may have known quite a bit about employment, and so may not have experienced as much added value.

Table 28: The emphasis on employability in the course, by age band

Age in 3 bands	Mean	N
Under 21	1.82	462
21-25	1.69	94
Over 25	1.36	88
Total	1.74	644

Female respondents showed a stronger appreciation than males of the inclusion of employability in the teaching that they had received (Table 29).

Table 29: The emphasis on employability in the course, by gender

Gender	Mean	N
Male	1.58	128
Female	1.78	512
Total	1.74	640

Further analyses suggested that the gender difference was largely due to the large numbers of female respondents who were studying programmes in Fashion/Textiles and Applied Arts, both of which (for females) gave means of around 1.90.

The perception of the extent to which the teaching had emphasised employability probably has a different valency for students with disabilities compared with students who do not declare a disability. This might account for the discrepancy apparent in Table 30.

Table 30: The emphasis on employability in the course, by disability declaration

Disability declared	Mean	N
No	1.77	564
Yes	1.51	70
Total	1.74	634

Respondents with a British background showed a slightly greater tendency to perceive the inclusion of employability in the teaching (Table 31). Although employability (or related terms such as 'graduate attributes') is acknowledged internationally as a significant outcome of higher education, the difference might simply be related to the strong policy emphasis given to employability in the UK.

Table 31: The emphasis on employability in the course, by ethnicity (dichotomised)

Ethnicity	Mean	N
British	1.77	501
Not British	1.66	204
Total	1.73	705

2. Assessment methods

On the whole, assessment methods were as a majority of students had expected (Table 32). Those who had undertaken a course in preparation for studying Art and Design at higher education level were a shade more positive about the match between expectation and experience.

Table 32: The level of match between expectations and the assessment methods experienced

Have the methods by which your work has been assessed been as you had expected?	N	Per cent
No	55	8.1
Partly	226	33.1
Yes	402	58.9
Total respondents	683	100.0

Of critical importance to learning and student development is feedback. It is well known that, in the NSS, the group of items covering assessment and feedback generates the lowest level of positivity and that this has stimulated institutions to strengthen feedback provision where necessary and to pay greater attention to informing students of what feedback is and when it is being given. Informing students about feedback is important since what staff consider to be feedback is not always appreciated as such by students (as ongoing work by Orr, Blair and Yorke is revealing). In Art and Design a lot of feedback is given in a relatively informal, conversational manner (especially in studios): where students have a conception of feedback as writing, conversation may not be recognised as feedback.

Students were asked whether they had experienced feedback in any of four ways: via discussion with tutors; written comments; 'crits'; and informally from peers (Table 33). The tick-box options available did not allow differentiation between a negative response and no response at all. The percentages are likely to be an underestimate, if anything.

Table 33: The methods of feedback that were experienced

Method of feedback	N experiencing	% respondents*	N not experiencing
Via discussion with tutor(s)	571	83.2	115
Written comments from tutors (either hard copy or electronic)	606	88.3	80
Group criticisms ('crits') with tutors and peers	480	70.0	206
Informally from peers	388	56.6	298

* Based on 686 respondents who responded to at least one aspect of feedback. Six of these respondents claimed that they had not, at the time of completing the survey, received any feedback (though they may not have recognised feedback that they had received relatively informally).

Although there was scope for respondents to indicate other ways in which they had received feedback, only 19 took the opportunity to do so. A couple of respondents mentioned the use by the course of video recordings as a medium for feedback. Other in-course approaches included:
The course has its own Facebook group on which we upload our work for easier crits.
Had a merchandising lecture timetabled to show what we did wrong and how to do it properly which was very useful.

People external to the course provided feedback in various ways. These included:
Friends.
Family.
From outside the university, by friends and contacts I have in industry.
From visiting ex-students and artists.
From other artists.
Extra-curricular crits from visiting artists.
Feedback in group criticisms with past students who are now employed designers.
Encouraged to create and maintain an online blog/webpage also where other users often leave feedback.
The class held an exhibition in a local art gallery where we received feedback via a visitors' comments book.

Although reported experiences of feedback via discussion and in writing were broadly similar across the age groups, the youngest students had a greater propensity for reporting having experienced crits, whereas the oldest students had a greater propensity for reporting that they had received informal feedback (Table SS.26).

Although similar proportions of British and non-British respondents reported having received feedback through tutorial discussion and through writing, there were differences in their reporting of the extent of their experience of crits and of receiving informal feedback (Table SS.27), the levels being lower for non-British students. It is not clear why there should have been these differences.

Looking more closely at the pattern of feedback methods reported by 680 respondents who had received feedback via at least one of the methods listed in the survey, it is apparent that a majority of the respondents had received feedback in multiple ways (Table 34).

Table 34: Methods of feedback experienced in combination

Methods experienced	N	Per cent
All four methods	299	44.0
Discussion + Written + Crits	103	15.1
Discussion + Written	75	11.0
Written	55	8.1
Discussion + Written + Informal	34	5.0
Discussion + Crits + Informal	26	3.8
Discussion	20	2.9
Written + Crits	19	2.8
Written + Crits + informal	12	1.8
Discussion + Crits	11	1.6
Other combinations	26	3.8
Total respondents	680	100.0

Figure 1 summarises pictorially the various combinations of feedback involving tutors (informal feedback from peers is not shown[5]). For example, 16 per cent of students experienced discussion with tutors and received written feedback, but had not been involved in crits.

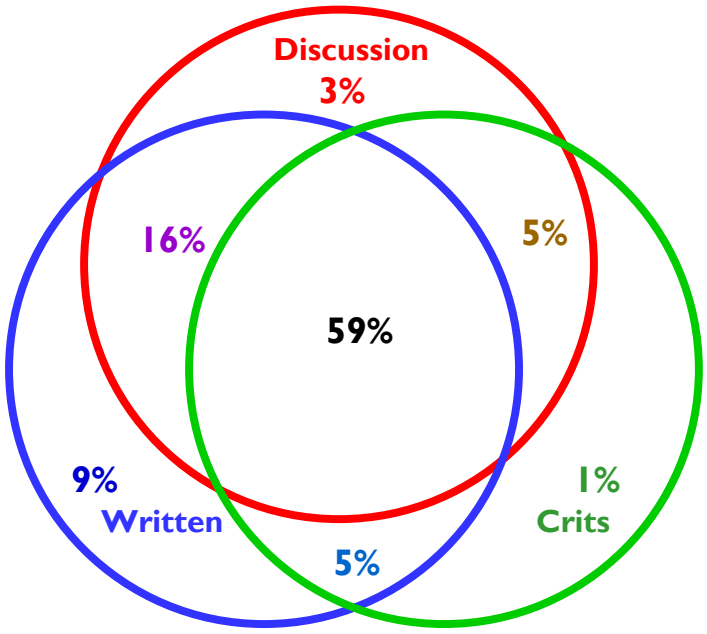

Figure 1: A Venn diagram of the three formal methods of feedback (not to scale)

Boud (2000) and Sadler (2009), among others, have emphasised that a key requirement of higher education is to assist students to become aware of the standards expected of them (with the implications for students developing their

[5] Four variables would require a three-dimensional (tetrahedral) representation.

capacity to evaluate their own work). Ideally this should happen early in the students' programmes. Feedback is of obvious importance. Respondents' reactions to a question on this are given in Table 35, which is based on the 680 who claimed to have received feedback in one way or another.

Table 35: Informativeness of feedback as regards respondents' understanding of standards

To what extent has the feedback you have received on your work (by whatever means) helped you to appreciate the standards expected of first-year work?	N	Per cent
Not at all	21	3.1
To a very limited extent	70	10.3
To a moderate extent	206	30.3
To a considerable extent	267	39.3
Completely	116	17.1
Total respondents	680	100.0

The responses suggest that there is some scope for further pedagogic attention to be given to this issue.

Assessors' comments

Some three dozen students appreciated the assessors' directness in commenting on their work, even though this might be painful:
Accuracy and fairness of assessment even when it has been critical/bad.
They're brutally honest.
It was honest and constructive, never putting you down but looking for ways to improve what you already had done.
Informality and truthfulness – it's very easy for people to lie to make you feel better about the work being produced, whereas the truth will benefit you so much more.
Honesty of the teaching staff and the critical analysis from them of the work we create.
I liked that there is more than one lecturer to offer an opinion on our work and each have different experiences of being in industry.

In contrast, a handful of students saw assessors' directness as harsh rather than supportive:
Brutally blunt to an extent of being rude and patronising.
Can be quite harsh, at times too harsh.

However, one student remarked that the assessors were not harsh enough.

Discussion with tutors

Discussion with tutors was generally valued, both for its potential for the student to elaborate on what they were trying to achieve and also for the potential for the student to clarify 'messages' from the tutor that they may have not fully understood:
It gives me a chance to tell [the] tutor why I chose to do something, ask any questions and for them to ask me things to get my work across in the best way.
Knowledgable and technical informal discussions.

The tutors put a lot of effort in to make sure we get to talk to them, and make sure I understand what it is they try to teach me, and reinforce my work and my style.

Crits

Some respondents saw the virtues of being required to present their work to others:

I like the group crits and student presentations run by the tutors. I feel this is the time when the tutors do the right amount, they sit in the back allowing discussion to flow but also move it on or help fuel it when students are being less engaging – which is good.

You install your final piece for it to be exhibited. In my opinion this gives you a higher standard to work for knowing other people will view it in a gallery space.

The crits are not only forms of assessment, they're also a very practical way of gaining skills that will become very important later on in the career.

Helps to prepare you for public speaking/giving presentations as you would in industry.

