‘I can’t believe it’s not better’: The Paradox of NSS scores for Art & Design

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Executive Summary

Art & Design makes a substantial contribution to the national economy. It is a national success story. Yet when it is viewed through the lens of the National Student Survey [NSS], it does not come out well in comparison with other subject areas – hence the paradox.

GLAD (the Group for Learning in Art and Design) saw the need to gain an understanding of why the paradox existed – to ‘get under the skin’ of the data. It commissioned the authors in November 2008 to undertake research into the way in which Art & Design has experienced, and responded to, the NSS. This research was supported with funds from the Art, Design, Media (ADM) Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy and the HEAD Trust. The study had both quantitative and qualitative components which were pursued in parallel. The conclusions and recommendations at the end of this report derive from the authors’ assessment of the two strands of data and their implications.

This report aims to help colleagues in art and design subjects (and possibly other creative arts subjects, given that many of the institutions involved deliver a range of provision including, for example, media and performing arts) to:

• Better understand why the subjects receive the ratings on the NSS that they do; and
• Identify how best they can respond to expectations and the enhancement of the student experience.

Twenty two higher education institutions (HEIs) from England and Wales (Scottish HEIs had not until recently taken part in the NSS) were initially invited to take part in the project with seventeen, all based in England, finally agreeing to participate. The initial list of invitations was derived from an analysis of NSS scores for 2005 and 2006 in the broader subject area of Creative Arts & Design. The HE institutions taking part had achieved a range of scores on the NSS and were representative of:

• specialist art and design university colleges;
• specialist art and design universities, each with a number of courses in the same subjects delivered in constituent colleges/campuses across a geographical area;
• universities with a range of art, design, media and other creative arts courses (such as performing arts and architecture), some of this being within specialist faculties, others within faculties/schools with a wide arts subject mix, and some also delivering their courses through arrangements with local further education colleges (FECs).

Interviews with the seventeen key informants sought to gain an insight into how, and to what effect, institutions have responded to NSS outcomes, alongside perceptions of the factors affecting student responses to the NSS. On completion of the seventeen interviews, which were conducted between December 2008 and early February 2009, a one-day focus group meeting was held in London at the end of March 2009, which brought together six of the colleagues who had been interviewed.

Detailed data from the 2007 NSS were analysed in respect of the broadest JACS grouping of 19 subject areas and the finest grouping of 107 subjects. The latter set of analyses had two components: first a comparison of how the NSS results from the three main subjects within Art & Design (Fine Art, Design Studies, Cinematic & Photographic Studies) stood in relation to a number of other subjects which were chosen to represent a range of pedagogic types and, second, an analysis of the differences in institutional
performance of each of these three subjects in respect of the NSS scales of Organisation & Management and Assessment & Feedback.

All of the institutions surveyed in this project noted that, since the NSS was clearly here to stay, they were now taking the NSS results very seriously. Some readily acknowledged that the results had been a “wake up call” and others that they had staff who had tended to rest on their laurels, taking a view that “we are better than others so we don’t have a problem”.

In no case were the institutions surveyed complacent or defensive in the interview discussions about the view now taken of the NSS results. In fact there was more a sense of frustration that the majority of results in Art & Design tended to reflect, at best, a weakly positive view by students, particularly in Organisation & Management and in Assessment & Feedback (the latter also being an issue across HE in general), and that despite actions taken to respond to some of the negativity such results had continued.

NSS results were now being considered, alongside other evidence, as part of annual institutional and course monitoring, leading to detailed action planning. Many of the institutions also undertook internal surveys, in advance of or alongside the NSS, based on the same or a similar range of questions. It had often been found that an outcome of this was that although the internal survey results carried similar messages to those from the NSS, the scoring and comments made by students on the NSS were generally much harsher, leading to a question about whether students felt there would be stronger pressure for action to result from an external survey.

An underlying concern in many of the interview discussions was how students in Art & Design interpret the NSS questions. Although there was no direct evidence cited, there was a widely held view that the pedagogy of the subjects in Art & Design, through which students are encouraged to explore and navigate their own way through projects with support, did not sit well with the questions in the NSS, which were felt to relate more to subjects with a highly timetabled, often lecture-based, structure. Added to this was concern that the NSS questions were not designed to draw out how the students' personal development (as opposed to perceptions of actual personal development) had been supported and whether they had received a well-rounded educational experience (a concern which could apply to the NSS across the whole of HE).

Broadly speaking, there was a view from the institutions surveyed that the NSS is forcing the sector to sharpen its game and to think about aspects that have not previously been addressed, in the way that the quality assurance agenda (which was considered very close to the reflective practices of Art & Design education) had done over the last few years. However, it was also felt that there was a need to make sure that the NSS did not simply lead to a paper or management showcasing exercise. It was also important to reflect more on the pedagogic culture of Art & Design, based as it is on the student experience, and to improve both our understanding of this and our ability to explain it.
Some important messages for the HE Art & Design subject sector

Evidence from the NSS points sharply to the need for the HE Art & Design sector to consider whether it has ‘got its provision right’ for the contemporary context, and whether perspectives and practices need to be adjusted – for example, in respect of pedagogic practice and programme management. Particularly at a time of economic stringency, it needs to provide funders and the public with evidence that it is giving students experiences that will serve them well in the wider world. Claims that Art & Design is a special case, and not amenable to the kinds of questioning that are applied to other subject areas, simply will not wash.

- Whilst the NSS has its weaknesses and is not ideal for subjects such as Art & Design, it is not going to go away, and hence it is something that the HE Art & Design sector has to come to terms with.
- Some institutions seem to be managing to achieve much stronger ratings than others on the NSS: through this survey some possible reasons relating to local circumstances have been highlighted, but these are unlikely to tell the full story or to provide sufficient evidence for change.
- The Organisation & Management scores indicate that some institutions do considerably better than others Is this, for example, because they make very clear to students what ‘the deal’ is; is it because they are able to better provide things as and when students need them; or are there other reasons?
- Through the survey interviews it was clear that the NSS, despite its weaknesses, can act as a valuable prompt to reflection and quality enhancement. Some institutions have clearly ‘got the message’.
- Institutions should, therefore, look closely at their NSS results alongside internal surveys and other sources of relevant information (including sensible comparators) and consider what they can do to improve the student experience. In support of this there may be a need for some assistance for some institutions with regard to the interpretation of statistical data. This may be something that the ADM Subject Centre should set in train.

