

The NSS: a perfect storm hitting Art & Design?

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An analysis of data from the 2011 NSS

Analysis based on post-92 universities and colleges in the UK which were running studio-based first degrees

JACS Level 3 subject areas:

Architecture

Fine Art

Design

Cine & Photo

Other Creative Art & Design

Nursing (practical, high contact)

Imaginative Writing (creative)

Biology ('academic', specialist equipment)

Law ('academic', PT staff)

Business Studies (PT staff)

History ('academic')

Music

Drama

Dance

A caveat

The NSS scores are based on student perceptions which may or may not accord with the perceptions of others

Nevertheless, NSS data should prompt reflection as to why the students respond as they do

Comparisons between Art & Design subjects

Brief indication of question	Arch	FineArt	Design	Cine&P	Other Cr A&D
1 Explaining	0.78	0.81	0.81	0.79	0.78
2 Subject interesting	0.79	0.80	0.79	0.75	0.79
3 Staff enthusiastic	0.82	0.84	0.82	0.79	0.81
4 Intellectually stimulating	0.82	0.78	0.75	0.70	0.76
5 Clear assessment criteria	0.61	0.70	0.69	0.69	0.70
6 Assessment arrangements fair	0.62	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.70
7 Prompt feedback	0.59	0.72	0.67	0.59	0.67
8 Detailed comments	0.65	0.77	0.73	0.69	0.74
9 Clarify things not understood	0.65	0.72	0.69	0.62	0.67
10 Advice & support	0.69	0.73	0.72	0.70	0.72
11 Contact staff when needed	0.76	0.76	0.77	0.75	0.72
12 Advice for study choices	0.69	0.72	0.72	0.70	0.68
13 Timetable effective	0.69	0.78	0.73	0.71	0.72
14 Effective communication of changes	0.62	0.63	0.63	0.59	0.61
15 Course organisation	0.56	0.60	0.57	0.53	0.57
16 Library	0.83	0.85	0.79	0.79	0.83
17 IT	0.80	0.84	0.79	0.84	0.81
18 Specialist equipment	0.70	0.75	0.70	0.73	0.69
19 Present with confidence	0.74	0.78	0.75	0.70	0.77
20 Communication skills	0.82	0.80	0.80	0.75	0.79
21 Tackling unfamiliar problems	0.77	0.76	0.76	0.69	0.74
22 Overall satisfaction	0.74	0.76	0.73	0.68	0.73

Comparisons with particularly 'academic' subjects

- A&D broadly weaker than Bio, Hist, Law, Perf Arts re teaching (Q1-4)

Brief indication of question	Biol	Law	Hist	Arch	FineArt	Design	Cine&P	Other Cr A&D	Music	Drama	Dance
1 Explaining	0.91	0.89	0.95	0.78	0.81	0.81	0.79	0.78	0.86	0.87	0.87
2 Subject interesting	0.81	0.79	0.91	0.79	0.80	0.79	0.75	0.79	0.83	0.86	0.85
3 Staff enthusiastic	0.85	0.82	0.93	0.82	0.84	0.82	0.79	0.81	0.86	0.88	0.89
4 Intellectually stimulating	0.85	0.86	0.90	0.82	0.78	0.75	0.70	0.76	0.74	0.80	0.81

- A&D and Perf Arts weaker re Org & Man (Q14,15)

Brief indication of question	Biol	Law	Hist	Arch	FineArt	Design	Cine&P	Other Cr A&D	Music	Drama	Dance
14 Effective communication of changes	0.74	0.73	0.80	0.62	0.63	0.63	0.59	0.61	0.63	0.65	0.64
15 Course organisation	0.70	0.75	0.84	0.56	0.60	0.57	0.53	0.57	0.58	0.59	0.62

Comparisons with practice-oriented subjects

- A&D generally weaker than Nursing, Perf Arts re teaching (Q1-4)

