



2004 National Students Survey

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
Purpose of the study	8
Profile of survey respondents.....	10
Students' overall assessment	13
Responses to individual questions.....	14
Open-ended questions.....	45
Factor scale analyses	48
Correlation analysis.....	62
Conclusions.....	65
References.....	67
Appendix 1: Student Course Experience Questionnaire.....	68
Appendix 2: Percentage of Responses to Q1 to Q27: Undergraduates	71
Appendix 3: Percentage of Responses to Q1 to Q27: Postgraduates	72
Appendix 4: Representative answers to the open-ended questions	73

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Executive Summary

This is the summary of the report, which analyses the results of the Economics Students Survey in 2004. The survey covered both undergraduates and postgraduates and was carried out by the Economics Network of the Higher Education Academy.

Purpose of the study

The Economics Network has conducted its second on-line national students survey to obtain information about students' perceptions of learning Economics. The survey is based on a questionnaire developed by Paul Ramsden and used in Australia for more than 20 years. It is part of the Network's programme of research into the needs of our different stakeholders along with the Lecturers, Alumni and Employers surveys. This time, not only undergraduates but also postgraduates took part in the survey. Departments have used the results of the 2002 survey to improve their teaching.

2. Profile of survey respondents

A total of 2022 students took part in the survey: 1843 undergraduates and 179 postgraduates. Of the respondents:

- 55.7% were male and 44.3% were female;
- 86.5% started their courses under the age of 21;
- 63.5% stated that English was their first language;
- 62.7% had an A-level in Mathematics;
- 63.1% had an A-level in Economics;
- 78.5% stated that Economics was their first choice.

The survey was an observational study and not a controlled experiment.

3. Students' overall assessment

Students' responses to the survey questions have been analysed separately for undergraduates and postgraduates, with particular attention paid to the differences in responses according to gender, age of entry, level of study, A-level Mathematics, A-level Economics, English as first language and whether Economics was the first choice of course. Standard statistical methods were applied. Responses to each of the questions are summarised in terms of percentage frequency of responses and accompanied by quotes from answers to open-ended questions.

4. Responses to individual questions

Although only half of the students felt that their degree course had turned out to be as they expected, more than 70.0% of them were satisfied with its quality.

It is too early, with just two surveys, to speak about tendencies or trends, but the results of the 2002 and 2004 surveys are generally consistent. They are also consistent with results of similar surveys of Australian universities.

There were some differences in the way undergraduates and postgraduates answered their questions.

Students tend to agree more with the statements that their Economics courses are intellectually stimulating, sharpen their analytical, communication and problem-solving skills, provided them with all the information they needed for the course, helped to develop the ability to plan their own work, that they benefit from the contact with active researches and are satisfied with the quality of their degree course.

Students tend to disagree more with the statements that they are actively engaged in the lectures, that their workloads are heavy and pace is too fast, that the degree course has helped them to develop their ability to work as team member, that staff seemed more interested in testing what they have memorised, that Economics software is effective in helping them to learn and that it is easy to know the standards of the work expected from them.

As in 2002, students expressed polarised opinions regarding the appropriateness of the amount of maths and stats included in their courses.

Open-ended questions

Students identified as:

- *best aspects of the course*: the variety of modules on the degree, quality of teaching staff and employability prospects of the graduates;
- *aspects, that could be improved*: passive teaching, poor level of English language of lecturers and teaching assistants, lack of feedback on assessment;
- *hardest aspects of the degree*: maths and stats elements of the course and adjusting to university life;
- *most useful activities in seminars*: active workshops with group discussion, presentations and problem-solving exercises, developing skills useful for future employment;
- *least useful activities in seminars*: lack of interaction, “parrot-fashion repetition of answers”, lack of feedback, lack of communication between lecturers and students.
- *their future career*: banking, finance, accountancy, civil service, consultancy, journalism.

6. The factor scale analyses

The survey questions cluster together to form factor scales. The mean values, on a scale of 1 to 5, were:

- Good Teaching Scale – 3.25;
- Clear Goals and Standards Scale – 3.40;
- Appropriate Assessment Scale – 3.38;
- Appropriate Workload – 3.10;
- Generic Skills Scale – 3.52;
- Environment Scale – 3.39

The means for different scales cannot be compared directly. Their significance is as time-series data for tracking possible future changes. Comparison of data between universities may be misleading, as students differ in terms of personal, educational and family background, which may have a profound effect on their perceptions of learning. For each scale, statistically significant explanatory variables are identified.