And more broadly:

- Analysis of the NSS data indicates to institutions that, because of the differences between subjects, it is not sensible to expect similar profiles of scores across all subjects. However, it might be very helpful for any institution to undertake a direct comparison of how its Art & Design subject provision compares with that of other institutions (rather than simply with, say, History or Engineering in its own portfolio of offerings).

Issues identified through this report, and ongoing evidence from the NSS, demonstrate that the HE Art & Design subject sector now needs to decide on a series of actions if it is to bring about change. Uncorroborated conjecture and special pleading will not be taken seriously and there appear to be areas of pedagogic practice and management that have either been taken for granted or need to be better understood, developed and explained.
It is hoped that the HE Art & Design subject sector will find this report helpful and will give serious consideration to the issues identified, determining collectively the actions that it needs to take with some urgency.

1. The paradox

With the development of new media and new combinations of subjects over the past decade or so the HE Art & Design sector has become much more difficult to define. It is, however, a definable subject sector within the National Student Survey (NSS). In many institutions the title Faculty/School/Department of Art & Design has also become a misnomer, since the range of courses now offered often goes well beyond what was traditionally titled Art & Design.

Art & Design is part of what has become known as the Creative Industries sector, which, according to the Government has been, and continues to be, one of the major drivers of the UK economy. The Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) website, Creative Industries fact-file, notes

“Creative Industries accounted for 7.9% GDP in 2000; Four of the CI’s account for three quarters of the economic value of the grouping of sectors (Design - 2.8% of the whole economy; Software - 1.6%; Publishing - 0.9%; and Advertising - 0.7%). The CI’s grew by an average of 9% per annum between 1997 and 2000, compared to an average of 2.8% for the whole economy over this period. Exports contributed £8.7 billion to the balance of trade in 2000, equating to 3.3% of all goods and services exported. Exports have grown at around 13% per annum over the period of 1997 - 2000. By comparison over the same period the value of all services exported have grown by 9%, while all goods and services combined grew by 5%.”

In February 2009 NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) published an item on its website headed “UK Creative Industry to Drive Significant Growth in UK Economy” in which it noted

“NESTA’s analysis suggests that between 2009 and 2013 the UK creative industries - which is responsible for films, music, fashion, TV and video games production - will grow on average at 4% - more than double the rate of the rest of the economy. By 2013, the sector is expected to employ 1.3 million people, likely to be more than the financial sector.”

Also noted on the DCMS Creative Industries website fact-file is the importance given to links with HE:

“DCMS in partnership with Universities UK has established a Creative Industries Higher Education Forum. The Forum draws together members of Government, creative industries and educational establishments to advise Ministers on the strategic policies relating to education and research in the UK creative industries”. The terms of reference of the Forum include: “To work with employers and universities to ensure that students have the knowledge and skills necessary to progress quickly from university to employment” and “To ensure the effective use and exploitation of the creative industries
knowledge base by business, Government and the public services to create wealth and improve quality of life”.

Even a simple search of the Internet reveals that the UK is not alone in recognising the importance of the Creative Industries, there being examples of initiatives from both established and emerging economies.

Against the original 1997 Blair Government’s growth target for 50% of 18 – 30 year olds to experience higher education, albeit now (in 2009) an aspiration, HE (and many FE) institutions have been quite inventive in developing new courses, many of which are focused on Art & Design or on related subjects. Against this Art & Design has been a consistently buoyant area of study in which student recruitment is strong and has remained so despite the introduction of tuition fees, student loans and regularly published reports about graduate employment and levels of graduate debt. Indeed, to achieve ambitious growth targets in student numbers it has not been unknown for institutions to call upon Art & Design to take additional students beyond original planned targets year on year (although in a number of cases this may have also led to a stretching of resources).

UCAS holds data which demonstrates that, although the pattern of pre-entry qualifications to Art & Design has become wider, with, for example, a smaller year on year proportion of applicants from Foundation Diploma in Art and Design courses, application and acceptance levels have been consistent. Overall Art & Design is a buoyant area of study: student recruitment is strong.

So it is apparent that Art & Design makes a substantial contribution to the national economy. It is a national success story. Yet when it is viewed through the lens of the National Student Survey [NSS], it does not come out well in comparison with other subject areas – hence the paradox.

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2. The National Student Survey

A national student survey was mooted in the ‘Cooke Report’ (HEFCE, 2002, para 64), which considered the issue of what information should be available to prospective students in higher education. Institutions were consulted about the nature of such a survey, and a report (HEFCE, 2004) confirmed that ‘a new national survey would be
needed to generate comparable feedback, as internal feedback mechanisms within HEIs are too diverse, and have a different purpose – specifically to inform internal improvements’ (para 17). The distinction was drawn between, on one hand, the need for comparable information on aspects of the student experience to assist in the choice-making of prospective students and, on the other, institutions’ internal feedback processes which were viewed as diverse and focusing on the improvement of provision. In addition to supporting students’ choice-making, the report noted that the survey would contribute to public accountability through the audit processes operated by the QAA (para 18).

Institutions quickly realised that the results of the NSS would have an impact on the public’s perception of their provision, and that the NSS could be a potent influence for enhancement. In 2006, the then incoming Chair of the NSS Steering Group said:

‘As well as providing tomorrow’s students with detailed information to help them make choices, it is also encouraging universities to further enhance the quality of their learning and teaching.’

(Michael Arthur, Vice Chancellor, University of Leeds, quoted in HEFCE, 2006)

Though the responses to the 22-item NSS\(^1\) have been generally positive, the broad subject area of Creative Arts & Design fares badly in comparison with other subject areas (Figure 1). Creative Arts & Design lies in the middle of the subject areas as far as Assessment & Feedback is concerned, but towards the bottom for the remainder of the NSS scales and the ‘Overall Satisfaction’ item. This report concentrates on two of the NSS scales where ratings have proved least positive: Organisation & Management (where Creative Arts & Design has consistently been rated low relative to other areas) and Assessment & Feedback (which has consistently been rated relatively low across all subject areas).

\(^1\) The optional items are not considered here, since their use has been variable across the Art & Design sector and in any case their data are not publicly available.
Figure 1: Mean percentage agreement with items from the 2008 NSS, by NSS scale and broad subject area (JACS 19)

3: Methodology

3.1: Qualitative

NSS data for 2005 and 2006 were analysed in order to identify an appropriate sample of institutions: during the life of the project data for 2007 and 2008 became available and analyses of these datasets are contained in this report. The qualitative component consisted of interviews with key informants and a focus group discussion of emerging findings. As the report was being finalised, data for 2009 became available (though not in an ideal format for the kinds of analysis presented here), and analyses are provided in an Addendum.