Brief indication of question	Nurs	Arch	FineArt	Design	Cine&P	Other Cr A&D	Music	Drama	Dance
1 Explaining	0.89	0.78	0.81	0.81	0.79	0.78	0.86	0.87	0.87
2 Subject interesting	0.85	0.79	0.80	0.79	0.75	0.79	0.83	0.86	0.85
3 Staff enthusiastic	0.89	0.82	0.84	0.82	0.79	0.81	0.86	0.88	0.89
4 Intellectually stimulating	0.87	0.82	0.78	0.75	0.70	0.76	0.74	0.80	0.81

- All subjects relatively weak re Org & Man (Q14,15)

Brief indication of question	Nurs	Arch	FineArt	Design	Cine&P	Other Cr A&D	Music	Drama	Dance
14 Effective communication of changes	0.59	0.62	0.63	0.63	0.59	0.61	0.63	0.65	0.64
15 Course organisation	0.55	0.56	0.60	0.57	0.53	0.57	0.58	0.59	0.62

- Nursing marginally best re Personal Development (Q19-21), especially re communication skills (Q20)

Brief indication of question	Nurs	Arch	FineArt	Design	Cine&P	Other Cr A&D	Music	Drama	Dance
19 Present with confidence	0.86	0.74	0.78	0.75	0.70	0.77	0.74	0.82	0.79
20 Communication skills	0.91	0.82	0.80	0.80	0.75	0.79	0.76	0.84	0.82
21 Tackling unfamiliar problems	0.88	0.77	0.76	0.76	0.69	0.74	0.71	0.80	0.77

Comparisons with subjects employing more PT staff

- A&D weakest re contact with staff (Q11)

Brief indication of question	Nurs	Law	BusSt	Arch	FineArt	Design	Cine&P	Other Cr A&D	Music	Drama	Dance
11 Contact staff when needed	0.80	0.81	0.80	0.76	0.76	0.77	0.75	0.72	0.81	0.80	0.83

Comparisons with subjects using specialist equipment

- No major differences

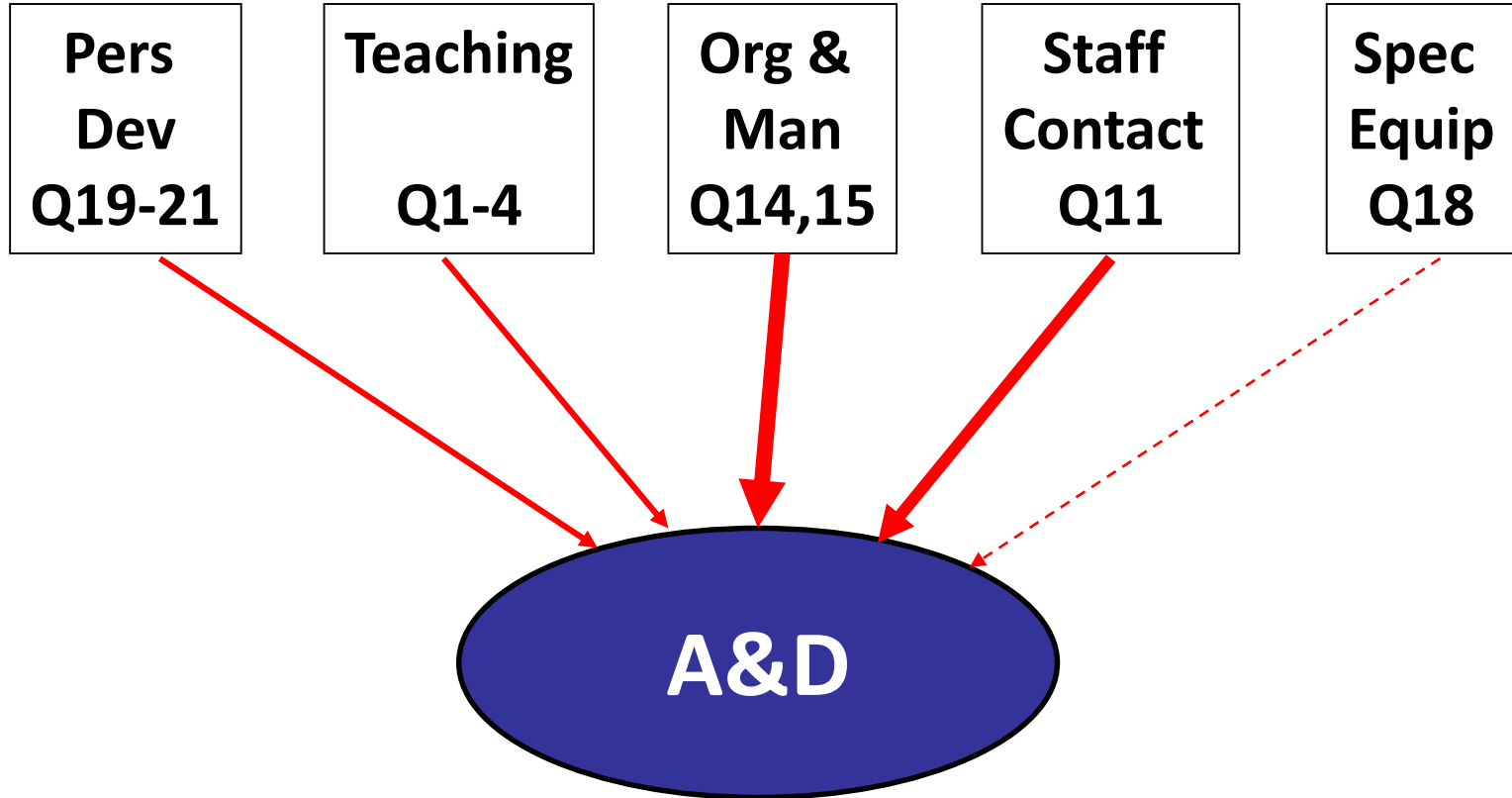
Brief indication of question	Nurs	Biol	Arch	FineArt	Design	Cine&P	Other Cr A&D	Music	Drama	Dance
18 Specialist equipment	0.77	0.74	0.70	0.75	0.70	0.73	0.69	0.71	0.65	0.69

