



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE

# NSS data analysis to unpick student stereotypes

a look at Architecture and Built Environment  
programmes at Northumbria University

John Holmes

with contributions by Roger Penlington

Faculty of Engineering and Environment

# some literature

- Bennet and Kane (2014) Student's' interpretations of the meaning of questionnaire items in the NSS, *Quality in Higher Education*
  - *Feedback has been prompt.....*
  - *Students with high or low engagement, intrinsic or extrinsic learning orientation*
- Bell and Brooks (2017) What makes students satisfied? A discussion and analysis of the UK's NSS, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*
  - *'..the results the NSS are examples of realisations of a stochastic process so that results may rise and fall over time as a result of essentially random factors'*
- Pickford (2013) Leadership of the NSS for enhancement, *Quality Assurance in Education*
  - *Laissez Faire...benign neglect ...urgent action.....focussed intervention*

# Student stereotypes

- “Part time students are more critical.....especially quantity surveyors”



Glasgow Empire Theatre

# Not true.....

- Part time students are positive on
  - Staff are good at explaining things +25%
  - I have received sufficient advice +35%
  - Staff value students opinions +30%
  - Overall I am satisfied with quality +20%
- Negative on
  - I feel part of a community... -23%
  - Marking criteria made clear -22%
- Neutral on
  - Opportunities to explore ideas
  - Opportunities to bring information
  - Access to resources

# Student stereotypes

- “Female students are nicer...”



# not really true

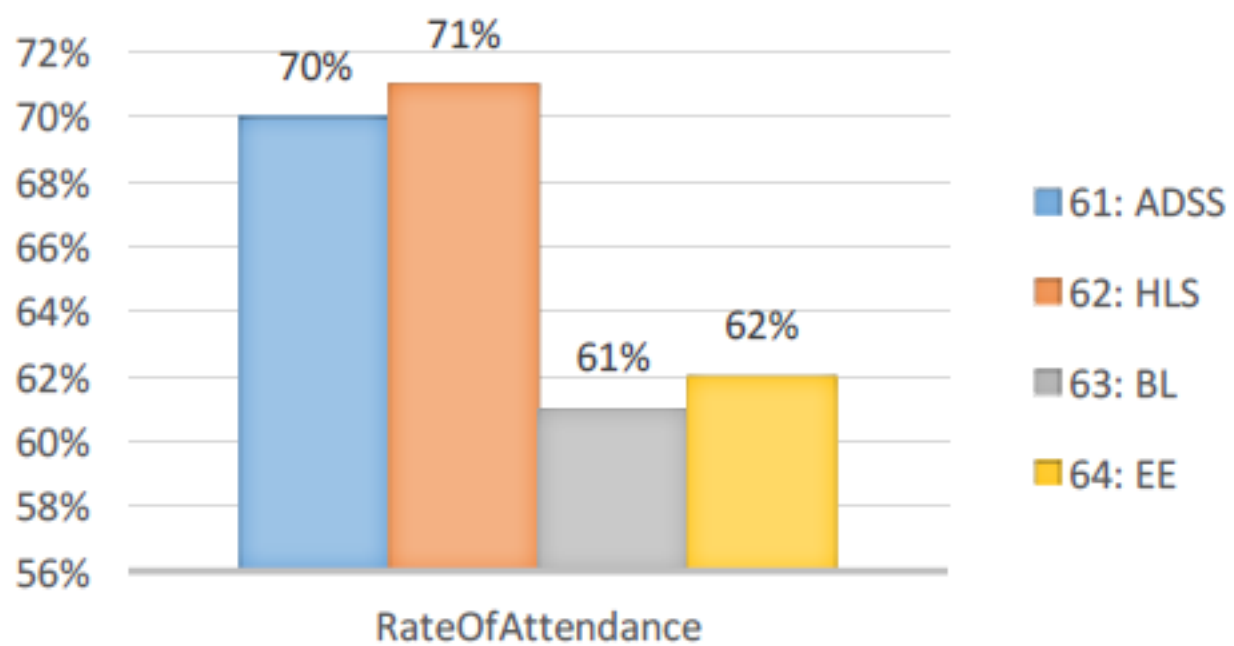
- **Female architecture students positive on**
  - Overall satisfaction +12%
- **Negative on**
  - Feedback on work has been timely -15%
  - Changes communicate effectively -11%
- **Neutral on**
  - Everything else +/- 5%