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- specialist art and design university colleges;

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2 NSS data for 2008 were only available for the broadest level of JACS (19 subject areas). The more finely-grained analyses are based on the more extensive 2007 data.

3 Detailed data were provided by Dr Paula Surridge, University of Bristol, who is commissioned by HEFCE to undertake analyses of the NSS data.
• specialist art and design universities, each with a number of courses in the same subjects delivered in constituent colleges/campuses across a geographical area;
• universities with a range of art, design, media and other creative arts courses (such as performing arts and architecture), some of this being within specialist faculties, others within faculties/schools with a wide arts subject mix, and some also delivering their courses through arrangements with local further education colleges (FECs).

Interviews with the seventeen key informants sought to gain an insight into how, and to what effect, institutions have responded to NSS outcomes, alongside perceptions of the factors affecting student responses to the NSS. On completion of the seventeen interviews, which were conducted between December 2008 and early February 2009, a one-day focus group meeting was held in London at the end of March 2009, which brought together six of the colleagues who had been interviewed.

3.2: Quantitative

Detailed data from the 2007 NSS\(^4\) were analysed in respect of the broadest JACS grouping of 19 subject areas and the finest grouping of 107 subjects. The latter set of analyses had two components: first a comparison of how the NSS results from the three main subjects within Art & Design (Fine Art, Design Studies, Cinematic & Photographic Studies) stood in relation to a number of other subjects which were chosen to represent a range of pedagogic types and, second, an analysis of the differences in institutional performance of each of these three subjects in respect of the NSS scales of Organisation & Management and Assessment & Feedback.

4: The qualitative evidence

4.1: What the interviewees and the focus group said

4.1.1: Overview

In this report the majority of the points from the interviews were raised in one form or another through several of the interview discussions and, although probably recognizable to those who raised them, are not attributed to particular institutions. Many of these points were then informed or added to through a focus group meeting where colleagues were able to share and compare experience of the NSS.

All of the institutions surveyed in this project noted that, since the NSS was clearly here to stay, they were now taking the NSS results very seriously. Some readily acknowledged that the results had been a “wake up call” and others that they had staff who had tended to rest on their laurels, taking a view that “we are better than others so we don’t have a problem”.

In no case were the institutions surveyed complacent or defensive in the interview discussions about the view now taken of the NSS results. In fact there was more a sense of frustration that the majority of results in Art & Design tended to reflect, at best,

a weakly positive view by students, particularly in Organisation & Management and in Assessment & Feedback (the latter also being an issue across HE in general), and that despite actions taken to respond to some of the negativity such results had continued.

There was no evidence from the interview discussions that the NSS results for Art & Design in general or for any of the institutions surveyed had affected the annual level or range of applications for places over the period since it was introduced. There was, however, often concern that there were pressures, more so from within the larger institutions, simply to improve results against those of other subjects without any basis of understanding the subject context. In general there was also concern that the NSS data results were inevitably aggregated into league tables, which, because Art & Design on the whole does not generally come out well, disadvantaged the subject area\(^5\). Inevitably these league table results tended to be viewed as “black and white” without any recognition of the diversity of the sector, different types of student experience and areas of strength against those with poorer scores.

It was clear from the interview discussions that all of the institutions surveyed are now considering the NSS results in some detail, including (but not in all cases) responses to the Free Text Question. Much more emphasis is now being placed on using the analysis of the results to take actions to enhance the student experience and to communicate this better through dialogue with students. Actions include:

- regular feedback on actions taken through websites, focus groups and other meetings, for example, student reps taking “tea with the Dean” (who is considered to be objectively removed from direct course delivery);
- poster campaigns, e.g. “You said it – We did it”; and
- making sure that marketing and prospectus information is realistic, that what is promised is delivered and that student expectations are, as far as possible, realistically informed.

In many of the institutions student support services had also been reviewed, resulting in increased or more focused provision.

NSS results were now being considered, alongside other evidence, as part of annual institutional and course monitoring, leading to detailed action planning.

Many of the institutions also undertook internal surveys, in advance of or alongside the NSS, based on the same or a similar range of questions. It had often been found that an outcome of this was that although the internal survey results carried similar messages to those from the NSS, the scoring and comments made by students on the NSS were generally much harsher, leading to a question about whether students felt there would be stronger pressure for action to result from an external survey.

Some institutions had found that poor NSS results in one course/subject area could adversely affect the overall results for the whole of their Art & Design provision. However, it was clear from the survey discussions that, although there were some commonalities between different institutions, there was no common high or low scoring subject area across the Art & Design subject sector.

\(^5\) The disadvantaging can extend to institutions. If an institution has a large amount of Art & Design, and this is rated according to the subject norm, then the institution will be disadvantaged in comparison with an institution with a smaller proportion of Art & Design of similarly-perceived provision. [This point is due to Sir David Watson.]
There was a generally shared frustration from those interviewed that the NSS results could be affected year on year by such things as:

- the student mix and any underlying tensions within this;
- changes being made to resources through, for example, building works or relocation, intended to improve provision;
- unexpected short-term or ongoing staff illness.

There could also be considerable inconsistencies and contradictions in the comments and scores underlying the results, which overall did not appear to change much despite actions that had been taken to answer student concerns.

There were also some concerns that NSS results could be influenced by the timing of the survey, which for many Art & Design students coincided with anxieties around the submission of a major written assignment and the start of a final major assessment project (there being a similar curriculum structure within most HE Art & Design provision). For some subject areas the final major project also required considerable resources to be provided by the student or institution (or both) for the final assessment presentation, which often tended to increase the levels of student anxiety. Such considerations also led to discussion about the emphasis and timing of various course elements and to whether it was the student learning experience or the NSS scores that should lead curriculum planning.

Although the majority of the institutions surveyed had found detailed analysis of the Free Text responses at the end of the standard questions to be both informative and useful in determining actions (often also building into internal surveys the issues that had been raised), others had remained sceptical of the validity of the comments generated. In some cases there was a suspicion that student comments had been influenced by staff disaffection, particularly where major change or restructuring had occurred. There were also institutions where a lack of cross-institutional consensus about which questions should be included had led to there being no inclusion of any questions from the bank of NSS auxiliary questions.