... but others found the experience to be daunting (one referred to 'feral crits') or of limited value as regards personal development:

The pressure of talking in front of a group of peers. I do not feel comfortable with an audience and I don't think you can explain work fully under the pressure.

Students during the first year, all alike, are not ready for such critical discussion about each others' work yet. Peer discussions were very unhelpful and meaningless, they never discussed anything of certain depth or direction. Commenting on other students' work by saying 'it looks good' does not influence any development at all.

Two acknowledged that the discomfort of giving a presentation could, in the end, lead to valuable learning:

The things I didn't like have been the things I've learned from the most, eg talking in front of people, deadlines.

While at first it was daunting, the fact that you have to present your work in front of your peers has resulted in boosting my confidence and mental strength.

Peer assessment

Peer assessment attracted a handful of comments. Most were favourable:

I didn't know we would go round in groups and have to explain our work to the whole group, rather than just the teachers. But I do like this way.

... but one was quite critical:

Other students mark your work. The feedback doesn't help at all.

Feedback speed

The speed of feedback has been a long-standing issue arising from the National Student Survey. To be useful, feedback has to be received in time for the student to make use of it in subsequent submissions of work. Fifteen respondents noted that the feedback they had received had been prompt:

My tutors always give me detailed feedback and it is always very soon after handing my work in so it makes it really convenient.

However, roughly double this number commented on the slowness of the provision of feedback:

The written feedback was most helpful but was given too late at the end of the projects meaning there was no opportunity to improve.

The length of time waiting for feedback, as this has made it hard to adjust and improve my work before the next assessment.
They sometimes take a long time to let us know our marks after they have marked our work. We also do not have all our marks collated on the university's website like I know most other courses do. We also do not find out our percentages in any of our grades we are only told it is an a, b, c etc, not the percentage or whether it is a first, 2-2 etc.
Late feedback (5 months late).

Feedback frequency

Frequent feedback has an obvious potential in assisting student learning. However, feedback is often construed as written (or electronic) comment on submitted work and not the relatively informal exchanges that can take place in practical workspaces. The following two comments seem to take the more limited view of feedback, even though the respondents were positive about what they had received:
It is clear, frequent, and lets me know exactly what I need to do to reach my own personal targets. I feel respected, and as though I have a good professional relationship with my tutors that allows me to ask about my progress whenever I am unsure.
My work is marked at several intervals throughout the year, rather than everything being marked at the end of the year, so I have several deadlines instead of one big final deadline. This reduces stress and helps me to keep on top of my work.

Criteria and their application

For some respondents, assessment criteria were clear:
The assessment criteria are thoroughly explained at numerous points throughout the module so you know exactly what they are looking for.
We get a copy of the assessment criteria with our brief so we always have it to refer to so we understand what exactly is expected.
That you are given the assessment sheet you can see what is expected and what it takes to hit certain grade areas.

For others, assessment was a mystery:
To be honest, I'm not entirely clear how my work is assessed. It's never been explained in simple terms, instead, paragraphs of descriptions, I'm sure it must be simpler!
The grading system is unpredictable, for eg: last term on my first project I had nothing much to present and I got a 70 out of 100, while in my second assignment I have worked ever so hard completing everything and received a lower grade in comparison to other people. It does not make sense at all. Most people in class agree that they are unsure on how this works. Although I have got a low grade my feedback was all positive – this gives me no room to improve and when I ask my tutor she ignores the question saying the grading is not important.
The assessment criteria are not clear, and we receive conflicting feedback from the tutors as to what is required of us. This has created confusion as to (1) the kind of work we are expected to produce, and (2) the documentation that we are required to collate in order to substantiate our work.
We are only given written feedback, not face-to-face feedback which often leaves us unclear about why we got a certain mark. Would be nice to have verbal feedback as well. We have group crits, but these aren't at final assessments.
Not understanding what was needed for certain parts and consequently getting lower assessment grades than I could have got.

Mixed responses. In tutorials, tutors appear very positive about your work but then give you a poor mark. There is no comment, it's just a number so there is no way of improving because you don't know what you did wrong. This happens more with the tutors that come in for certain projects so you never get to see them again.

Subjectivity and inconsistency

Perhaps as part of 'the mystery of assessment' (as perceived by some students), some two dozen referred in one way or another to assessment in Art and Design as a subjective process governed by assessors' taste, and the problems posed by differences in taste between assessors:

It appears to be very subjective, despite the use of assessment criteria forms.
They seem to be influenced a lot by their personal taste rather than the marking criteria.
Personal taste of tutors can get in the way.
Art being so subjective, is very difficult to 'assess' I think. Sometimes I find it hard to distinguish between my tutors' personal taste and what's acceptable by standards of the course and how my work will be marked. However, I'd say that's more of a problem with the subject as a whole, not the course itself.
Each tutor marks differently and each tutor says something different when asked whether something must be allowed or how it should be presented etc. They don't explain what you did wrong in the projects so when you come to do it a second time, you don't know if you're still doing it wrong.
Sometimes tutors can vary in opinion which leaves you confused where to go from there.

Insufficient comment

Three respondents said that they had received only a grade for their work:

When essays are marked there is no specific feedback given, only the grade, which is very frustrating when you have put a lot of time into writing the essay.

... whereas others would have liked to have received more information about why they had been awarded particular marks:

It's not always fully explained where you gain marks and where they are lost.
Too little info regarding allocation of marks. Would be useful to know what % of marks given for ideas, presentation of work, technical ability, etc, etc.

One respondent criticised the award of the same mark to all members of a group on the grounds that 'free riders' benefited unduly:

Group work is marked so that every member has the same mark. Found it very unfair when some people do no work but get the same mark as those who do almost everything. Peer assessment form would be good so that the group can anonymously mark each member on the amount of effort they put in.

A couple of respondents criticised assessment templates:

You get given a piece of paper at the end where they have ticked some boxes and given you a percentage. That is not an assessment, it's disgusting for the amount of work you do.
One of the assessments (after comparing with a lot of other students) turned out to be all a template – makes you doubt work has actually been read.

Feedforward

A key component of the assessment process is the provision to students of ideas about how they can make improvements to their work – the 'feedforward' function.

Some 50 respondents testified to the feedforward that they had experienced in their courses:
Being given areas for improvement or development is the most useful and that the fact that the formal aspect of this is written and you can reflect upon what is written is very useful.
They talk about certain areas of module in assessment that I can possibly take forward into the next module.
During group crits tutors are very helpful in steering you in the right direction and giving you information eg articles to read and photographers to look at, to help enhance your ideas.

However, about half as many commented on the lack of feedforward in the assessment process:
Lack of detailed feedback and guidance on how to improve.
I feel sometimes tutors are not as helpful when I have asked them something I am not sure about when giving feedback. They don't tell you what you could do to improve, so sometimes I don't know what else to do.
No in depth evaluation on where to improve or future development, just feels like a tick box pass or fail.
I just passed in all my units and not once has the teacher guided me what I can do to improve and get the top grades.
One might entertain some reservations about the last-quoted student's emphasis on grades (which seems implicitly greater than on actual achievement).

Formative assessment of drafts of their work has an obvious educative value, since it enables students to gain a greater appreciation of the standards expected and to produce a final version that takes into consideration the advice that they had received. One wrote:
Interim verbal and written feedback half way through an assignment has been the most useful to me as it has allowed me time to take on board what has been said and use (or not) the comments made.

However, a couple indicated that they had not received such formative feedback:
I would have liked to be able to submit drafts of written work throughout the year for assessment so that I could get feedback on it and improve the work. Rather than having to submit the work at the end of the semester not having an indication of if it is a good enough standard or not.
Feedback has usually been given at the end of completing a project however it would have been more helpful to receive it throughout working on a project.

Feedback – most helpful form (many of the comments touched on more than a single category)

The survey asked students which form of feedback they had personally found most helpful. Written feedback had the virtue of being a permanent record to which reference could be made whereas oral feedback from tutors (and others) was direct and offered the possibility of dialogue. One student did not equate electronic feedback with written feedback:
We have not yet got anything on paper, just online. I thought we would get more on paper.

The discussion inherent in crits is, by its nature, immediate and has the potential to open up a variety of views about the work being presented. Informal comments from peers, likewise, offers the prospect of engagement with different ideas – but in a less

stressful environment. The students' preferences should not distract attention from the fact that feedback via multiple routes is likely to be optimally beneficial to the student.

More than 600 comments were received that related to the 'most helpful' form of feedback. The following quotations are an illustrative selection.

Written feedback

Some students clearly valued feedback and perceived its developmental potential:
The written comments were most helpful as you can go over them again when looking at your work and you can see what they may mean and next time try to improve. Also feedback from tutors directly, but you could forget what they have said.
Report accompanied by my percentage from each lecturer who teaches the various units. Reading through my feedback reports, I am often able to trace back to where I find I had missed opportunities to better my mark and my overall performance as a journalist in training.
The written feedback is done by another tutor, one that hasn't seen the project before, so this is combined with a tutorial with your own tutor who has seen the project develop. This feedback is really good because you get the perspective and opinions of more people, the fact you have something written means you always have it to refer to.

One drew attention to the emotional charge that can accompany assessment:
A discussion with tutors backed with a written copy means you can relook at areas to be developed once the emotional response has died down.

Occasionally the valued feedback was provided via media other than writing:
Recorded feedback sent to me from a tutor, analysing my work, explaining where I have got and not got marks from and what I could improve.

Written feedback – perhaps in 'assessment language' – can lack intelligibility to the student and needs to be supplemented:
I've only received written but discussion would be more helpful because written can be very vague.