# Student stereotypes

- “Students vote with their feet”

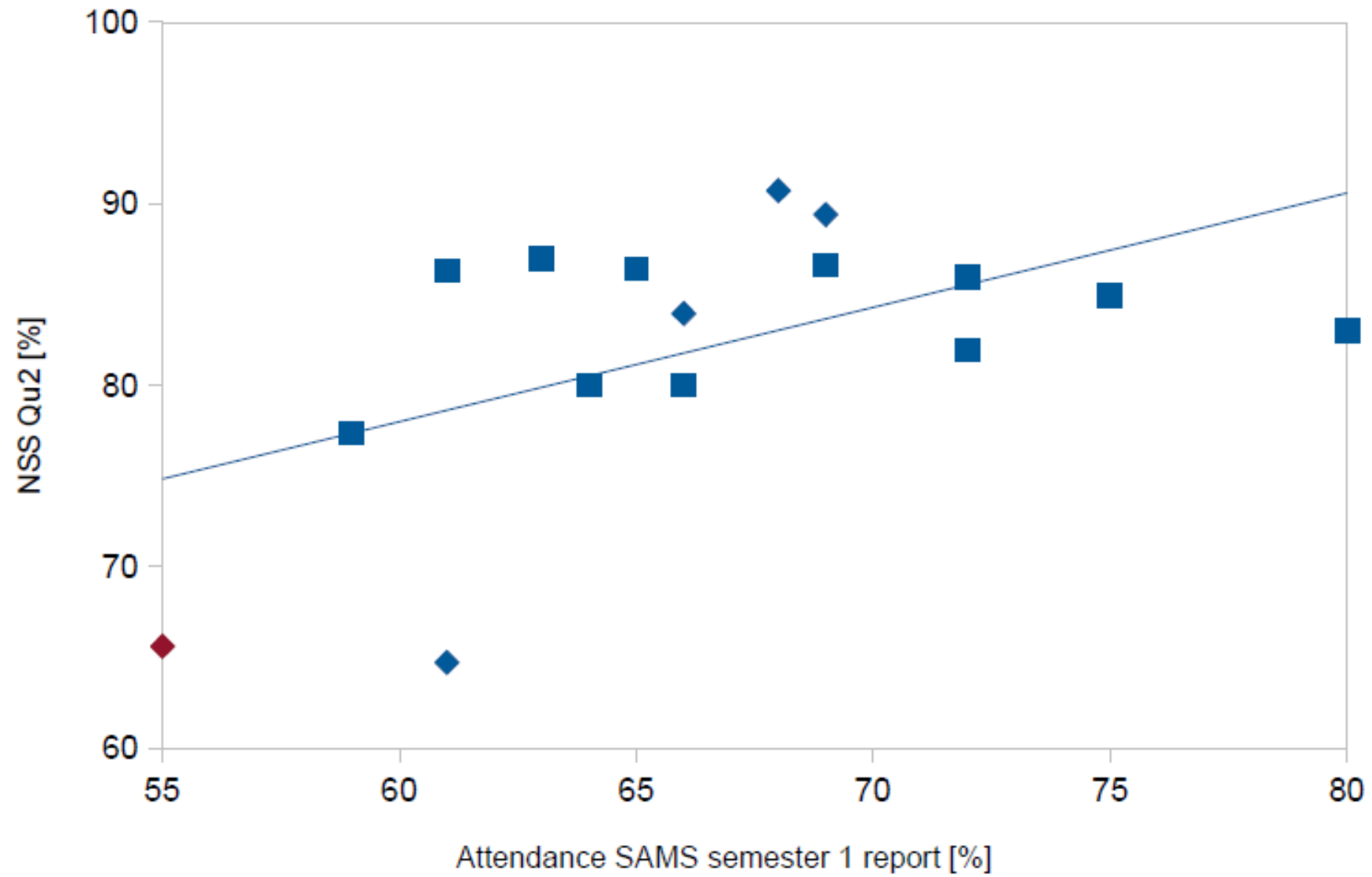