An underlying concern in many of the interview discussions was how students in Art & Design interpret the NSS questions. Although there was no direct evidence cited, there was a widely held view that the pedagogy of the subjects in Art & Design, through which students are encouraged to explore and navigate their own way through projects with support, did not sit well with the questions in the NSS, which were felt to relate more to subjects with a highly timetabled, often lecture-based, structure. Added to this was concern that the NSS questions were not designed to draw out how the students' personal development (as opposed to perceptions of actual personal development) had been supported and whether they had received a well-rounded educational experience (a concern which could apply to the NSS across the whole of HE). Also, because Art & Design subjects are rooted in developing practice and pushing boundaries, many of the institutions had, over a number of years, taken steps to make various connections with the world outside in order to aid the links between HE and career planning. These included:

- projects run in partnership with external companies, for example, software producers and fashion houses;
- student exchanges in Europe and beyond;
- periods of study abroad, including at study facilities established by the institution.
Following from this the institutions concerned had often noted a marked maturity and change of attitude of the students involved, but it was felt that the main 22 NSS questions did not allow students to reflect on this (however, institutions could, if they wish, introduce some of the optional NSS questions to pick this up).

Several of the institutions surveyed had taken steps to successfully increase student participation rates in the NSS including:

- the appointment of student ambassadors to remind students and to help them log on to the online survey;
- staff informing students of the importance of the NSS;
- student focus groups with graduates from previous cohorts;
- providing incentives to students, for example, prize draws or vouchers to be spent in the shop/canteen (some concern was raised about the potential for competition between institutions to outdo each other over the value of the latter).

In contrast one institution did, however, note that it had unearthed evidence where staff who were not confident of a good outcome for their course had discouraged students from completing the NSS in the belief that the response rate would be too low to publish. It was also noted by several institutions that care needed to be taken in the way that students were encouraged or reminded to complete the NSS, as pressure to do so (particularly when pursued by NSS representatives) could backfire with negative effects, whatever HE subject they were studying. There was also a sense that there were differences in the emphasis that students gave when completing the NSS through a telephone questionnaire interview rather than on-line, with the former leading them to take a harsher line.

Broadly speaking, there was a view from the institutions surveyed that the NSS is forcing the sector to sharpen its game and to think about aspects that have not previously been addressed, in the way that the quality assurance agenda (which was considered very close to the reflective practices of Art & Design education) had done over the last few years. However, it was also felt that there was a need to make sure that the NSS did not simply lead to a paper or management showcasing exercise. It was also important to reflect more on the pedagogic culture of Art & Design, based as it is on the student experience, and to improve both our understanding of this and our ability to explain it.

### 4.1.2: Organisation & Management

From the analysis of the annual outcomes data since 2005 it is clear that Organisation & Management has consistently been the component of the NSS where Art & Design has tended to receive lower ratings than other subject areas. This was therefore one of the two main components of the NSS focused on in the survey interviews.

In relation to the outcomes data it has also been said that, if Art & Design could improve the overall scores for Organisation & Management, the standing of the subject area

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6 However, the analysis of NSS ‘residuals’ by Surridge (2007) indicates that, for all NSS respondents, the opposite is more likely to be the case across all NSS scales and the ‘Overall Satisfaction’ item. Dyslexic students are more likely than others to respond to the telephone administration of the NSS (as opposed to on-line administration). Against this, though, dyslexic students tend to be less positive in their responses to the NSS, and statistically significantly so for the Organisation & Management and Assessment & Feedback scales, and the Overall Satisfaction item (but not the other scales).
would improve considerably within the NSS. However, from the interview discussions it has become apparent that the drivers behind the data are complex. Whilst some quite obvious and straightforward actions have been identified by institutions in response to concerns raised by students, there are a range of subject-wide matters that require identification and much deeper consideration by the subject sector.

From the survey interviews it also became apparent that reflection on the background to the Organisation & Management NSS results had identified a range of institutional factors, which appeared to have a bearing on the results and student comments. Some of these related to such things as institutional structures, others to major or minor changes in the physical environment, and some to the way that Art & Design was located or perceived within the institution. Examples relating to the physical environment include:

- In order to improve resource access one institution had undertaken a complete refurbishment of the main Art & Design building, during which time access had been restricted and this had led to adverse comment with low scores;
- An institution had undertaken a phased move of the School of Art & Design 80 miles from one city to a new building in the main institution centre in another – this had brought positive comments from those students who had moved (though not always from staff) but adverse comment from those students who hadn’t yet moved;
- An institution had restructured its resources into open access to enhance provision for all students but this had led to students needing to book into them, leading to adverse comment because they were not immediately available.

Examples relating to institutional structures include:

- A large institution had undertaken a complete faculty reorganisation involving moving groups of courses around – this had led to confusion by students and staff stress, which were seen to have impacted in adverse NSS comment;
- An institution had taken what had been specialist Art & Design School and placed it in another much larger faculty with a main base in another city – this had been viewed beneficially and had resulted in extended curriculum options against a considerable reduction in the previously confusing array of curriculum components, leading to some early staff anxiety but positive student comment.

Examples of the perception of Art & Design within an institution often appeared to relate to where it was located or co-located, and how it was managed. In some institutions central management seemed often to create problems when structures did not fit with the complexity and need for flexibility of the Art & Design subjects. Within big institutional structures, devolved local subject management appeared to fare better in the NSS Organisation & Management component. However, there was often a perceived ignorance of the pedagogy of Art & Design in some of the larger institutions leading to inappropriate pressures for change in order to improve NSS results.

In reviewing the NSS scores and student comments directly against programmes and courses, institutions had found that there was often a direct correlation between good course leadership and good NSS scores and vice versa. It was also noted that good leadership also tended to lead to good communication with students (and staff), whereas
poor leadership and organisation often led to blaming other factors, such as institutional structures and timetabling. There was also an acknowledgement that while some staff were good organisers, others might not be – but could nevertheless be very successful creative teachers. There was also a view that providing training “does not help someone who lives from day to day to become well organised”.

Many of the surveyed institutions had put considerable investment into improving technical and other resources and into making them available to all Art & Design students, rather than restricting access by making them course- or subject-based. Whilst it had been recognised that this had enhanced the student experience it had also been found to raise problems in Organisation & Management (as evidenced by the NSS scores and comment).

Analysis of the Organisation & Management NSS data had led many of the institutions to look more deeply at some of the underlying characteristics of Art & Design (and in some cases other creative arts subjects as well). A common view was that the tendency for creative arts subjects to achieve lower scores and more negative comments about Organisation & Management could in part be attributed to students being subjected to a much more complex self-determined and negotiated study programme than those on highly timetabled lecture-based courses. It was felt that procuring specialist resources to complete a project required much more forward planning and negotiation on the part of Art & Design students than for those who attended a regular lecture/seminar based study programme. Therefore there was concern that the NSS question “I have been able to access specialist equipment when I needed to” was less likely to meet with a positive reaction when the equipment had to be booked into and queued for (in contrast to having it available on demand)7.