Written comments can also be illegible:
Some handwritten feedback I have received has been illegible.

Discussion with tutors

Discussion with tutors was frequently given a high value and, in a number of instances, was mentioned in combination with other forms of feedback:
My tutorials have been amazing because the tutor really looked through all my work and gave me a sense of direction and confidence in my ideas.
I found the face-to-face feedback more helpful than the written feedback, as this gave me an opportunity to ask them what they expect of me.
Via discussion with tutors has been the most helpful for me as I was able to find out what targets I needed to reach with constructive feedback to push me to do my best.
Tutorials and discussions with the tutor, as [they] helped me to understand it from their perspective and made me realise clearly what I needed to change – in a pleasant way that gave me confidence. It was easier to learn from than written notes.

One to one tutorials with the opportunity to seek advice on current progress and suggestions to help further progress is helpful. Good feedback received after end of semester assessments is crucial. Preferably electronically delivered.
Tutorials with tutors, they are able to give such a good insight into what you have perhaps been not so good at and give brilliant ideas as to how you can adapt and they confirm the things you are good at an encourage these elements to be taken advantage of.
Discussions, as they are much more thorough. Generic forms with boxes ticked don't give you too much insight into why you've ended up at that grade and written comments are often too vague and hard to read.

Crits

Group crits are really helpful as my peers are more constructive with their criticism and we are all able to discuss things to improve each other's work, and be positive rather than negative.
Group crits, because you can find out what people think about your work and if you've come to a stop it can help you to be motivated again and get new ideas.
Crits – though they are terrifying.
Group crits, as people often offer ideas about my work I'd not even considered.
Group criticisms, as I am quite the quiet person and it has pushed my boundaries for talking in large groups.

However, the dynamics of a larger group may not work well:
Group crits, but most specifically, ones in smaller groups where everyone bounces ideas off another. In larger group crits, everyone gets tiresome and there is simply not enough time to have a full discussion about just one person's work.

Informal comments from peers

Some of the following comments might have been located under 'Crits', but in this group of quotations it is the informal feedback that is the focus:
Between peers. Because they tell me clearly what I need to do, and what I can change and also what is good within my work. I don't always get this from tutors, they just tell me what I have done wrong.
Informal feedback from peers has been very helpful, as it is often hard making the transition into a new institution, but this way I feel like I understand what's going on and that I'm supported by my peers. One on one conversations I've had with tutors have been very good, all my tutors have different areas of expertise which is useful, and makes me find them very approachable. Hard copies of feedback [are] very clear and useful.
Informal discussions with friends from my course in the canteen has probably helped my ideas progress more than any other feedback because they are genuinely enthusiastic and engaged and don't strive to nit-pick.
We use a separate Facebook account to post work and give feedback on [each] other's work. It's been incredibly useful to hear other students giving tips and advice on how to improve a piece.
Informal crits – relaxed so people aren't as tense to give advice and constructive criticism. In a formal event with your friends it feels a little stiff.

Feedback from students further on in their courses

Comment from students who had progressed beyond the first year could be valuable:

From students from higher year groups, as their interpretations and explanations make you feel less alone.

Feedback from visitors to the institution

Likewise, visiting practitioners sometimes gave comments that were greatly appreciated:

Written feedback from [a] visiting artist was a real treat. I didn't think they would take the time to write feedback for us.

Feedback with past students helps a lot, as it gives us an insight into the rest of our time on the course and gaining a job from it – and helping us to identify ourselves as designers.

3 The learning environment

By and large, the learning environment matched up well to first-year students' expectations (Table 36).

Table 36: The level of match between expectations and the learning environment experienced

To what extent has the learning environment for your course matched your expectations?	N	Per cent
Not at all	36	5.4
To a very limited extent	71	10.7
To a moderate extent	178	26.8
To a considerable extent	263	39.7
Completely	115	17.3
Total respondents	663	100.0

The requirement to book workspace and/or equipment attracted an even split of responses (Table 37).

Table 37: The booking of workspace and/or equipment

Are you required to book workspace and/or equipment in advance in order to do the work set on your course?	N	Per cent
No	333	50.5
Yes	326	49.5
Total respondents	659	100.0
Missing	119	
Total	778	

When the 326 respondents who said 'yes' were asked whether they had expected to have to make such bookings, a quarter of them indicated that they had not (Table 38).

Table 38: Expectation regarding the need to be self-organising in respect of workspace and/or equipment

Did you expect, before you arrived at the institution, that you would have to be self-organising in this way?	N	Per cent
No	80	24.6
Yes	245	75.4
Total respondents	325	100.0

These two tables may be easier to assimilate as a flow diagram (Figure 2) showing that roughly 1 in 8 (12.2 per cent) of all respondents had been surprised to find that they needed to be self-organising as regards booking workspace and/or equipment.

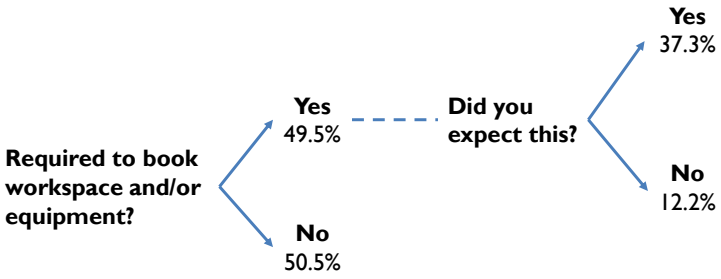

Figure 2: A flow diagram of expectations regarding the booking of workspace and/or equipment

Female respondents had a lower level of expectation that they would need to book space or equipment than did their male peers (Table SS.28).

Where the provision of workspace was important, more than four in five respondents indicated that such a space was available regularly to them (Table 39). As Table 39 shows, the availability of institutional workspace was not relevant to some students (eg those undertaking theoretical studies or who were able to use computer technology off-site).

Table 39: The access to spaces for the production of coursework

At your institution, do you have regular access to a space where you produce practical coursework?	N	Per cent
No	106	17.3
Yes	506	82.7
Total respondents	612	100.0
Not applicable	51	

The support of technicians in workspaces was positively acknowledged (Table 40), though for a few respondents this kind of practical support was not relevant.

Table 40: The contribution of technicians to studio-based learning

To what extent have technicians contributed to your studio-based learning?	N	Per cent
Not at all	31	4.9
To a very limited extent	94	14.8
To a moderate extent	145	22.8
To a considerable extent	367	57.7
Total respondents	637	100.0
Not applicable	20	

Female students reported a higher level of technician contribution to their learning than did their male peers (Table SS.29).

Some comments about technicians' support are given below.

What the students said about the learning environment

Spaces

Some students enthused about the workspaces available to them:

That you can use any studio or workshop space freely whenever you want or need to. Technicians are also around if you need help and can't find a lecturer.

I really like having my own studio space, where I don't have to worry about someone else needing it, and I can leave my work there overnight etc.

Lovely amount of studio space so that you are not restricted by your surroundings to the size of work you make/materials you want to use; huge variety of specifically equipped workshops – resin/casting, print and ceramics/glass are nice additions to the 'standard' metal and wood workshops, plus having the option to use other courses' workshops (photography, textile etc) is useful as you can be more ambitious creatively in the work you want to make. Having digital (& related) equipment (cameras/projectors/tripods etc) available to hire out is great because it means you don't have to buy an expensive camera etc. to make good quality work.

I love our studio space. The room isn't too small and my space is just about big enough to present my work. Workshops are fantastic and the equipment is all really good.

The resources provided by the institution for students have been amazing. I have never struggled for studio space, computers, cameras, printing all the facilities have been a great help.

I was pleased to find that there were two black and white darkrooms and a colour darkroom. This exceeded my expectation.

[The] facility at our school is absolutely amazing in comparison to most schools based anywhere else, eg the space, the studio space students are entitled to ... [Apart from problems with the security of personal belongings], wonderful.

Others were less enamoured, reflecting to some extent the negative comments noted by Thomas *et al*. (2007):

There are only 4 studios and they book up exceptionally quickly when they are so large that the space should be shared. Also, other courses can book the studios (eg fashion to photograph their projects) and take up time slots when photography students should have first pick. I have found it incredibly difficult to book studio space.
Small studio workspace, have to buy own equipment or pay to use anything.
Often you will turn up to complete work on a day 'open access' is meant to be available only to find out the technician has locked the room and disappeared. A lot of the sewing machines etc are very old and temperamental which considering what we pay in fees I think is unreasonable.
Students are crammed into studios. We were then asked to move everything out before the spring term was over and at the beginning of the summer term.
No storage space – I have to haul heavy equipment such as printing plates miles on and off buses.
The timetable allowed very little unscheduled time to access the works shops which was frustrating and as these resources closed at 4pm there was no option to gain 'out of hours access'.
We didn't receive much studio space and the computing facilities were limited. Also we didn't receive areas in which we could keep our work and equipment such as lockers or a drawer.
*Really sh*t studios that were badly lit, freezing cold and completely uninspiring.*
I expected more room for the amount of people on the course.
As an art student, I expected a creative area where I could be messy, but this has not proved the case. I am lucky to have some space at home to paint in.

A student on a course that did not involve studio work was critical of the allocated classroom:
We study in a cold, boring room with no tables. We are expected to sit on hard chairs taking notes for two hours in a room that is completely depressing and un-motivational.