## RATE OF ATTENDANCE

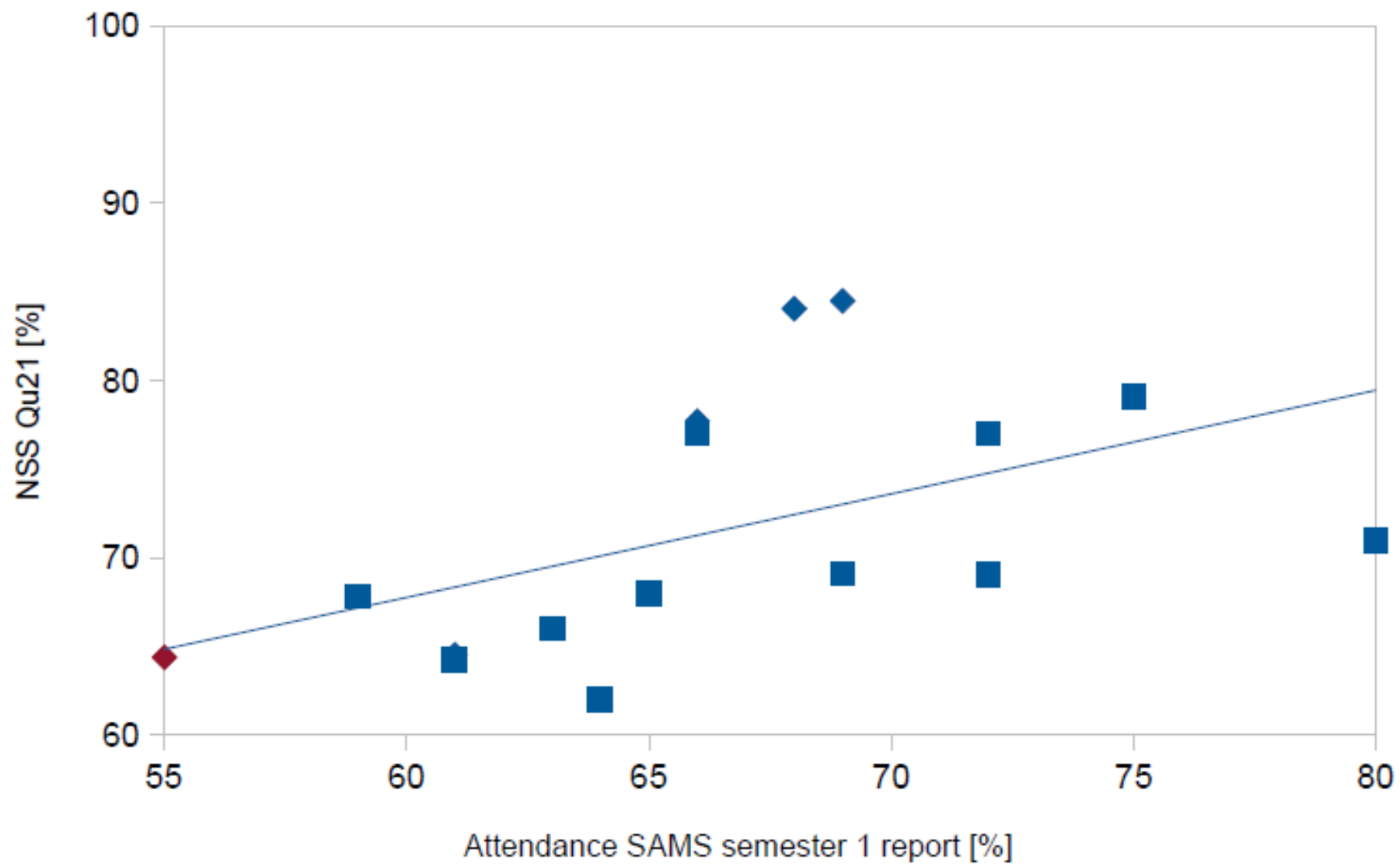