There was also a common concern that the pedagogy of Art & Design could mean that “the more a student has creative freedom the more they are likely to experience what they believe to be a failure of Organisation & Management”.

Course timetabling had also been identified by many of the institutions as an NSS Organisation & Management issue. One institution commented that the NSS question “the timetable works effectively as far as my activities are concerned” could lead to negative comment from creative arts students that “the timetable was not effective because it got in the way of their self-determined creative project work”. This had raised the possible conflict between course organisation and students’ personally determined paths through their learning, leading to a potential clash with the learning experience that comes from students finding their own way of organising their studies.

Alongside such questions, as a consequence of their detailed consideration of NSS comments about Organisation & Management, institutions had recognised the importance of better communication with students. In answer to NSS comments about students not being informed about general course changes or a member of staff not

7 Birkhead’s (2009) comments on the provision of resources (in this case, textbooks) may have some resonance. He sees the provision of course textbooks as providing an implicit boundary beyond which it is not essential for the student (as ‘customer’) to go in their search for understanding. Something broadly similar might be said about expectations regarding the ready availability of resources in Art & Design. However, the need to forage for resources is likely to encourage the independence that is generally held to be a desired outcome of higher education. Though a foraging-oriented programme might not be rewarded in NSS terms, it might be construed – and perhaps even presented – as a virtue if a longer-term student-oriented perspective is taken.
being available, one institution in the survey noted “it’s not rocket science to do things like alerting students to the cancellation of a lecture or laying down expectations about the availability of part time teaching staff”. Many institutions had invested heavily in resources beyond the familiar notice board, for example, to put timetables on-line and to improve information about staff availability through such means as text messaging and “pyramid” messaging, where students take on the task of passing information to fellow students. It had also been recognised that while this had in the main been positively received, there were students who did not like using electronic media and it was still difficult to communicate last-minute changes, such as a cancelled class due to staff illness, where students are not on campus and may already be travelling from a distance to the institution. However, implicit in making such information easily accessible was the responsibility of the student to regularly check the source as part of the “deal” between the institution and the student.

In addition to this there was also evidence that institutions are taking action to improve the quality, detail and delivery of information to students about the institution, their course of study and such things as the roles and responsibilities of the course leader, teaching, technical and administrative staff. There has also been a recognition that students are often confused about who to go to for information, which has led to an increased emphasis on, and in many cases the reorganisation or enhancement of, information and course administrative services.

Through the student responses to the NSS institutions have also become more aware of the confusion that can be experienced when different staff have given students what is seen as conflicting advice or comment about project work. Where the institution may see this as an example of the pedagogy of Art & Design, with the expectation that the student will consider the advice and make their own decision about it as part of the learning process, students have regularly commented through the NSS that for them it indicates a lack of communication between staff and therefore a failure of Organisation & Management. (This issue is also relevant in the consideration of Assessment & Feedback and in the clarity of roles of part-time, proportional and full-time teaching staff).

Another aspect of communication that has been given greater emphasis by many of the institutions surveyed as a result of the NSS is the management of student (and staff) expectations or “what's the deal?”. Much more attention is now being paid to the information given to students in both prospectus and marketing information and on course, in order to try to make sure that expectations are realistic and are met. Institutions are also becoming much more aware of the relationship between what is proposed through course validation and the need to monitor the course in action. Alongside this, institutions are also becoming more aware of the need to clarify what the student can expect of the institution and – equally importantly – what the institution should expect of the student, emphasising that they each have responsibilities to the other. In some cases institutions are also revisiting or resurrecting their Student Charter in order to reinforce and clarify this.

Running beneath many of the interview discussions about the NSS responses to Organisation & Management was the (often returned to) question of the pedagogy of Art & Design, our understanding of it and our ability to explain it to our students (and to others). As noted earlier there are issues here which, it is beginning to be widely recognised, will need to be addressed by the subject sector.
4.1.3: Assessment & Feedback

The second main NSS component of the interview discussions for this survey was Assessment & Feedback. In this case though, Art & Design subjects are not alone in that this component has consistently attracted low ratings across the whole of HE.

This said, comments from the interview discussions suggest that feedback tends to be more of an issue than summative assessment in Art & Design, but since the two are inextricably linked much work has been undertaken in fundamental awareness raising to both students and staff. Examples of this include:

- the production of assessment handbooks highlighting where Assessment & Feedback takes place;
- discussions with students individually and in groups to explain formative and summative feedback and to encourage them to engage with the assessment process.

Linked to this is the recognition that it is the institution’s responsibility to make sure that staff understand the assessment processes and apply them consistently.

Despite the initiatives being taken to develop, share and more clearly articulate assessment and feedback processes, there remains concern that there has been very little impact on the NSS results. This has led to some institutions questioning not only whether staff, as well as students, fully understand the assessment and feedback models in use, but also whether it can any longer be assumed that the accepted models work adequately.

Many questions are being asked about whether students really understand what learning outcomes and assessment criteria are for, and how they are used. This has led some to ask whether statements in handbooks are sufficient without further exemplification and, through efforts to make things more explicit, even “have we made everything over-complex and difficult to understand?”

A fundamental question now being raised by many institutions, particularly where a wide range of Art & Design subjects is taught, is that of whether a universal application and consistency of approach to the processes of Assessment & Feedback is possible across all subjects. Although there are many commonalities, there appears to be a greater recognition that, with the definition of specific subject-focused learning outcomes and, therefore, detailed assessment criteria, the identification and application of underlying principles across Art & Design now needs more careful consideration and explanation.

It is also being recognised that the pedagogy of Art & Design education often means that there is a very close working relationship between staff and students which can also lead to misunderstandings – “I thought you said I was doing OK (feedback) but now I’ve not got the marks I expected (summative assessment)”. It was commented that feedback may be delivered in many different ways, for example, formative feedback may be given in passing and can be challenging, with the intention to stimulate thinking but it is not always recognised as such and can even be seen by students as an instruction. This also raises the issue of feedforward, which has received little attention and is not explicitly covered in the NSS, as well as feedback, which is often misunderstood and in any case covers multitude of approaches.
Follow up of the analysis of NSS comments has made institutions more aware that feedback in general, whether formative or summative, is often not recognised or understood by many students. This led one institution to comment that “Our students wouldn’t recognise they were receiving feedback even if we all went round wearing T-shirts that said You are now getting feedback”. Another commented that it appeared that the only form of feedback students in Art & Design recognise is that tailored to them as individuals “what do I have to do to get a better mark (i.e. 1st or 2.1)?”.