An issue mentioned by a number of respondents was pressure on workspaces:
The studio space is well above average for this kind of course. Each student has a reasonably sized, permanent desk, wall and lockable storage area, which is really impressive ... Workshops have been my only disappointment ... just too busy in there a lot of the time.
Open access is brilliant BUT because the in contact teaching time is so limited EVERYONE relies on open access so it's very busy.
Not an 'assigned' space, having to fight other people for table and wall space.
Having to fight to sign up to the limited workshops there are.
The studio space was badly organised, the 'first come first served' scenario was more severe than I thought, tutors should make clear that people cannot move other people's belongings or take up half of the studio.
There are way too many people on our course and the teachers can't teach properly with the amount, plus the workshops can't hold us in properly.
STUDIO SPACE!! Too crowded.

However, one respondent was concerned about the underuse of studio space:
[Campus] is an incredible place, the studios are great and the community is great. But due to the course unit structure – for the most part of this year people were unclear whether to use the studio or not, so they were quite quiet and empty, which was a shame because it obviously means we've lost the space as students weren't clear on what they were supposed to be doing.

Security

A few respondents expressed their concern about security:

The one thing about [institution] is the security ... people's bags, brushes, wallets went missing and it just doesn't give us the security to work in such environment.

Lack of security. Studio never locked. If students were supplied with a swipe card system it might have improved security and attendance monitoring.

Library

Library provision was broadly perceived as very good, although there were some instances where the provision was felt to be inadequate:

The library is an excellent resource for research including online and electronic resources. Particularly the quality of the books in the library.

The libraries are fantastic and the amount of books we can borrow is much appreciated.

The library is brilliant and has been an incredibly helpful resource for working at nights, weekends, etc.

Arts library does not have a great amount of books that are needed for our course.

All good except books in library. Not enough copies.

The library often only carries 5 copies of 'key texts' when there are around 30 of us doing the essay. The majority of the computers are a bit outdated and often they are all taken so you can't print something off for a deadline. The scanners are ancient and barely work.

The library is not open long enough. I think the library should be more of a place to spend long hours, feel free to come in and stay.

The library is open 24/7 but with no-one to check on the noise levels it can get really loud after staff have left. Security do not address these issues.

Resources in general

Where expressed in relation to undifferentiated resources, opinion was divided:

There is a vast amount of resources and we can gain access to all!

They [resources] were much better than I ever expected.

I like the fact that the resources are at the university but due to budget cuts we aren't allowed to use anywhere near as much as they said we could on the open day.

*The resources that this course has compared to other institutes [are] sh*t. The computers are crap, the software freezes, sometimes not even right software. Getting taught 2nd rate.*

Nothing: it's all so limited ... and I feel this should have been said before I joined ... and a list sent out for what you actually need to have with you for lessons.

The needs of particular groups of students

Part-time students and those with disabilities on occasion found themselves disadvantaged with respect to the availability of resources:

There [are] very limited resources for part-time as everything was designed around full-time students.

Not having 2 days of full access to resources. Full-timers have 4 days full access, part-timers 1 day, on which there is no access to workshops, equipment or technicians from 5 to 8pm.

Workshop space not allocated for part-time students, and also being first-years can't access most of the workshops with specialist equipment in as haven't had inductions yet.

Not adapted for my special needs and that of another student in particular who uses a wheelchair, ie desk heights and equipment.

Computers

Across the respondents, opinion divided as to the merits of the computing equipment that was made available. On the positive side:

The wide range of iMac computers is excellent. Software is loaded on to every computer making completion of tasks simple. Computer suites are generally pleasant areas to work and spend time.

The computers are of a decent quality with large enough screens for better working on art programs like Photoshop and 3DS Max.

Resources provided are very well kept and up to date, all the latest software is provided on campus computers and there is plenty of audio visual equipment to borrow.

The computer labs are for our course only and there are enough computers for students to come and go during non-lesson times.

Criticisms included the following[6]:

Computers are very slow and crash a lot. The printers take a very long time to print pictures, which is ridiculous when it's what you do most on an art and design course. Also need more A2/3 scanners.

Just in short supply and sometimes not all available computers are working. ie mouses missing, keyboards not responding, screen not working, etc.

More up-to-date computer systems would be appreciated.

The computers in the library [are] a joke. A university ... should have top modern technology, not computers from the mid 80s.

One module requires specific software which was not available in the room we had been timetabled and was then not installed. I had expected the software to be readily available when the module is so software specific.

Other equipment

Opinions divided regarding the provision of equipment. Some satisfaction was expressed in merely a brief acknowledgement. Negative comments tended to be more elaborated, as one might expect:

The learning environment provided MORE equipment than I expected and that is very nice.

Practical equipment and computing facilities are excellent – I cannot fault them.

Up to date 'industry' standard equipment and the opportunity to get some of this for ourselves.

Some equipment should have been thrown out when Victoria died.

The equipment should be checked more thoroughly to make sure that it isn't broken or damaged when given to us.

Digital cameras that have lots of dust on the sensor; darkroom equipment is old and worn; there is sometimes not enough equipment for all students who need it; the queuing system is diabolically slow.

Everything, the resources seem very limited. It seems ridiculous that as an Art College we don't have a campus shop, and that to get art materials on campus we have to fill out a form with the materials we want, take the form to finance to pay for it, then wait till a specific time on a specific day in order to finally receive [our] materials. This system is ridiculous and does not work in the slightest.

[6] It is worth noting that students responding to the project run by Thomas *et al.* (2007) expressed concerns over the usability of recently introduced virtual learning environments in the participating institutions.

Lack of equipment that we needed for our projects. I had to look for a camcorder since there were only four on the university for the whole course (three years, 40 people per year or so).
I thought more equipment would be ready available, well this is the picture that was painted on the open day. Fail.
I thought that we were allowed to use the resources more but we haven't been allowed to use half the resources yet, and that's a bit of a disappointment.
The resources on my course are a joke. The lack of funding because of the lack of students on this course makes it worse which make a lot of students want to leave this course.
... no access to any equipment (sometimes even for coursework) even though the university has it, useless workshops that waste time, not seeing a penny of the 'equipment fee' (£100) paid at the beginning of the year.
Very crowded and the studios aren't big enough. Not enough computers or printers.
There is not enough space or equipment for everyone on the course. People need individual posts to work at. The studio doesn't have the kind of atmosphere where you can comfortably work, also because you can't leave your belongings anywhere without your supervision in case something gets stolen.
We have great facilities in knit, but the machinery isn't backed up with the tools to use it being around, it all needs servicing and the room is just generally a mess – all simple things to rectify yet no one has done them.

Technical support

Technicians generally, though not exclusively, got a very good press. Comments included the following:
The technicians!!!! They teach me everything.
Excellent practical teaching from technicians.
The technicians are extremely helpful and knowledgeable. They take an interest in what you are doing and help to support and develop your ideas. The technicians for me have been one of the best parts of this course.
Technicians have been particularly helpful throughout, they are the university's biggest asset, they help everyone make the most of the resources available.
The range of different materials and machinery that are available to use. As well, the staff in the workshops sit down with you and the plans for what work you want to create, and plan with you what would be the best possible method for creating the work.
LOTS of workshops available (woodwork, glasswork etc.) and technicians are VERY keen to help you out.
Everything is industry standard and the technicians are extremely helpful.
It's been good having studio space. Workshops have been immensely useful – both for access to tools and equipment – but also for technicians – being both highly knowledgeable, very sharing with their knowledge and also very supportive.
Practical studios are well managed and the technicians very helpful.
All equipment [is] regularly checked, so there are no problems. Also, workshops are organised and we are given handouts to refer back to if necessary.
Technicians not always knowing what to do or how to fix a problem – technicians and teachers switching between a problem passing it on to each other and not really fixing it.

Payment for materials, etc.

Comment regarding the need to pay for various facilities was – unsurprisingly – negative:
Not enough printers for Macs and prices too high for printing.

... but considering the fees are so high, the equipment should be cheaper to use.
There was nothing wrong with the quality or range, however, just the fact that there are so many extra fees and bills to pay even after enrolling. I am a international student paying full international student fees, however, I still have to pay induction fees, and brush fees even as little as 5 pounds per term depending on our course. I believe something should be done about this.
Having to pay studio fees, and then not being given some resources and having to buy them ourselves anyway, it is a bit disappointing.
Everything is super expensive on an Art course, I think they should be more aware of that and maybe some of the £3,000 we spend to do the course could go towards a limited supply of art materials? Otherwise it is just going on their wages and I don't think it needs to be that expensive.
We paid material fees at the start of the year yet we not been provided with anything. We have been told to buy our own materials such as the basics [eg] paper. No material has been provided to us.
Resources are limited. The £150 materials charge at the start of term is extremely overpriced.

4. Course organisation

A quarter of the respondents indicated that the organisation of their course had not matched up to their expectations (Table 41).

Table 41: The level of match between expectations and the course organisation experienced

To what extent has the day-to-day organisation of your course matched up with what you had expected before you arrived?	N	Per cent
Not at all	48	7.4
To a very limited extent	113	17.4
To a moderate extent	258	39.7
To a considerable extent	186	28.6
Completely	45	6.9
Total respondents	650	100.0

What the students said about course organisation

Scheduling

Positive comments from respondents related to being provided with clear scheduling of the various demands:

I like the fact that lectures stay on the same day throughout the year, as with core skills – this makes it much easier to plan the week.
I love the fact we get timetables which show our schedule for the whole project as it helps me to plan day trips to museums/galleries in different cities as part of my research and it generally helps me plan dates for when I can visit home.
The week by week breakdown in the unit handbooks is great just because it lets you know exactly what will be happening and when and also informs you of what you should be doing in terms of self-directed study.

The deadline dates were all made very clear and we were emailed every week with tutorial times, which was very useful and allowed us to not waste time at university waiting for tutorials.