7. Correlation analyses

Correlation analyses of the scales shows that they were not independent and there was a strong linear relationship between the Good Teaching Scale and some other scales – Generic Skills Scale ($r = 0.591$), Environment Scale ($r = 0.582$) and a more moderate relationship with the Clear Goals and Standards Scale ($r = 0.538$). The Appropriate Workload Scale and Appropriate Assessment Scale have very poor correlation between themselves and the rest of the scales.

8. Conclusions

The conclusions summarise the results of the report and suggest its possible use by departments in improving teaching quality.

9. Appendixes

Appendix 1 includes the Economics Network Student Questionnaire. Appendixes 2 and 3 include the Tables of Responses to Questions 1 to 27 by undergraduates and postgraduates. Appendix 4 includes representative answers to open-ended questions 28 to 33.

Purpose of the study

Following the success of our 2002 Students Survey and as part of our research programme into teaching and learning economics, the Economics Network has conducted its second national on-line economics students survey in April–May 2004.

The results of the Students Survey provide us with an inside view of what is really going on in teaching and learning economics in HE UK. It is part of our intelligence gathering to understand better the needs of our different stakeholders, along with the Lecturers, Alumni and Employers surveys.

But the survey is not only about information. It is playing an important role in the enhancement process. Several departments have reported that they found the results of the 2002 Survey extremely useful in providing them with the data for Programme Review, stressing that comments were more considered and thoughtful than responses from institutional surveys (perhaps because students felt that the survey was more independent). Some departments have asked us to run workshops in the areas of teaching that students have identified in the survey to be in need of improvement. We see such action taken by departments as a very important part of their commitment to teaching and learning and would like to encourage them not only to discuss and reflect on their own confidential reports but also to identify areas for action. The Economics Network will be happy to support them in so doing.

More than 2000 students took part in the Survey in 2004: this time not only undergraduates, but also postgraduates. As their experience of studying economics vary, we have decided to have separate analyses of the survey results for undergraduates and postgraduates.

The 2004 Survey used the same questionnaire as the 2002 one, which is based on the Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/sceq/>), used at Sydney University for the undergraduates on all academic courses. Parts of what follow are based on the 2002 report.

The theory of teaching and learning that underpins the survey was described by Paul Ramsden (1991) and links students' perceptions of courses to the learning outcomes. A few changes were made to the survey to make it more economics-specific. Additional open-ended questions were added to the questionnaire, regarding the best aspects of the degree, the ones that could be improved and the ones that students find the hardest, as well as the activities in the tutorials that they found more useful and less useful, and the careers that students intended to pursue.

The survey focuses on students' perceptions of studying economics and not on any specific course or module. They are asked to think back over the time they spent at university and to rate their agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale with 27 statements regarding their learning experiences. The statements could be clustered together to form factor scales: the Good Teaching Scale (GTS), Clear Goals and Standards Scale (CGSS), Appropriate Workload Scale (AWS), Appropriate Assessment Scale (AAS), Generic Skills Scale (GSS) and Environment Scale (ES). There were also questions, not included in the scales, regarding students' expectations of their course (Question 1) and their satisfaction with their course (Question 27), as well as whether there was an adequate inclusion of maths and stats in their course

(Question 11). Participants were also asked to provide some demographic information and answer six open-ended questions.

The survey aimed to provide valuable information on students' perceptions of studying economics and to identify the strong and the weak areas in learning and teaching as well as some possible specific problems. The main value of the survey lies in the long term, as the findings will be compared to the results of future surveys that we plan to conduct. The full comparison report on the two surveys to date – 2002 and 2004 – will be published in spring 2005. No comparisons are made between different institutions, as there are too many variable factors to make such comparison meaningful.

All economics departments and schools were invited to take part in the survey. A special letter was sent to Heads of Departments/Schools reassuring them that the results would be confidential to the department/school and only national aggregated results would be published. More departments/schools agreed to take part in the survey this time than in 2002: 62 (58 in 2002) out of 94 departments/schools.

The survey was conducted on line and students were offered five £50 vouchers for randomly chosen winners.

We have taken measures to promote the validity of responses. Students were asked to submit their e-mail addresses to participate in the draw. Duplicate entries were excluded, although it should be noted that this year the number of duplicate entries was very low, compared to the 2002 Survey.

The survey was intended as an observational study and not as a controlled experiment. The respondents do not constitute a random sample of all economics students in the UK, but a self-selected group. As a result, their views may not fully reflect the opinions of the entire student population. Despite the self-selection, however, there is evidence that the expressed attitudes represent more widely held student opinions. The survey covers a broad cross-section of both undergraduate and postgraduate economics education.