There was a growing awareness amongst a number of the surveyed institutions that the teaching and assessment strategies in Art & Design are generally not considered to be very explicit and need to be more clearly articulated. It was commented that “what we value is taken to be common knowledge but not spelt out – we take it for granted but don’t explain it”. Another commented that “assessment is not just about the final outcome but evidence of the learning process – assessment criteria should enable this”.

Despite changes in employment legislation and tight staffing budgets, many of the institutions surveyed still maintained a base of part-time practitioner teaching staff – indeed, one institution noted that it was often the case that the only full-time member of the teaching team was the course leader and even they had other parts to play. While it was considered that part-time teachers were still an important link with the professional world of Art & Design and served to keep the subjects fresh and up to date (which was appreciated by students), it was also becoming apparent from the NSS comments that their involvement in assessment was not always respected. Depending on their level of involvement part-time teachers were sometimes seen to bring a very different focus to Assessment & Feedback, which was open to the vagaries of their own practice rather than reflecting a student learning perspective. Institutions were becoming more aware of the need to manage such involvement carefully to make sure that there was an appropriate moderating role by other staff and that proper briefing took place.

4.1.4: Staffing

Many of the institutions surveyed employed hourly paid part-time and fractional/proportional teaching staff in Art & Design, usually balanced by a smaller number or even (as noted above) a single full-time member of the course teaching team. In almost all cases, institutions had found that NSS comments showed that many students not only had concerns about the role of hourly paid visiting teachers/practitioners in assessment (particularly those who did not have a regular teaching input) but also about their availability on a day to day basis, often with the expectation that they would be available just when they needed them. There were also concerns about the level of understanding of such part-time visiting teachers of the teaching and learning context in which the subjects operate. This again had begun to reinforce the need for a better understanding and explanation of the expectations and pedagogy of Art & Design for students and staff alike, particularly through the progressive stages of a course. It was also noted that, although full-time and fractional/proportional staff were generally encouraged to participate in the postgraduate certificate in higher education staff development courses offered by most institutions, this rarely applied to hourly paid part-time teaching staff. Through the focus group meeting there were also questions raised about the effectiveness of such courses where they were of a generalist rather subject focused nature.
There were also concerns expressed through the survey interviews about the knock-on effects of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) on course staffing levels, which had also impacted on the NSS responses. This was particularly the case where key staff had been taken out of teaching to undertake research projects and had been replaced, often at short notice, by part-time teaching staff.

4.1.5: Accommodation and Resourcing levels

Many of the surveyed institutions noted that over the period of the NSS to date their student numbers in Art and Design had continued to increase, in some cases by 30% or more. Against this, accommodation and resources, though often subjected to some enhancement through refurbishment or reorganisation, had not increased to keep pace. The pressures created by this were also believed to have led to less than positive comment through the NSS.

In order to try to alleviate this situation a number of the institutions had taken steps to increase the availability of key resources through, for example, extended opening hours and technical support. However, it had generally been found that, while students had asked for greater access, the resources were not well used outside of the normal working day or week.

4.1.6: Possible influence of the student mix and pre-HE experience

All of the institutions in the survey had seen changes in the pattern and demographic of student recruitment over the period since the introduction of the NSS, particularly with the continuing expansion of HE. Although not entirely true of all of the types of institution represented, the majority had for many years (as has traditionally been the case across HE Art & Design) become used to a very high proportion of their annual student intake having undertaken a preparatory Foundation Diploma in Art & Design course (which, in comparison to an undergraduate honours degree, tends to be tightly structured and intensively taught) prior to applying. However, it was beginning to be recognised that this pattern could no longer be assumed, with more students applying directly from ‘A’ Level or with other prior qualifications or experience. In relation to the detailed consideration of NSS responses, the institutions had begun to question whether the assumed preparedness of students for HE Art & Design studies could any longer be taken for granted and whether, in the light of NSS comments, it is now time to reconsider the curriculum structure against the pedagogy of the subjects. For example:

- is there a need to look again at the first year experience?
- should there be much more emphasis on induction into the study skills necessary for HE;
- is there a case for front-loading resources for first year students?

It was clear from the interview discussions that there was now much more awareness that the student mix, whether from home or abroad, and background preparation were now likely to have a much greater bearing on their understanding and attitude to HE study.

There was also recognition from all surveyed institutions that there was a very high incidence of dyslexia and other learning difficulties among their students in HE Art & design and other creative arts subjects (acknowledged as fact across both FE and HE).
With this in mind there were serious concerns about the way in which such students would interpret the NSS questions and, therefore, their response to them.\(^8\)

As an extension of this survey it was suggested at the focus group meeting that it would be helpful to have further evidence of the way the demographic pattern of entry into HE Art & Design might be changing, particularly with regard to the proportion of students undertaking preparatory courses, such as the Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, and how this might affect the preparedness of students for HE study. To that end a number of the survey institutions kindly undertook to provide details of the prior study qualifications for recent cohorts of Art & Design students. Unfortunately analysis of this data proved less than straightforward, because of the way that this information is now requested by HESA (the Higher Education Statistics Agency), and so it was not possible to disaggregate the Foundation Diploma numbers and other specific preparatory qualifications. However, as noted earlier, UCAS holds data which does show that the pattern of pre entry qualifications to Art & Design has become wider, with, for example, a smaller year on year proportion of applicants from Foundation Diploma in Art and Design courses.

4.1.7: Understanding and developing the pedagogy of Art & Design

Running through the survey interviews was an underlying concern that Art & Design had suffered from an inadequate level of subject-specific pedagogic research. There was little evidence of interest or activity through the various RAEs and indeed, in some respects the RAE was felt to have done little to increase or develop the understanding of the underlying teaching and learning philosophy. There was a view emerging through both the survey interviews and the focus group meeting that there was now a need to develop a much more reflective approach and shared discussion about the teaching of HE Art & Design. There was a view that if we were to understand and act upon the messages coming through the NSS responses then it would be necessary for the subject sector to have a much better understanding of itself – despite the pressures to raise the NSS scores, the educational experience in the subject should lead future development, rather than the NSS.