However, not every student found the course schedule to their liking:
There can be crazy busy weeks followed by very empty weeks, some things could be spread around better.
One minute we are very busy with multiple deadlines and the next we have very little to do.

For some students, a 'gappy' timetable was unwelcome because of the implications for travel:
Lessons spread out, rather have them all condensed into several days so travelling in is easier.
Large gaps between sessions on the same day.

Some students may have to contract for accommodation until the formal end of the year, not realising that the actual classes end much earlier:
Students paid their accommodations till the end of June (end of the course date stated on information material distributed during induction), but classes finished at the end of March.

One student was happy to be able to find out electronically what was scheduled:
I like that everything is on Blackboard and accessible, I always know what's going on.
... but Blackboard was not always perceived as having been used effectively:
If workshops have been cancelled, we haven't been told about it soon enough. Being a student who travels from home to uni everyday, it's annoying to find when I get here that my lesson has been cancelled for that day, and not noted on Blackboard.
That lectures are changed or cancelled without notice. That [the] Blackboard facility is so poorly organised when [it] could be a great resource.

Breakdowns in communication about course provision prompted a number of negative observations:
I also dislike how if there is a room/time change/notice it will only get put up on the notice board outside the staff room which we have to come in to university to check when they have our emails so they could email us!! Sometimes we miss important things and they say it's our fault for not checking but that's ridiculous – why are they trying to catch us out? It's not a contest, they should be doing everything they can to help us, we are paying for this education.
Lack of advance notification of dates, deadlines, what is required for assessment and in what format. Where early notice is given, this is greatly appreciated and helpful for fitting [in a] part-time course with other work and family commitments.
Very little verbal reminders of deadlines (which was difficult to understand at first because first-years are still reliant on staff to give notice of essay deadlines, there wasn't any warning that we would have to keep checking handbooks to see what was due in next).
For my course there is a major lack of organisation and the scheduling is not conducive to the lifestyle of a busy student. The lecturers seem to have no concern about cancelling or rescheduling lectures, which is not fair to the students who are paying for this education.
The changes to the timetable but I suppose this is just preparation for the disorganisation of the real world of work.

The lack of formal timetable is a problem. There have been times when classes have been cancelled or scheduled and we have not been informed until we arrived at the college. I feel like this wastes everyone's time.

On the other hand, staff's organisational efforts were appreciated:
Staff go above and beyond expectations to ensure everything runs smoothly for everyone concerned.

There was some appreciation of a course's sensitivity to students' part-time working and other kinds of personal need.
You're in a lot but they think about your need to do things outside of uni life. They give you at least one day off a week and they tell you this is the time for doctors, dentist, chill out time etc.
We have to be in University about 15 hours a week, over a period of 3 days in the middle of the week. I found this extremely useful as it gave me a 4 day weekend so I could plan entire days to do projects or go out and do photoshoots without having to come back to University for only an hour or two each day.
Mondays have been kept vacant throughout the course, even when it's meant long hours on the other days. This has been a thoughtful consideration towards those on the course with part-time jobs.

However, the needs of part-time students can get overlooked, the following quotation echoing earlier findings by Yorke and Longden *et al*. (2008):
They are disorganised, they don't count part-time students when talking in general, and it's difficult to contact them if you need them. In a year I meet my 'real' tutor twice, and the other tutor I met before suggested things I could do without knowing how I can actually do it.

Asked if they had found a way of raising with the course team any dislikes about the course, two-thirds had, but one-third had not (Table 42).

Table 42: The raising of dislikes with the course team

If you have had any particular dislikes about the course, have you found a way of raising them with the course team?	N	Per cent
No	181	31.9
Yes	386	68.1
Total respondents	567	100.0

5. Analyses involving all four key aspects

Although inferences have to be made with caution, given the generally low levels of response, an analysis of the four questions about the extent to which the students' experience matched their expectations suggests that some institutions were more successful than others at informing their students prior to enrolment (Table 43). Table 43 lists the institutions in a rough descending order of 'match', though small differences are unlikely to be meaningful.

Table 43: Institutional differences in respect of four broad aspects of the student experience

Institution	N range (high-low)	Match with expectations			
		Teaching 5-point scale 0-4	Assessment methods 3-point scale 0-2	Learning environment 5-point scale 0-4	Course organisation 5-point scale 0-4
A	48-47	**3.00**	1.70	3.00	**2.70**
B	18-16	**2.94**	1.59	2.75	**2.59**
C	21	**2.76**	1.71	2.76	2.48
D	37-36	2.51	1.61	**3.14**	2.19
E	39	2.51	1.54	2.90	2.44
F	70-62	2.39	1.54	2.83	2.35
G	41-38	2.41	1.58	2.60	2.24
H	18-17	2.44	1.56	2.24	2.11
I	17-16	2.25	1.53	2.18	2.12
J	14	2.50	1.71	2.36	2.43
K	25-24	2.28	1.60	2.50	2.08
L	22-17	2.09	1.48	2.59	2.29
M	29-25	2.14	1.71	2.68	1.92
N	26-22	2.23	1.52	2.50	2.14
O	9-6	2.22	1.63	2.50	2.00
P	12-11	2.25	1.25	2.33	2.27
Q	8	2.25	1.25	2.13	2.13
R	29-27	1.90	1.37	2.25	1.78
S	40-34	2.03	1.54	**1.95**	1.97
T	60-54	1.83	1.25	2.35	**1.44**
U	10-9	**1.40**	1.56	2.44	**1.44**
V	10-9	**1.50**	**1.00**	2.40	1.67
W	11-9	**1.73**	1.36	**1.44**	1.78
X	37-33	**1.73**	1.50	**1.94**	**1.48**
Y	9-7	**1.44**	**0.86**	2.43	**0.71**
Unknown	13-12	1.69	1.25	2.33	2.08
Total	673-613	2.23	1.51	2.53	2.09

(Green indicates a mean rating that is above average, with the darker shade indicating a considerable difference from average. Pink and red, likewise, indicate mean ratings below average.)

Table 43 suggests that institutions vary with respect to the extent that their students' expectations and experiences are aligned. It is intuitively plausible that the way in which institutions engage with students (potential and actual) plays a part, although the number of respondents is too low to make this any more than a suggestion. However, if there is an 'institutional effect', then one would expect some correlation with outcomes of the NSS. The mean percentage agreement with

Question 22 (*Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course*) was calculated[7] for each institution's provision for Art and Design, and the correlation between this and the (rather rough and ready) total 'match' score for the four variables in Table 43 was determined. The correlation coefficient was +0.45, indicating a moderate level of association between the two measures[8]. In other words, there is some evidence to support the 'institution effect' hypothesis.

The importance of prior information to the students' perception of match between expectations and experience (in respect of teaching, assessment methods, the learning environment and course organisation) is shown clearly by 'collapsing' the responses in Table 43 into 'Low' and 'High' levels of prior information (Figure 3). 'Low' combines the first two categories; 'High' the last three.

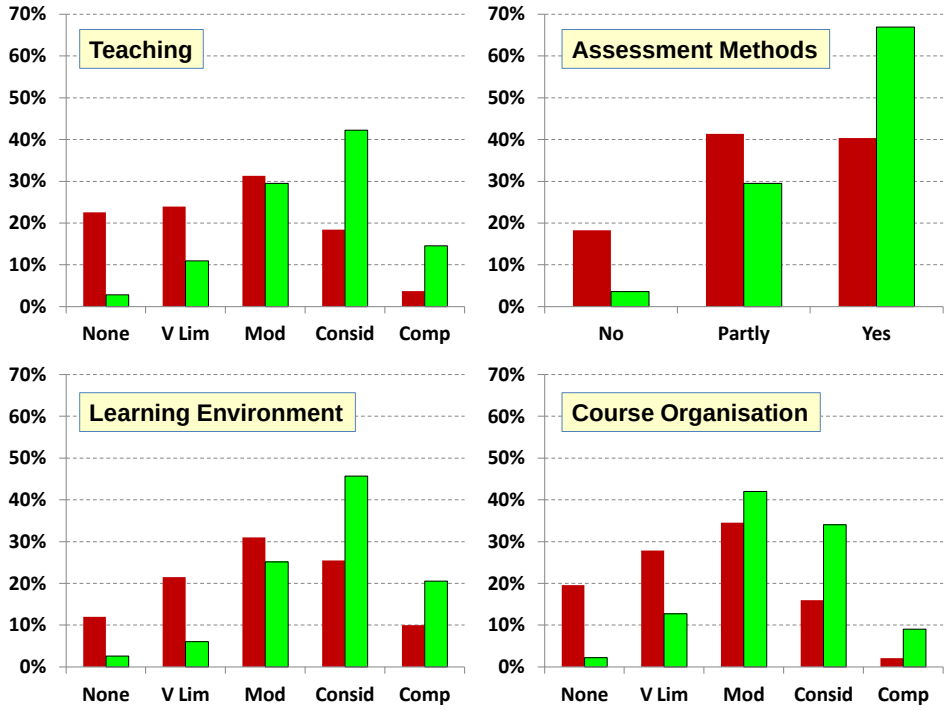

Figure 3: The influence of prior information on perceptions of the match between expectations and experience, for four broad aspects of the student experience
(The levels of 'match' in three of the histograms are: none; very limited; moderate; considerable; and complete.)

