'Erm, that question…. I think I probably would've just put some in the middle and sort of moved on to the next one, because I think it's really unclear' :

How art and design students understand and interpret the National Student Survey

Dr. Bernadette Blair, Professor Susan Orr, Professor Mantz Yorke

'I can't believe it's not better!'

How do art and design students understand and interpret the questions in the National Student Survey?

Key Research Aims

- To understand why art and design subjects receive the ratings on the NSS that they do.

- To illuminate and understand how art and design students interpret and understand this generic questionnaire.

- To provide further information to assist staff and students to prepare for the NSS.

National Student Survey

Ipsos MORI hefce HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND Unistats from universities and colleges in the UK IN ASSOCIATION WITH UCAS nus national union of students tda DH Department of Health Ipsos

Please write in your date and month of birth.
This information is essential to validate your response.
We may contact you again if your date and month of birth are missing or incorrect.

| DD | MM |

For each statement, show the extent of your agreement or disagreement by putting a cross in the **one** box ☒ which best reflects your current view of the <u>course as a whole</u>. If you need to change your answer obliterate your cross by completely shading the box ▨ then place a cross in the correct box. Please use black or blue ink pen.

	Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree	Not applicable
The teaching on my course						
1. Staff are good at explaining things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Staff have made the subject interesting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. The course is intellectually stimulating	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Assessment and feedback						
5. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Feedback on my work has been prompt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I have received detailed comments on my work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic support						
10. I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Organisation and management						
13. The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. The course is well organised and is running smoothly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learning resources						
16. The library resources and services are good enough for my needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities, or rooms when I needed to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

HUSID

Serial No.

11012598/V1

Please turn over to complete the questionnaire ➡

Response time lines

- The summative experience of the entire course

- The final year experience

- The experience in recent weeks

NSS statement 1

'Staff are good at explaining things'

NSS statement 4

'The course is intellectually stimulating'

'Intellectually threw me a bit because it's stimulating; I think it's challenging, but I don't always think it's intellectually challenging in a sort of academic sense. Intellectual to me is more academic than sort I suppose of design-based things, so that word threw me a little bit. So I guess that affected my answer slightly as well.'

Fashion student

'My definition would be that the course is giving you enough motivation to go and find out more about the course. Well, not just the course but what the course involves in the real world. That's what I think intellectually means. Interesting parts of how the world is changing for the course.'

Graphic Design Student

Intellectually is a funny word to use for a design course […] Because it's not intellectual. It's not a sorting of books subject [sic]. just interpreted it as, did I find it interesting?

Graphic Design student

My definition would be that the course is giving you enough motivation to go and find out more about the course. Well, not just the course but what the course involves in the real world. That's what I think intellectually means. Interesting parts of how the world is changing for the course.

Graphic Design Student

NSS statement 7

'Feedback on my work has been prompt'.

Yeah, not the feedback from like … like we'd have discussions about how according to the research ……….. well have you thought about looking at this, looking at that, because that's not… I reckon that's not feedback, that's more of a personal sort of one-to-one, that's teaching, not feedback, I'd say.

… I was thinking just about crit situations really, because we do get feedback quite promptly, but that wouldn't necessarily reflect the whole three years of the course. I was focussing more on my final year

NSS statement 8

"I have received detailed comments on my work"

- *I think it has been more tutorial based and verbal, and I've had to write down myself or record them or whatever. But in the first year we got loads of written comments, but not enough... not really any tutorials.*

- *That's kind of about… I was thinking about what written feedback do we get rather than… because if you have a tutorial, it's more kind of just conversational whereas there's not much written feedback in the third year than there is in the second and third year. Yes, I kind of… not dismissed, but kind of forgot about the first and second year. I didn't take that into account.*

I think it should be written, like. Verbal, they could say one thing and like, next week they come back and say something completely different to what they said,

NSS statement 9

'Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand'

It's tricky on our course, because a lot of what we do you only know unless you do it, so somebody can give you feedback and you can think it's a good idea but you don't understand it until you've done it, if that makes sense. And you can get so many different responses from different people, different tutors, your peers can give you different ideas and take you on a different spin. So feedback is helpful, but I don't know if it clarifies my understanding. A lot of the designers do end up a bit confused just because people interpret your work differently to how you intended it to be and it might be positive or it might be not.