5: The quantitative evidence

Figure 1 showed that Creative Arts & Design tends to be rated low on the NSS. However, this broad subject area includes performance arts as well as the usual Art & Design subjects. If a more finely-grained approach is taken to the NSS results, and a variety of subject disciplines are brought into the picture, then differences between the subjects become apparent (Figures 2A to 2G).

Figures 2A to 2G: Comparisons between selected subject disciplines for the six NSS scales and the ‘Overall Satisfaction’ item. The subjects are ordered in terms of declining

\(^8\) As noted earlier, Surridge’s (2007) analyses show that dyslexic students in general tend to give lower ratings across the scales of the NSS. If Art & Design attracts a higher proportion of dyslexic students than other subjects, then this could tend to lower NSS scores.
mean percentage agreements, and hence the ordering varies according to the NSS scale.

Note:
Art & Design disciplines are signalled by large red means, performance arts by large blue means, and Architecture by large black means. Other subjects are given smaller black means. The vertical lines indicate the range of percentage agreement found in the institutions for which NSS data are available.

Figure 2A
Figure 2F

Percentage agreement PerDev 2007, selected subjects (JACS 107)

Figure 2G

Percentage agreement OvSatis 2007, selected subjects (JACS 107)
Some broad observations can be made.

• Whilst the subject means vary, the range of percentage agreements within each subject is wide and hence it is difficult to be confident about the extent to which differences in means are of significance.

With the above reservation in mind, there are some tendencies that should prompt reflection as to why the results are as they are.

• Performance arts tend to be more positively rated than Art & Design on the following scales: Teaching & Learning; Academic Support; Organisation & Management (albeit narrowly); Personal Development. The same holds for the Overall Satisfaction item. In other words, if the performance arts subjects were removed from the Creative Arts & Design JACS cluster, these scale mean scores would be lower.
• Art & Design subjects fare rather better on the Assessment & Feedback scale.
• The scale that most strongly differentiated between subjects is Organisation & Management.
• There is relatively little discrimination between subject areas where ratings on Learning Resources are concerned.
• Subjects where classes are strongly scheduled (e.g. lecture/seminar or lecture/laboratory) tend to attract higher ratings for Organisation & Management than do subjects in which practical activities take place ‘in the field’ or may be determined more by the individual.
• Subjects in which the expectation is for some form of extra-institutional involvement (such as practice in the field) tend to attract stronger ratings for Personal Development.

The above figures can be compressed into a tabulation (Figure 3) which shows that, on the NSS, the subjects within Art & Design tend to fall into the lowest band of the selected subject disciplines.

Figure 3: An alternative illustration of the standing of Art & Design subjects relative to a selection of others on the six NSS scales plus the ‘Overall Satisfaction’ item. The figures
in the cells show the subject area’s ranking, with 1 being the strongest performer on the NSS and 22 the weakest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JACs Subject</th>
<th>TL</th>
<th>AF</th>
<th>AS</th>
<th>OM</th>
<th>LR</th>
<th>PD</th>
<th>OvS</th>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>11</td>
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The data that underlie Figures 2A to 2G are the raw percentage agreements that are the feedstock of what is made available to the general public. If account is taken of the differences between the student profiles of institutions, and the variance due to factors such as gender, entry qualifications and ethnicity is removed, the residual score gives a stronger indication of what is attributable to the institution itself (there is some similarity with the computation by HESA of institutional ‘benchmarks’ for continuation and completion)\(^9\). The residuals are essentially norm-referenced, with the mean set at zero. Institutional residuals can lie above or below zero. If ratings lie above zero, then the institution is being rated ‘better’ than its raw ratings would suggest; if below, ‘worse’. It can be computed whether the residual is statistically significantly different from zero.

The point at issue here is that the raw score alone may not necessarily be a clear indicator of how well an institution is performing on the NSS. Figure 4 shows that the relationship between raw score and residual is not straightforward. Although there is a general trend for raw scores to be positively related to residuals, it is apparent that some institutions with high raw scores are scoring less well than would be expected, and some with low raw scores are scoring better.

Figure 4: A plot of residual scores against raw scores for the broad subject area of Creative Arts and Design, based on the Organisation & Management scale of the NSS. Institutions with residuals significantly higher than zero are represented in green; significantly lower in red.

\(^9\) The discussion on this issue is based on analyses conducted by Surridge. See HEFCE (2008).
If institutions are divided into three groups according to the environment in which Art & Design is provided
- In a faculty (or similar) in a multidisciplinary institution
- In a specialist institution
- In a large, dispersed specialist institution

There is a general trend visible in the NSS scale scores, with specialist institutions gaining the most positive ratings and the large dispersed specialist institutions gaining the least positive (Table 1). The comparison in Table 1 is rough and ready, since it is based on all undergraduate provision in the three subject disciplines of Fine Art, Design Studies, and Cinematic & Photographic Studies only, and because institutions are represented up to three times, depending on the profile of their provision.

Table 1: A comparison of institutional environments for the provision of Art & Design, as regards NSS scale scores (percentage agreements).

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<tr>
<td>A&amp;D in faculty</td>
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<td>A&amp;D in Specialist Inst</td>
<td>80.5</td>
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<td>72.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>A&amp;D in dispersed Spec Inst</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>55.0</td>
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When the focus is narrowed to the individual subject discipline in Art & Design, it is apparent that (a) institutions vary in the level of positivity in the students' raw NSS ratings and that (b) there is considerable overlap between institutions. Figures 5A to 5C illustrate the points as far as the Organisation & Management scale is concerned; Figures 5D to 5F similarly in respect of Assessment & Feedback\(^\text{10}\). The Figures are limited to institutions in which studio practice forms a significant part of the programme.

Figures 5A to 5F. Institutional percentages of agreement on the NSS Organisation & Management and the Assessment & Feedback scales, by subject discipline. Institutions are ordered by declining mean, and hence the order of institutions is different in each of the Figures.

Note
Red squares indicate institutions in which the Art & Design provision is in a faculty (or similar) within a larger institution; blue diamonds where the provision is in a specialist institution, and blue triangles where the provision is in a large and dispersed specialist institution. The vertical bars represent the band within which there is a 99% confidence that the true mean will be found\(^\text{11}\).

\(^{10}\) Similar figures could be produced for the other NSS scales, but would distract from this report’s emphasis on Organisation & Management and Assessment & Feedback.