It is readily apparent that the level of prior information correlates strongly with the level of 'match' (as would be expected). The 'message' is obvious, but needs to be tempered by the fact that, for some students, their higher education experience turns out to be better than they had anticipated. In other words, some mismatch is positive – note the highlighted red columns in Figure 4 below (data for which came

[7] The mean was weighted according to the numbers of respondents per JACS Level 3 subject.
[8] Of the two measures, the NSS mean is by far the more reliable because of the far higher response rate. Elimination of one institution with a very small number of respondents, and whose data was markedly deviant from those from the other institutions, increased the correlation coefficient to +0.60.

from a separate study of first-year students, based on NSS methodology, which was undertaken in a new university in 2011).

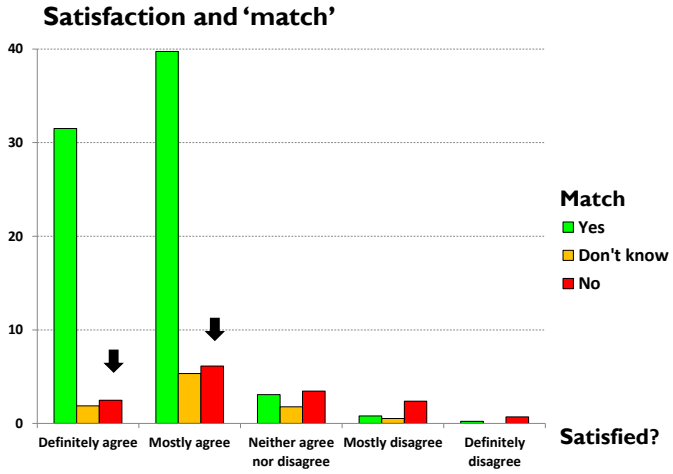

Figure 4: Histogram of responses to a question about overall satisfaction (y-axis is expressed in percentages)

Subject areas

Categorisation of subject areas is fairly rough and ready because of ambiguities and multiple foci (eg joint Honours). The data are affected by varying response rates across institutions. Hence the data in Table 44 below have to be treated with considerable caution. Caveats entered, there is a suggestion that the expectations/experience match tends to be better for some subject areas than the overall mean whereas the opposite applies to others. The table includes Bachelors degree and foundation degree students only.

Table 44: The match between expectations and experience for four broad aspects of the student experience, by subject area

Subject area	N range (high-low)	Teaching 5-point scale 0-4	Assessment methods 3-point scale 0-2	Learning environment 5-point scale 0-4	Course organisation 5-point scale 0-4
Architecture	15-13	2.36	1.47	2.33	2.00
Art, including Fine Art	104-97	2.19	1.50	2.40	2.02
Applied Arts	72-67	2.40	1.64	2.81	2.22
Design (misc)	29-24	2.41	1.58	2.75	2.25
Fashion/Textiles	186-167	2.16	1.47	2.62	2.17
Graphic Design	116-106	2.21	1.42	2.28	2.05
New Media	82-73	2.10	1.47	2.47	1.88
Photography	64-60	2.36	1.63	2.55	2.08
Creative Arts (general)	16-15	2.75	1.63	2.53	2.27
Total	684-622	2.24	1.51	2.52	2.09

Commentary

A number of reports in the last decade and a half (see, for example, Thomas *et al.*, 2007; Yorke and Longden, 2008; Vaughan and Yorke, 2009) have pointed to areas of provision in Art and Design where there has been scope for enhancement. There is hard evidence that, in some institutions, the 'messages' have been understood and action successfully taken. However (and judging by the evidence collected in this study and that from the NSS), this appears not to have been the case across the whole community of practice in Art and Design. At a time when higher education in the arts is being subjected to massive changes in its funding base, institutions that do not offer – and deliver – 'a good deal' (in both senses) to their students will surely suffer serious consequences. Good reputations are hard won, but easily lost.

There is no single 'student experience', though the term is used as a convenient shorthand for student experiences in general. The evidence from this and other studies shows that students vary considerably in both background and what they want from their higher education experience (eg 'being taught' versus being left free to pursue their own (discipline-relevant) interests), and what gives them satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In other words, there is no magic paint that can be brushed over curriculum design and implementation to guarantee students' delight in their experience. Enhancing the student experience in general is probabilistic, in that there are many ways in which improvements can be sought but some may work to an individual student's advantage, some may be broadly neutral in effect, and some could be disadvantageous (eg giving greater freedom to a student who feels the need to be given more formal teaching). There is, perhaps inevitably, a hint of utilitarianism at work in the optimisation of the collectivity of student experiences. Given the constraints on higher education, it is a very severe challenge to design and implement curricula that maximise the quality of the student experience for all who make up a cohort.

The evidence shows – even from the relatively limited number of respondents – that they vary considerably in demographic background and prior experience of education. Some students had the experience of completing a foundation diploma in which there was relative freedom to experiment, whereas others had undertaken more formalised A-level studies. In broad terms, the needs of the two kinds of student are likely to be rather different, especially in the first year of higher education. It is a challenge to teachers to work optimally with a student group of such varied background.

While there are pedagogic challenges such as that outlined above, there are resource-related challenges in respect of minority groups. Students with disabilities were not always given consideration in respect of their needs (eg not having work surfaces at levels appropriate to a student with impaired mobility). The needs of part-time students, particularly where they are 'infilling' on a full-time programme, might be overlooked where the operational perspective is of full-time study.

The evidence from this study shows that the greater the amount of prior knowledge about the nature of the programme, the closer the match between expectation and experience. Induction programmes can 'do their bit' to mitigate any discrepancies.

Where expectation and experience were in fair alignment, the tendency was for any issues to be relatively minor: where there was misalignment, there was much more likely to be dissatisfaction than surprised delight. Dissatisfaction spills into the public domain through instruments such as the NSS and through some of the less formal channels on the world wide web. In a time when value for money is becoming an even more potent consideration, serious dissatisfaction must be of great concern to programme staff and to institutions.

Some students noted that their programmes seemed to have been constructed with sensitivity towards the needs of the contemporary student – in particular, in timetabling formal engagement in such a way as to maximise their capability to undertake part-time employment or to undertake projects away from the institutional campus. Others expressed their dislike of having formal commitments scheduled such that there were significant gaps in the institutional day (they might not have taken advantage of library and other resources in the gaps in their schedule), or that travel costs were not minimised. One broad issue that did emerge from many of the responses was a dissatisfaction with the provision of information about late changes to the schedule. Particularly where a curriculum is flexible, the corollary is that it is necessary to have a reliable method of communicating changes to students. Mobile technology ought to go a long way to providing this.

It is readily apparent that student opinion divided as regards the quality of the teaching they had received – and in some cases in respect of the amount of contact time with teaching staff. There is an issue here which this report cannot deal with, other than to mention it: do students differ in their view of 'contact' between a lecture to a group and the circulation around a studio talking to students on an individual basis? If there is a perspective on teaching that equates it roughly with 'transmission', then studio circulation might be construed to a lesser extent as teaching.

Conceptions of feedback varied widely. Some saw it as written comments; others recognised conversation in a studio as contributing to feedback; and some had a more embracing view. For some, divergent evaluations of their work were disconcerting; for others, an opening up of possibilities. Perhaps the most important aspect is 'feedforward' – the signals to students as to how they might further develop their work. It should surely be a matter of concern if students say that such pointers are not being given.

A similar divergence obtained in respect of summative assessment. Some seemed happy with the assessment criteria that they had been given, whereas others saw summative assessment as a mystery in which assessors' subjective preferences were to the fore. It may be that the former were given more than criteria which – on their own – can be opaque: the provision of exemplars is widely understood as an important way in which criteria (sometimes expressed in arcane 'assessment language') can be made meaningful.

A theme running through the responses was value for money. Concerns were expressed about the amount of teaching that was being provided, about the de facto length of the academic year, and about contact with staff in general. Under the current fee structure, some students questioned the extra costs that they were

expected to bear. Other aspects of 'the deal' that attracted comment were the availability of studio facilities (and of personal spaces within them). The incoming fee regime will give the whole 'value for money issue' a very sharp point, and institutions will feel this as they consider how best to address it.

Pointers towards a successful first-year experience

The statistical data suggest that some of the differentiation in student responses to the survey could be related to the way in which institutions interact with potential and actual students – ie that there may be an 'institutional effect'. Of course, other effects at more 'local' level, such as that of the course and/or module, may also have played a part. This survey was not designed to tease out the particular circumstances in institutions that could have affected students' experiences for the better or for the worse. However, some general points can be made, based on the evidence from this study and (where appropriate) from the wider education literature. Not all will be applicable to every student: for example, students from overseas face obvious difficulties in visiting institutions prior to enrolment.

More than ever before, it is vital that institutions monitor the experiences of their students, with a keen eye for both the strengths and the weaknesses of their provision. Dealing with some weaknesses is critically important; with others, less so: it is a matter of determining priorities and concentrating enhancement-oriented efforts accordingly.

The following template (Table 45) can be used by institutions as a starting-point for assessing the quality of the experience they provide for students. The template can be adapted to suit local circumstances. Since there can be considerable variation between courses, the template could be adapted to reflect the course rather than the institution as a whole, with the institution subsequently looking at the collection of course-level responses.

Table 45: A template for assessing the quality of the student experience

Aspect of provision	Yes	Unsure	No	If Yes, how do you know?
Potential students have a clear understanding of the nature of 'the deal' that the institution is offering them.				
Potential students have the opportunity to engage with the institution in various ways (eg through visits and portfolio interviews – and, particularly for those more distant from the institution, accurate documentation regarding what is on offer).				
The institution gives students from minority groups parity of attention (the word 'minority' covers more than ethnicity – for instance, part-time and overseas students are encompassed here).				
Study accommodation and resources of various kinds are of a high standard.				
Study accommodation and resources are readily available.				
There is good technician support in workshops.				
Course organisation is effective and efficient.				
Students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them (this applies with particular force to expectations regarding assessment).				

