

Royal Holloway Students' Union Department Rep Briefing

Department: Computer Science

For the Academic year: 2026-27

Date Prepared: July 2026

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Background

Department briefings are prepared annually, collating the data from the Staff-Student Action Meeting (SSAM) and the outcomes of the National Student Survey (NSS). The briefing aims to give an understanding of the student opinions of the activities within the department.

Commentary

The following data is a summary of some of the key themes discussed in the 'Negative' and 'Positive' student responses to the NSS survey open-text question, 'Looking back on your experience, are there any particularly positive or negative aspects you would like to highlight?' Comments have been cross-referenced with minutes from the SSAMs which ran during the same academic year. Any topic solely discussed during SSAMs and not in the NSS have been clearly identified in the table as (SSAM).

Key Themes	Commentary	
	Things working well	Areas for improvement
Community	- Inclusive diverse environment - Collaboration with peers is encouraged	- Difficult to make friends - Student's Union not representing student voice - More frequent student and staff meetings - More extracurricular events
Facilities	- Competitions - Online learning platforms are helpful - Labs always available - Library resources useful and accessible	- Timetables are not commuting students friendly - Limited study spaces - Limited parking - Inconsistent state of teaching rooms - Unreliable software - Some buildings not accessible for student with disabilities - Desire for a quiet zone in Bedford Labs (SSAMs) - More social spaces (SSAMs)
Teaching	- Course provides great set of skills preparing for employment - Interactive and engaging teaching - Enthusiastic lecturers and guest speakers	- Some lecturers do not cover the content fully - Some lecture materials are outdated - Some lectures are not as engaging

	• Helpful extra teaching materials provided • Good balance between independent and taught learning • Good balance between practical skills and theoretical knowledge	• Some lecture recordings never get uploaded • Too high workload • More seminars or smaller group sessions • Inconsistent teaching quality across modules • Some modules poorly structured • Desire for lecture notes to be uploaded in advance (SSAMs)
Assessment	• Final year project can be customised • Coursework allows to demonstrate knowledge and skills • Helpful feedback	• Deadline stacking • Weekly quizzes not useful for learning • More in-depth feedback • Inconsistent marking across modules • More exam support • Spread out exams across terms • Unclear marking criteria • Desire for exams to not be concentrated in term 3 (SSAMs)
Communication	• Easy to contact lecturers • Student feedback is acted upon • Course well organised and clearly communicated	• Poor communication of last-minute changes • Student feedback is not acted upon • Some lecturers are rude • Difficult to get in touch with some lecturers • Group projects poorly navigated • Lack of understanding of the role of Personal Tutors (SSAMs)
Support	• Lecturers are supportive and friendly • Great career support • Great mental health support • Helpful mentor support • Helpful CEDAS maths support	• Difficult to access mental health support • More career support • Issues with Personal Tutor support – lack of contact with them (SSAMs)

NSS

The National Student Survey (NSS) is a nation-wide survey of all final year undergraduate students studying at institutions across the UK and is managed by the Office for Students (OfS). The survey has run on annual basis since 2005. In 2020 the OfS undertook a significant review of the survey questions with an aim to refresh the NSS with questions that are more direct using positivity measure with a four-point scale to gain more accurate insight into the undergraduate student experience at UK universities.

The NSS 2025 questionnaire had 25 core questions which were grouped into six categories, or scale questions around themes like teaching, resources, academic support and there is a specific question about Students' Unions which is a part of the Student Voice category. Each of the six scale questions are composed of multiple questions which explore various elements of this theme in more detail. There were two additional questions included around mental health and freedom of speech, of which the second was offered only to students in England, and Royal Holloway included these questions in 2024.

Below is a table of the scores the Department received following the 2026 NSS. This can help you inform areas that may working on and monitoring. This data can also inform the comments provided above. The term 'positivity measure' means the proportion of respondents who gave a positive answer.

		2026	2025
Response Rate (%)		75	62
Questions (% Positivity Measure)			
1	How good are teaching staff at explaining things?	88.80	89.90
2	How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?	63.50	62.50
3	How often is the course intellectually stimulating?	87.10	83.30
4	How often does your course challenge you to achieve your best work?	87.90	89.20
5	To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?	81.00	79.80
6	How well does your course introduce subjects and skills in a way that builds on what you have already learned?	93.10	84.60
7	To what extent have you had the chance to bring together information and ideas from different topics?	78.40	72.50
8	To what extent does your course have the right balance of directed and independent study?	80.10	75.60
9	How well has your course developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?	89.20	83.30
10	How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?	73.20	66.10
11	How fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?	87.90	83.80
12	How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?	91.40	82.10

13	How often have you received assessment feedback on time?	84.80	76.60
14	How often does feedback help you to improve your work?	72.70	63.10
15	How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?	92.10	84.10
16	How well have teaching staff supported your learning?	91.10	80.80
17	How well organised is your course?	86.60	79.20
18	How well were any changes to teaching on your course communicated?	85.60	73.30
19	How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?	93.30	89.20
20	How well have the library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?	87.20	83.60
21	How easy is it to access subject specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software) when you need them?	91.20	92.70
22	To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your course?	85.70	76.60
23	To what extent are students' opinions about the course valued by staff?	80.50	73.20
24	How clear is it that students' feedback on the course is acted on?	65.50	50
25	How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests?	73.50	68.20
26	How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services?	90.30	81.40
27	During your studies, how free did you feel to express your ideas, opinions, and beliefs?	87.80	86.60

NSS Categories (% Positivity Measure)		2026	2025
1	The teaching on my course	81.90	81.10
2	Learning opportunities	84.10	78.80
3	Assessment and feedback	82.00	74.40

4	Academic support	91.30	82.30
5	Organisation and management	86.20	76.50
6	Learning resources	90.20	88.50
7	Student Voice	76.90	66.90
8	Students' Union	73.50	68.20
9	Mental wellbeing services	90.30	81.40
10	Freedom of expression	87.80	86.60