When it says my work, you have studio work, dissertation work, and they are two completely separate things because dissertation, that's the more academic side so that's definitely got a question and you answer it, whereas our studio work is a lot different to that and so there's no clarity in the question as to which it's referring to. But I would always, most of the time, think about my design work because that's what is most important.

….so from an art perspective, rather than a sort of right or wrong answer perspective, I suppose I've got an issue, I've got a bit of a problem with the question in that, you know, I might well have been told something I didn't know, but it might not have been something I didn't understand.

NSS statement 15

'The course is well organised and is running smoothly'

Instead of well-organised, it's not noticing that it's not organised - if that makes sense (laughs). It's when you notice that things aren't going very well planned, then I would say it's unorganised, but to be well-organised you shouldn't notice.

I think without any glitches really, like everything's on time; everything's pre-booked in advance; the timetables are printed out, like the term ones, like everything exactly that happens on each day. That's what I think it's trying to ask me. But obviously things change, so ... But I can always imagine that an academic subject would be like that. I feel it would be like that, because they have lectures like twice a week or whatever, but we don't have really lectures. We have talks and those talks could be cancelled or changed, or all of a sudden they're doing tutorials instead and we're all going, like, whoah.... I don't really look at my timetable at all really, because I know it's going to change so I'm just like mmmm....

when we get industry in to talks, they can't always make it and we can't expect them to always be there, and they've got their own jobs and their own lives, so we don't expect anything, really. I think that's quite the same for everybody. I don't think we expect anyone to be on time or we don't expect anyone to be in ... Some of the tutorials run over, like the time that you've got runs over, but they always expand, extend it so they keep quite flexible. I think it's quite a wasted ... yes, it is a wasted question I think. Because you don't know how to answer it really.

it's partly to do with taking responsibility for your learning; it's partly to do with maybe your personal circumstances; partly to do with how you're finding it, and whether you're managing the workload, organising yourself – I think. It's really interesting, when you actually sit and look at the questions, because they're … quite ambiguous, aren't they?

NSS statement 18

'I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities or rooms when I needed to'

I think I was thinking more about the technicians. But at the same time, they're in charge and you're like no, you know, can't do it, can't do it.

And they get this whole tone of voice where it's just like, hump, like this fed up tone of voice.

NSS statement 22

'Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the course'

It's just a very general statement so I just kind of gave a general answer. So the quality of the course… I mean, there's so much to think about on the course you can't… it does seem a bit silly to have one little box to tick and answer on behalf of everything. Because the course is not just one thing but many different aspects so I just kind of… I don't know what it involved but it just kind of summarised. I just didn't give that one much thought really because it's just a general question.

*I thought the word **quality** was quite important in this statement because there's a lot of things I feel that contribute to the quality of the course; the teaching, and then it's the organisation and the running of it as well. And a lot of things were different ends of the spectrum again. Some things were great and some things weren't so good, so I felt that sort of skewed it again a bit. I almost would have preferred it to have been split slightly so that you could have answered on both levels, the organisation and the teaching qualities. Because when it's all lumped together it becomes a bit skewed.*

I don't know how the survey works, but if it's about the course then each survey should be more tailored towards what the course you're doing is

You can tell they [the NSS questions] are not worded for a design course. I can't remember what some of the questions were talking about but... I think it was one of the first ones.

Yes, explaining things as well as intellectually stimulating. No, they're not worded for a design course. Even stuff about booking facilities and rooms.

Implications for practice and recommendations

- Clarification and further discussion with students is needed on the terminology used by these generic questionnaires and how they may relate to their art and design discipline.

- Many questions were responded to in relation to the students' recent experience with only a few being related to the whole course experience.

Implications for practice and recommendations

- The responses raised around assessment and feedback also highlights the question "do the students see studio practice as feedback or do they see this as teaching/learning and then the feedback happens somewhere else.

- The key role that technicians play in the way students answer the NSS questionnaire was highlighted by the responses.

there have been instances identified where such students have got the feedback scale on similarly structured questionnaires the wrong way round, thereby giving the opposite view to the one they intended – does this also follow for the NSS? (p.31)