Staff manifest their commitment to student success in a range of ways, including:

A high quality of teaching in both formal and informal situations.				
Tutorial engagement, including availability to students and formative feedback on work in progress.				
Providing prompt feedback on submitted work.				
Ensuring that feedback not only evaluates submitted work but also points to ways in which the student might develop it further ('feedforward').				
Showing supportiveness to students, which includes sensitivity to the emotional impact of assessment outcomes on students.				

And, last but far from least:

The course represents good value for the money that students have to lay out in order to achieve their personal aims.				

Changes to the funding of institutions and students pushed student expectations centre stage. Institutions are already responding to the implications, but there is plenty of evidence from this report of expectations being dashed. The template (Table 45) is intended to challenge too-easy assumptions that course provision is as it should be. It is quite easy to give a 'yes' to the items, which is why the final column asks what evidence there is to support the claim – and that evidence needs to be soundly grounded. If good evidence is not available, then it needs to be sought.

Commitment to the aspects of provision listed in the template does not come cheap. Evidence from recruitment suggests that Art and Design tends to be quality sensitive rather than price sensitive. In other words, quality has to be the primary driver of the student experience. In the emerging context of higher education in the UK, institutions will ignore the quality imperative at their peril.

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... and, of crucial importance:

- the students who were willing to give their time to filling in the fairly lengthy survey questionnaire.

Appendix 1: The demographic backgrounds of the respondents

The demographic questions constituted the final part of the questionnaire and attenuation reduced the number of respondents to around 650.

Age, gender and ethnicity

The vast majority of respondents (86 per cent) were aged 25 or under. Above the age of 25 there was a fairly even distribution (Table A2.1).

Table A2.1: The age distribution of the respondents

Age on entry	N	Per cent
Under 21	467	71.8
21-25	94	14.4
26-30	21	3.2
31-35	13	2.0
36-40	10	1.5
41-45	15	2.3
46-50	11	1.7
Over 50	19	2.9
Total who gave an age	650	100.0

For analyses in the body of this report, age is 'collapsed' into three categories – Under 21, 21-25 and Over 25 – because of the relatively small proportion of older students.

Four-fifths of the respondents were female (Table A2.2).

Table A2.2: The gender profile of the respondents

Gender	N	Per cent
Male	131	20.3
Female	515	79.7
Total respondents	646	100.0

White British respondents were in a large majority (Table A2.3), though there were indications that the proportion of ethnic minority students varied with institution.

Table A2.3: The ethnic backgrounds of the respondents

Ethnicity	N	Per cent
White British	483	75.1
White other than British	67	10.4
Chinese	18	2.8
Asian British	15	2.3
Asian other than British	13	2.0
Black British	8	1.2
Black other than British	4	0.6
Other	35	5.4
Total respondents	643	

With relatively few respondents who were other than white British, ethnicity is 'collapsed' into two categories for analyses in the body of this report. (This is methodologically unsatisfactory, but 'collapsing' is unavoidable where numbers are small.) Due to limitations on space, the survey did not ask an explicit question about domicile, and so any identification of non-British students as 'international' is necessarily inferential.

Disability

One in eight respondents had declared a disability to the institution (Table A2.4).

Table A2.4: The declaration of a disability

Have you declared a disability to the institution?	N	Per cent
No	568	88.8
Yes	72	11.3
Total respondents	640	100.0

As might be expected, the predominant single disability declared was dyslexia. In broad categories, the disabilities recorded by 68 respondents[9] were dyslexia, 35; dyspraxia, 4; physical impairments of various kinds, 16; and a diversity of psychological problems, 16.

Academic background

As would be expected, the vast majority of respondents had not previously studied at degree level (Table A2.5).

[9] A few respondents indicated two different kinds of disability.

Table A2.5: Prior experience at degree level

Is this the first time you have studied at degree level?	N	Per cent
No	98	15.0
Yes	556	85.0
Total respondents	654	100.0

The majority of respondents had entered their programme on the basis of A-level examination passes (Table A2.6).

Table A2.6: A-level entry qualifications

Did you study A-levels?	N	Per cent
No	204	31.4
Yes	446	68.6
Total respondents	650	100.0

Four-fifths of these indicated that their A-level passes were relevant to Art and Design. A few students noted that they had used qualifications gained in their home country as the basis of their enrolment. Roughly two-thirds of the respondents noted that they had undertaken a preparatory course other than A-level prior to enrolling. Forty per cent had combined A-levels with such a preparatory course (Table A2.7).

Table A2.7: Cross-tabulation relating A-level and preparatory course qualifications

	Preparatory course		
A-level	No	Yes	Total
No	40 (6%)	159 (25%)	199
Yes	181 (28%)	257 (40%)	438
Total	221	416	637

(Percentages are based on the 637 respondents.)

Female respondents claimed, to a greater degree than their male peers, the possession of A-level qualifications (Table SS.11) and that they had attended a course intended to prepare them for higher education in Art and Design (Table SS.12). The youngest respondents were more likely than their older peers to have entered higher education on the basis of A-level qualifications (Table SS.13), but were marginally less likely to have undertaken a course specifically preparing them for entry to Art and Design in higher education (Table SS.14). Disabled students were slightly less likely than the bulk of respondents to have gained A-level qualifications (Table SS.15), but more likely to have taken a course specifically preparing them for higher education in Art and Design (Table SS.16). As would be expected, students of British origin were more likely to have gained A-level qualifications (Table SS.17) and

to have undertaken a course intended to prepare them for study in higher education (Table SS.18).

Where entry qualifications other than A-level could be categorised with reasonable confidence (some named qualifications that were ambiguous as to level such as 'BTEC in Art and Design'), the respondents evidenced a variety of academic backgrounds (Table A2.8). 'Other HE experience' ranged from single modules to an MA in Architecture.

Table A2.8: Entry qualifications of the respondents, other than A-level (where identifiable)

Qualification category	N
Access to HE	18
Foundation diploma	218
National diploma	33
BTEC national diploma	45
HNC	3
HND	3
Foundation degree in Art and Design	11
Other HE experience	12
Total	**343**

Mode of study and part-time employment

The vast majority (96 per cent) of respondents were studying full-time. Forty per cent of full-time students were undertaking some form of employment to support their studies (Table A2.9).

Table A2.9: The support of studies by part-time employment

Do you support your studies financially by undertaking some form of employment?	N	Per cent
No	375	60.4
Yes	246	39.6
Total	621	100.0

Respondents over the age of 21 who were studying full-time were markedly more likely to be undertaking employment to support their studies (Table SS.19). Students from both British and non-British backgrounds were engaged to a similar extent in employment to support their studies (Table SS.20). Male respondents showed a lower level of employment to support their studies than did their female peers (Table SS.21). A shade over half of the full-time respondents said that they were in receipt of some form of grant support for their course. The receipt of a grant, or not, made no difference to the likelihood that the student undertook employment to support their studies (Table A2.10).

Table A2.10: The relationship between the receipt of grant support and the undertaking of part-time employment

		Employment to support studies?		
		No	Yes	Total
Grant support?	No	163 (27%)	114 (19%)	277 (45%)
	Yes	206 (34%)	128 (21%)	334 (55%)
	Total	369 (60%)	242 (40%)	611 (100%)

(Percentages are based on the totality of respondents.)

Family issues

Over one-third of the respondents said that they were the first in their family to enter higher education (Table A2.11).

Table A2.11: First in family to enter higher education

Are you the first in your family to enter higher education?	N	Per cent
No	407	63.6
Yes	233	36.4
Total respondents	640	100.0

In cases where the question applied, families[10] were almost always supportive of the respondent's choice to enrol in a programme in Art and Design (Table A2.12).

Table A2.12: Family support for the decision to study Art and Design

Did your family agree with your decision to study Art and Design?	N	Per cent
No	28	4.6
Yes	575	95.4
Total respondents	603	100.0

[10] 'Family' was elaborated in the question as follows: "The word 'family' is used very broadly here, covering parents, guardian, partner, etc. Interpreting 'your family' as 'your nearest and dearest' perhaps captures the essence of this question."

Supplementary statistics

Table SS.1: The extent to which a visit assisted appreciation of the nature of the course

If you visited the institution when deciding on your course, how clearly did the visit assist your appreciation of what the course would be like?	N	Per cent
Not at all	24	3.9
Vaguely	139	22.6
Fairly clearly	237	38.6
Very clearly	214	34.9
Total applicable responses	614	100.0

Table SS.2: Informativeness of information and visit, by age

Age in 3 bands	Pre-enrolment information re 1st year experience 5-point scale, 0-4	Visit informative about course? 4-point scale, 0-3
Under 21	2.09 (N=467)	2.10 (N=396)
21-25	1.86 (N=93)	1.96 (N=67)
Over 25	1.83 (N=89)	1.96 (N=78)
Overall	2.02	2.06

Table SS.3: Informativeness of information and visit, by ethnicity (dichotomised)

Ethnicity dichotomised	Pre-enrolment information re 1st year experience 5-point scale, 0-4	Visit informative about course? 4-point scale, 0-3
British	2.07 (N=505)	2.11 (N=446)
Not British	1.83 (N=229)	1.86 (N=168)
Total	1.99 (N=734)	2.04 (N=614)