\(^{11}\) The observed mean depends upon the particular students whose opinions were sampled. If the number of responses is relatively small, then the ‘error of measurement’ will tend to be high, and hence the 99% confidence limits will be quite wide apart. Conversely, when the number of respondents is large, the confidence limits are close together (this is detectable in the data relating to the large dispersed specialist institutions).
Figure 5B
Figure 5C

NSS 2007 Cine & Photo 1st degree, Organisation & Management

Figure 5D

NSS 2007 Fine Art 1st degree, Assessment & Feedback

Figure 5E
Figure 5F

NSS 2007 Cine & Photo 1st degree, Assessment & Feedback

6: Possible future work
6.1: How do students interpret the NSS questions?

Through this survey a number of concerns have been raised about the way in which students interpret and respond to the NSS. So far this is based on an HE institutional view following detailed analysis and consideration of the outcomes of the NSS year on year against actions they have taken. This view has to date been largely conjectural. The need for the Art & Design sector is to have a greater appreciation of what students are seeking to convey through their responses to the NSS. There are a number of ways in which this could be achieved: through an event that brings students together to share their experiences of completing the NSS, to undertake institution-based inquiries along the same general discursive lines, and to survey (say) second-year students and then to ask them about their meanings. The last of these would be of value in conveying to students what the NSS is seeking information about.

If Art & Design students have a higher than average level of dyslexia (and other support needs), does this, as has been suggested by a number of the surveyed institutions, have a bearing on how they interpret and respond to the NSS? In order to find out, the HE Art & Design subject sector may wish to ask for expert advice. (As an example, 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?)

6.2: Subject area comparisons

Given the concerns raised through this survey about the way that the NSS impacts on HE Art & Design, the relevance of some NSS questions to the pedagogy of the subjects and the understanding that students have of them, there is clearly further work to be done. In order to put this into perspective and to provide evidence to support or disprove the case, it may be helpful for the subject sector to undertake further work to find out how Art & Design compares with:

- other creative arts subjects;
- other practice-based but not especially creative subjects;
- selected academic subjects.

Figures 2A to 2G above give a lead into this by highlighting the differences that show up in the NSS statistics.

6.3: Reflection, understanding and explanation of HE Art & Design pedagogy

Consideration of the NSS outcomes by the institutions surveyed has often put the spotlight on how well the pedagogy of HE Art & Design is understood and explained. There have also been concerns that the subject sector has been handicapped by the lack of subject-focused pedagogic research. Perhaps, as has been suggested a number of times and is now often being raised within the wider subject community, it is time for some serious reflection on the pedagogy of HE Art & Design in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and to reinforce its relevance in what is an ever faster moving subject context.
7: Some important messages for the HE Art & Design subject sector

Evidence from the NSS points sharply to the need for the HE Art & Design sector to consider whether it has 'got its provision right' for the contemporary context, and whether perspectives and practices need to be adjusted – for example, in respect of pedagogic practice and programme management. Particularly at a time of economic stringency, it needs to provide funders and the public with evidence that it is giving students experiences that will serve them well in the wider world. Claims that Art & Design is a special case, and not amenable to the kinds of questioning that are applied to other subject areas, simply will not wash.

- Whilst the NSS has its weaknesses and is not ideal for subjects such as Art & Design, it is not going to go away, and hence it is something that the HE Art & Design sector has to come to terms with.
- Some institutions seem to be managing to achieve much stronger ratings than others on the NSS: through this survey some possible reasons relating to local circumstances have been highlighted, but these are unlikely to tell the full story or to provide sufficient evidence for change.
- The Organisation & Management scores indicate that some institutions do considerably better than others. Is this because they make very clear to students what ‘the deal’ is; is it because they are able to better provide things as and when students need them; or are there other reasons?
- Through the survey interviews it was clear that the NSS, despite its weaknesses, can act as a valuable prompt to reflection and quality enhancement. Some institutions have clearly ‘got the message’.
- Institutions should, therefore, look closely at their NSS results alongside internal surveys and other sources of relevant information (including sensible comparators) and consider what they can do to improve the student experience. In support of this there may be a need for some assistance for some institutions with regard to the interpretation of statistical data. This may be something that the ADM Subject Centre should set in train.

And more broadly:

- Analysis of the NSS data indicates to institutions that, because of the differences between subjects, it is not sensible to expect similar profiles of scores across all subjects. However, it might be very helpful for any institution to undertake a direct comparison of how its Art & Design subject provision compares with that of other institutions (rather than simply with, say, History or Engineering in its own portfolio of offerings).

Issues identified through this report, and ongoing evidence from the NSS, demonstrate that the HE Art & Design subject sector now needs to decide on a series of actions if it is to bring about change. Uncorroborated conjecture and special pleading will not be taken seriously and there appear to be areas of pedagogic practice and management that have either been taken for granted or need to be better understood, developed and explained.
It is hoped that the HE Art & Design subject sector will find this report helpful and will give serious consideration to the issues identified, determining collectively the actions that it needs to take with some urgency.

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*= HEIs supplying enrolment statistics

References


Addendum

Analyses of the NSS 2009 data

Notes

Where Art & Design is concerned, the focus is on studio-based provision. No such distinction has been attempted in respect of Performance arts.

Comparisons between 2007 and 2009 are based on HEIs that have studio-based provision and where NSS results are common to both years.

Missing data may be due to response rates below the publication threshold.

The HEIs represented in the figures differ from subject to subject.

Sequence 1: Consistency between 2007 and 2009

![Fine Art, Overall Satisfaction](image)

Correlation = +0.48

Some HEIs' results are consistent, others inconsistent (moving in either direction)
Sequence 2: Variation between institutions as regards Overall Satisfaction.

In general, HEIs’ results are more consistent than for Fine Art. The correlation is thrown out by one result which is wildly discrepant.

Indicates considerable consistency between 2007 and 2009.
Vertical bars give the 99% confidence interval range.
Sequence 3: Comparisons between subject areas for Overall Satisfaction and for selected NSS Questions.

The vertical bars here represent the range of % agreement in the various HEIs.
The vertical bars here represent the range of % agreement in the various HEIs.
Q14 (Changes communicated) Comparisons, NSS 2009

The vertical bars here represent the range of % agreement in the various HEIs.

Q15 (Course well organised) Comparisons, NSS 2009

The vertical bars here represent the range of % agreement in the various HEIs.
Two subjects involving laboratory work have been included here (Electronic & Electrical Engineering, and Biology). The data are consistent with the hypothesised difference of student perception as regards the extent to which the equipment is available in situ (or on demand).

The vertical bars here represent the range of % agreement in the various HEIs.