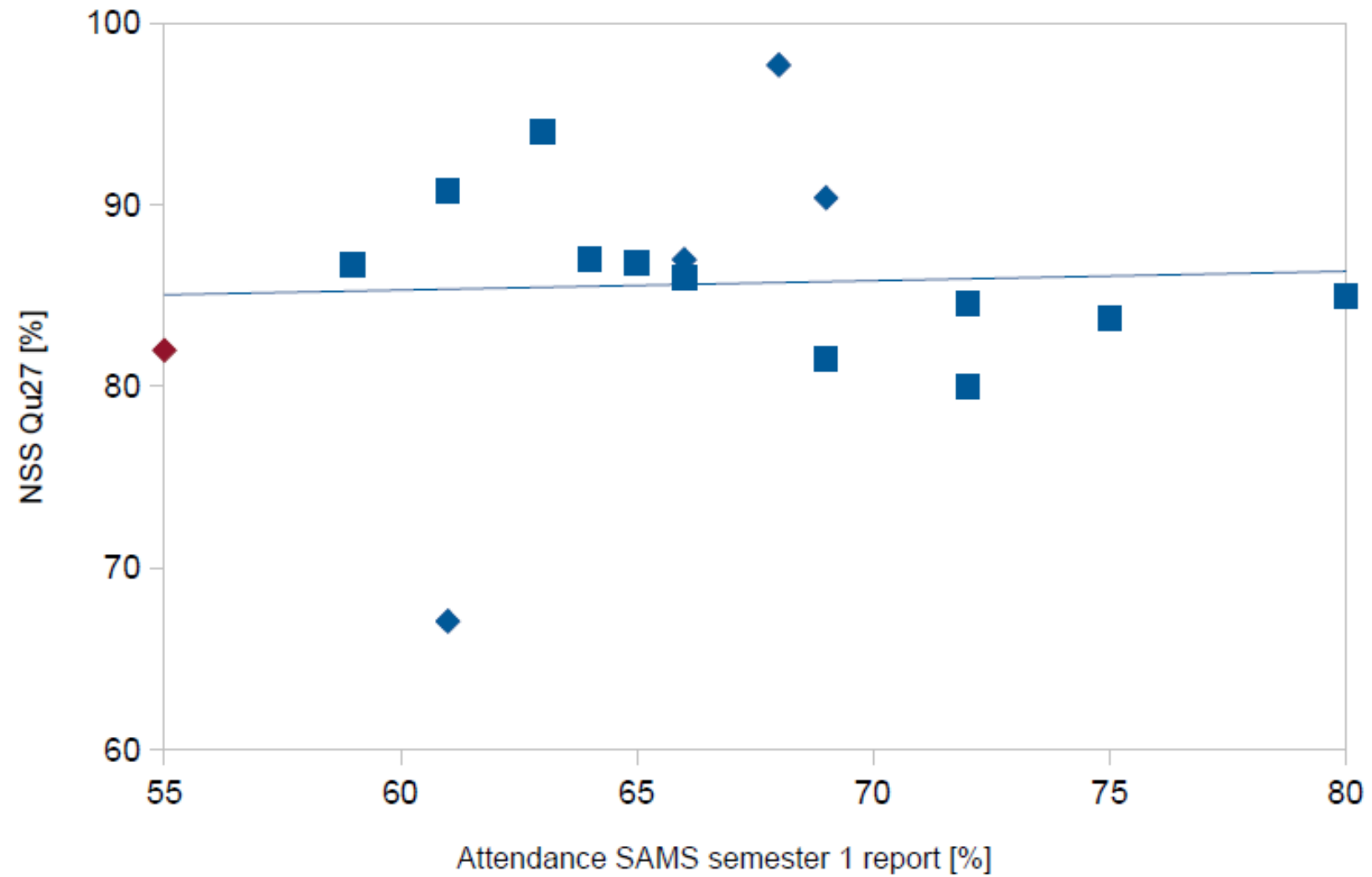
## Staff have made the subject interesting