Table SS.4: Influences on the choice of institution

Influences on choice of institution	Not influential	Moderately influential	Very influential	Response count
The institution's prospectus	121 (16%)	417 (54%)	230 (31%)	768
Visit to the institution	105 (14%)	206 (27%)	463 (60%)	774
Portfolio interview	161 (21%)	260 (34%)	334 (44%)	755
Recommendation from teachers at school or college	278 (36%)	263 (34%)	224 (29%)	765
Recommendation from careers service at school or college	457 (61%)	214 (28%)	83 (11%)	754
Recommendation from student(s) already studying there	285 (37%)	243 (32%)	236 (31%)	764
Recommendation from friend(s)	341 (45%)	253 (33%)	163 (22%)	757
Comments on social networking sites (eg Facebook)	471 (62%)	224 (30%)	63 (8%)	758

Recommendation from family member(s) – include partner as family	374 (49%)	268 (35%)	117 (15%)	759
'League tables' (rankings) of institutions published in the press	349 (46%)	262 (34%)	150 (20%)	761
Location of the institution	77 (10%)	233 (30%)	462 (60%)	772
Other	123	18	103	244

Table SS.5: Matches of aspects of experience of the first year, by gender

		Match with expectations			
Gender	N range (high-low)	Teaching 5-point scale 0-4	Assessment methods 3-point scale 0-2	Learning environment 5-point scale 0-4	Course organisation 5-point scale 0-4
Male	123-121	2.17	1.46	2.42	1.98
Female	503-499	2.29	1.53	2.55	2.11
Total	626-620	2.26	1.52	2.52	2.09

Table SS.6: Matches of aspects of experience of the first year, by disability declaration

		Match with expectations			
Disability	N range (high-low)	Teaching 5-point scale 0-4	Assessment methods 3-point scale 0-2	Learning environment 5-point scale 0-4	Course organisation 5-point scale 0-4
Not declared	553-549	2.28	1.53	2.58	2.10
Declared	69-67	2.12	1.49	**2.19**	1.91
Total	622-616	2.26	1.52	2.53	2.08

Table SS.7: Matches of aspects of experience of the first year, by age

Age in 3 bands	N range (high-low)	Teaching 5-point scale 0-4	Assessment methods 3-point scale 0-2	Learning environment 5-point scale 0-4	Course organisation 5-point scale 0-4
Under 21	466-463	2.32	1.53	2.55	2.11
21-25	94-92	2.03	1.40	2.46	2.07
Over 25	89-87	2.29	1.58	2.55	2.08
Total	649-642	2.27	1.52	2.53	2.10

Table SS.8: Matches of aspects of experience of the first year, by prior degree-level experience

First time at degree level?	N range (high-low)	Teaching 5-point scale 0-4	Assessment methods 3-point scale 0-2	Learning environment 5-point scale 0-4	Course organisation 5-point scale 0-4
No	98-96	2.09	1.41	2.40	2.03
Yes	555-552	2.30	1.53	2.55	2.11
Total	653-648	2.27	1.51	2.53	2.10

Table SS.9: Attendance at induction and its value, by age

Age in 3 bands	Attended induction? Yes=1, No=0	Induction value 5-point scale, 0-4
Under 21	0.66 (N=464)	2.36 (N=310)
21-25	0.72 (N=93)	2.13 (N=67)
Over 25	0.71 (N=89)	2.05 (N=63)
Overall	0.68	2.28

Table SS.10: Attendance at induction and its value, by ethnicity (dichotomised)

Ethnicity dichotomised	Attended induction? Yes=1, No=0	Induction value 5-point scale, 0-4
British	0.68 (N=503)	2.28 (N=343)
Not British	0.65 (N=227)	2.25 (N=151)
Total	0.67 (N=730)	2.27 (N=494)

Female respondents claimed, to a greater degree than their male peers, the possession of A-level qualifications (Table SS.11) and that they had attended a course intended to prepare them for higher education in Art and Design (Table SS.12).

Table SS.11: A-level entry qualifications, by gender

		A-Level qualifications		
		No	Yes	Total
Gender	Male	53 (41%)	77 (59%)	130
	Female	147 (29%)	363 (71%)	510
Total		200 (31%)	440 (69%)	640

Table SS.12: The undertaking of a preparatory course for Art and Design, by gender

		Preparatory course		
		No	Yes	Total
Gender	Male	53 (41%)	76 (59%)	129
	Female	164 (33%)	339 (67%)	503
Total		217 (34%)	415 (66%)	632

The youngest respondents were more likely than their older peers to have entered higher education on the basis of A-level qualifications (Table SS.13), but were marginally less likely to have undertaken a course specifically preparing them for entry to Art and Design in higher education (Table SS.14).

Table SS.13: A-level entry qualifications, by age

		A-Level qualifications		
		No	Yes	Total
Age in 3 bands	Under 21	108 (23%)	355 (77%)	463
	21-25	46 (50%)	46 (50%)	92
	Over 25	47 (53%)	42 (47%)	89
Total		201	443	644

Table SS.14: The undertaking of a preparatory course for Art and Design, by age

		Preparatory course		
		No	Yes	Total
Age in 3 bands	Under 21	168 (37%)	291 (63%)	459
	21-25	25 (28%)	64 (72%)	89
	Over 25	25 (28%	63 (72%)	88
Total		218 (34%)	418 (66%)	636

Table SS.15: A-level entry qualifications, by disability declaration

		A-Level qualifications		
		No	Yes	Total
Disability declared	No	166 (30%)	396 (71%)	562
	Yes	30 (42%)	42 (58%)	72
Total		196 (31%)	438 (69%)	634

Table SS.16: The undertaking of a preparatory course for Art and Design, by disability declaration

		Preparatory course		
		No	Yes	Total
Disability declared	No	196 (35%)	360 (65%)	556
	Yes	16 (23%)	55 (78%)	71
Total		212 (34%)	415 (66%)	627

Table SS.17: A-level entry qualifications, by ethnicity (dichotomised)

	A-Level qualifications		
	No	Yes	Total
British	132 (26%)	372 (74%)	504 (100%)
Not British	72 (49%)	74 (51%)	146 (100%)
Total	204 (31%)	446 (69%)	650 (100%)

Table SS.18: The undertaking of a preparatory course for Art and Design, by ethnicity (dichotomised)

	Preparatory course		
	No	Yes	Total
British	159 (32%)	340 (68%)	499 (100%)
Not British	63 (44%)	80 (56%)	143 (100%)
Total	222 (35%)	420 (65%)	642 (100%)

Table SS.19: The undertaking of part-time employment to support studies, by age

		Employment to support studies?		
		No	Yes	Total
Age in 3 bands	Under 21	292 (64%)	164 (36%)	456
	21-25	44 (49%)	46 (51%)	90
	Over 25	34 (51%)	33 (49%)	67
Total		370	243	613

Table SS.20: The undertaking of part-time employment to support studies, by ethnicity (dichotomised)

	Employment to support studies?		
	No	Yes	Total
British	296 (59%)	208 (41%)	504 (100%)
Not British	94 (64%)	53 (36%)	147 (100%)
Total	390 (60%)	261 (40%)	651 (100%)

Table SS.21: The undertaking of part-time employment to support studies, by gender

		Employment to support studies?		
		No	Yes	Total
Gender	Male	87 (67%)	43 (33%)	130
	Female	295 (58%)	214 (42%)	509
Total		382 (60%)	257 (40%)	639

Table SS.22: Attendance level, by age

		Attendance level dichotomised		
		Fair or worse	Good or very good	Total
Age in 3 bands	Under 21	71 (15%)	395 (85%)	466
	21-25	22 (23%)	72 (77%)	94
	Over 25	5 (6%)	83 (94%)	88
Total		98 (15%)	550 (85%)	648

Table SS.23: Perceived link between attendance level and achievement, by age

		Link between attendance and achievement?			
		No	Not sure	Yes	Total
Age in 3 bands	Under 21	98 (21%)	92 (20%)	274 (59%)	464
	21-25	31 (33%)	24 (26%)	39 (42%)	94
	Over 25	19 (22%)	12 (14%)	57 (65%)	88
Total		148	128	370	646

Table SS.24: Perceived link between attendance level and achievement, by gender

		Link between attendance and achievement?			
		No	Not sure	Yes	Total
Gender	Male	41 (31%)	18 (14%)	72 (55%)	131
	Female	107 (21%)	109 (21%)	295 (58%)	511
Total		148 (23%)	127 (20%)	367 (57%)	642

Table SS.25: Perceived link between attendance level and achievement, by ethnicity (dichotomised)

	Link between attendance and achievement?			
	No	Not sure	Yes	Total
British	111 (22%)	90 (18%)	304 (60%)	505 (100%)
Not British	41 (28%)	39 (26%)	69 (46%)	149 (100%)
Total	152 (23%)	129 (20%)	373 (57%)	654 (100%)

Table SS.26: Percentage reporting having received feedback via crits and informally, by age

Age	Crits	Informal feedback
Under 21	73.4%	55.9%
21-25	63.8%	51.1%
Over 25	60.7%	67.4%

Table SS.27: Percentage reporting having received feedback via crits and informally, by ethnicity (dichotomised)

Ethnicity	Crits	Informal feedback
British	73.1%	60.1%
Not British	61.1%	46.7%

Table SS.28: Expectation of booking space and/or equipment, by gender

	Expectation regarding the booking of space and/or equipment		
Gender	No expectation	Expectation	Total
Male	10 (15%)	59 (86%)	69 (100%)
Female	69 (28%)	179 (72%)	248 (100%)
Total	79 (25%)	238 (75%)	317 (100%)

(Percentages by row.)

Table SS.29: Rating of technicians' contribution to the first-year experience, by gender

Gender	Technicians' contribution
Male	2.15 (N=125)
Female	2.38 (N=492)
Overall	2.55

(Scale runs from 0 to 3.)