Comparisons with subjects emphasising creativity

- Imaginative writing showed up marginally better than Fine Art, which in turn showed as better than the other A&D subjects and Perf Arts.

Brief indication of question	Imag Writ	Arch	FineArt	Design	Cine&P	Other Cr A&D	Music	Drama	Dance
1 Explaining	0.90	0.78	0.81	0.81	0.79	0.78	0.86	0.87	0.87
2 Subject interesting	0.86	0.79	0.80	0.79	0.75	0.79	0.83	0.86	0.85
3 Staff enthusiastic	0.89	0.82	0.84	0.82	0.79	0.81	0.86	0.88	0.89
4 Intellectually stimulating	0.81	0.82	0.78	0.75	0.70	0.76	0.74	0.80	0.81
16 Library	0.77	0.83	0.85	0.79	0.79	0.83	0.79	0.72	0.76
17 IT	0.78	0.80	0.84	0.79	0.84	0.81	0.83	0.79	0.83
18 Specialist equipment	0.71	0.70	0.75	0.70	0.73	0.69	0.71	0.65	0.69
19 Present with confidence	0.76	0.74	0.78	0.75	0.70	0.77	0.74	0.82	0.79
20 Communication skills	0.77	0.82	0.80	0.80	0.75	0.79	0.76	0.84	0.82
21 Tackling unfamiliar problems	0.72	0.77	0.76	0.76	0.69	0.74	0.71	0.80	0.77
22 Overall satisfaction	0.82	0.74	0.76	0.73	0.68	0.73	0.75	0.78	0.79

In summary: where A&D tends to lose out on the NSS



A partial redemption?

**If you ... attempt to measure quality across disciplines ... you find that some disciplines emerge consistently better than others, across different studies and different institutions. Either one has to accept that certain subjects are always taught less well than others, which seems highly unlikely, or that different measures of quality are better aligned with the consequences of some (disciplinary) pedagogic practices than with others. [...]
Comparing quality between disciplines is fraught with difficulties.**

Gibbs, 2010, p.46

Encouraging complacency?

Who's listening anyway?

A perfect storm?

No

But maybe a cold shower