# I feel part of a community of staff and students



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



# Other areas

- Little differentiation in Architecture and Built Environment programme NSS scores when analysed under the headings of ethnicity, disability and deprivation.
- An analysis at **Faculty** level of progression and employment indicates.....
  - Males are less likely to progress with their studies and are also less satisfied in the NSS
  - Males have lower proportions of good honours than females and have lower graduate prospects
  - White students achieve the highest proportion of good honours
  - Asian students achieve the best graduate prospects
  - Students with a specific learning difficulty hold the highest rate of progression but have the lowest satisfaction in the NSS

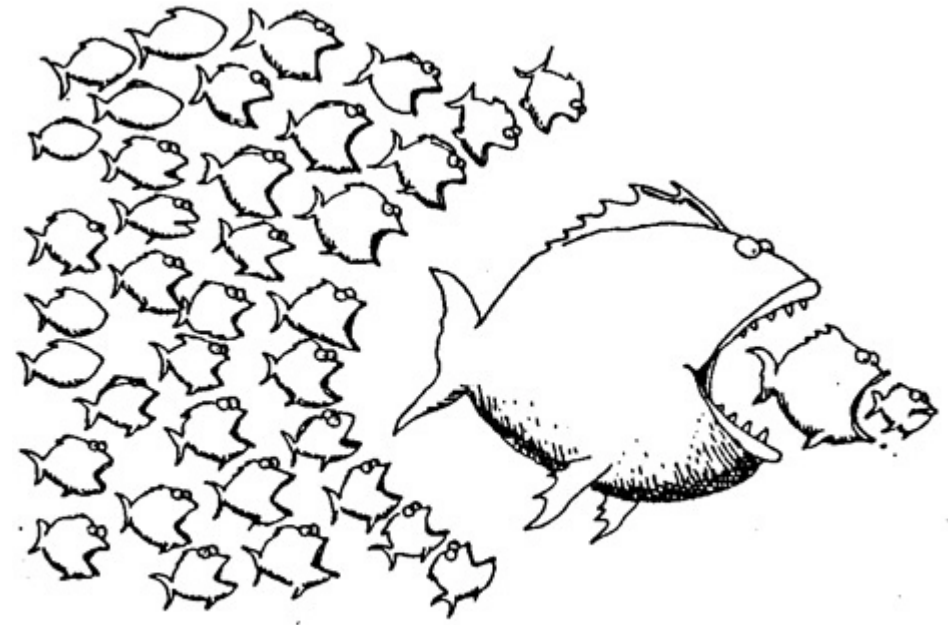
# the remedy – action plans

- Programme leaders produce action plans to remedy areas where the programme NSS score is lower than the 'sector upper quartile'
- Signed off by Faculty Lead on Teaching and Learning and Head of Department
- Subject to mid-year review to confirm completion



# action plans – the reality

- Action Plan circulated to staff but not a living document at the centre of programme management
- Many remedies outwith the control of the programme
- Actions not shared with students (which would act as a spur to completion and evidence of concern for their experience)
- Mid year ‘completion’ means attempted not necessarily achieved



# In conclusion

- We can observe that in practice the best, most cohesive, dedicated teaching team get better NSS results than the chaotic collection of staff all pursuing their own agenda
- as Bells and Brooks assert...
- 'It is common for score for a given course at the same institution to vary from one year to another, sometimes substantially, yet typically the structure of the course, the teaching staff and the facilities change relatively slowly. The only factor changing systematically from one year to another is the student body itself and so perhaps these year on year variations say more about the students than the quality of the provision'.
- Employ the right people and train them effectively and the NSS will look after itself