Profile of survey respondents

A total of 2022 students took part in the survey. These were full-time economics students (1843 undergraduates and 179 postgraduates) studying at UK universities. The demographics of the survey participants can be compared to those of the total economics student population using data from the HESA publication, *Students in Higher Education Institutions in 2002–2003*.

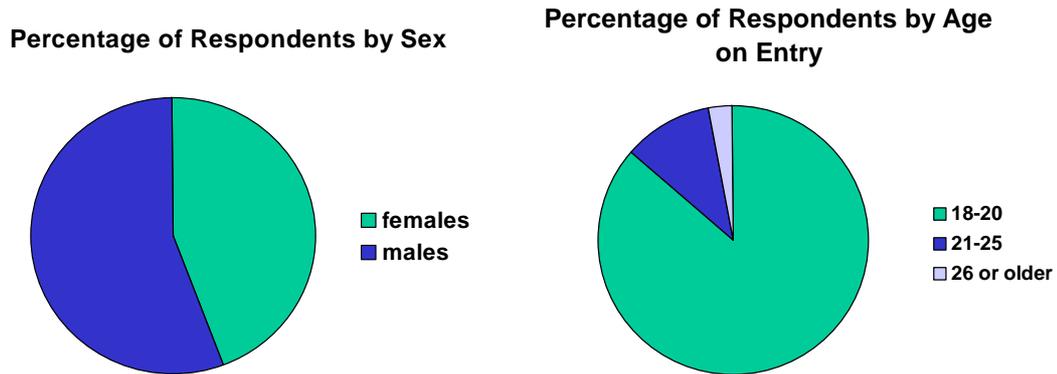


Figure 1 Characteristics of respondents: sex and age on course entry

Of our survey respondents 44.3% were female (Figure 1), while among economics students in general this percentage is lower at 35.6%. Among undergraduate respondents to our survey, 43.7% were female, while among postgraduates the figure was 49.1%. The larger proportion of female respondents to our survey than in the HESA data is consistent with the widely reported survey research findings that females are more likely than males to answer the questionnaires.

As for the age group, 86.5% of survey participants were under the age of 21, similar to their proportion in the general population of economics graduates (Figure 1). This figure is higher for undergraduates (90.3%) and is halved for postgraduates (48.0%). Students in the 21–25 age group are 8.1% and 36.0% respectively, and those older than 26 are 1.6% and 16.0%.

The question of English was included in the survey, because it was presumed to be an important variable that influences students' experiences in studying economics. And it may be not just the language knowledge itself, but also their education background, as students for whom English was not first language could have school training different from those in UK. Among all the respondents English was a first language for 63.5%, among undergraduates it was for 80.0%, while among postgraduates only for 58.8% (see Figure 2). There are no national statistics regarding this question. The closest match is the domicile of students. According to HESA data, 73.1% of UK economics students come from the United Kingdom, the majority of whom having English as their first language.

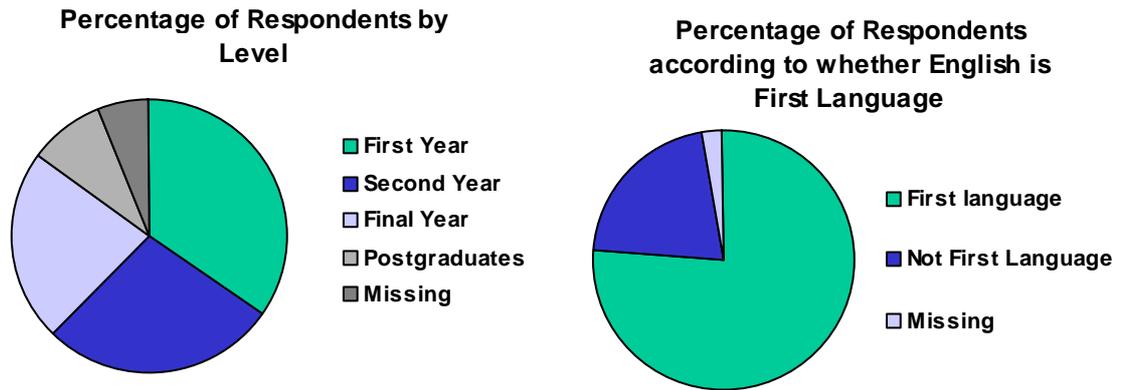


Figure 2 Characteristics of respondents: course level and first language

Other factors that we consider important to take into consideration when talking about students' experiences are whether they have taken A-levels at school in Mathematics and/or Economics and whether taking this course was their first choice (see Figure 3).

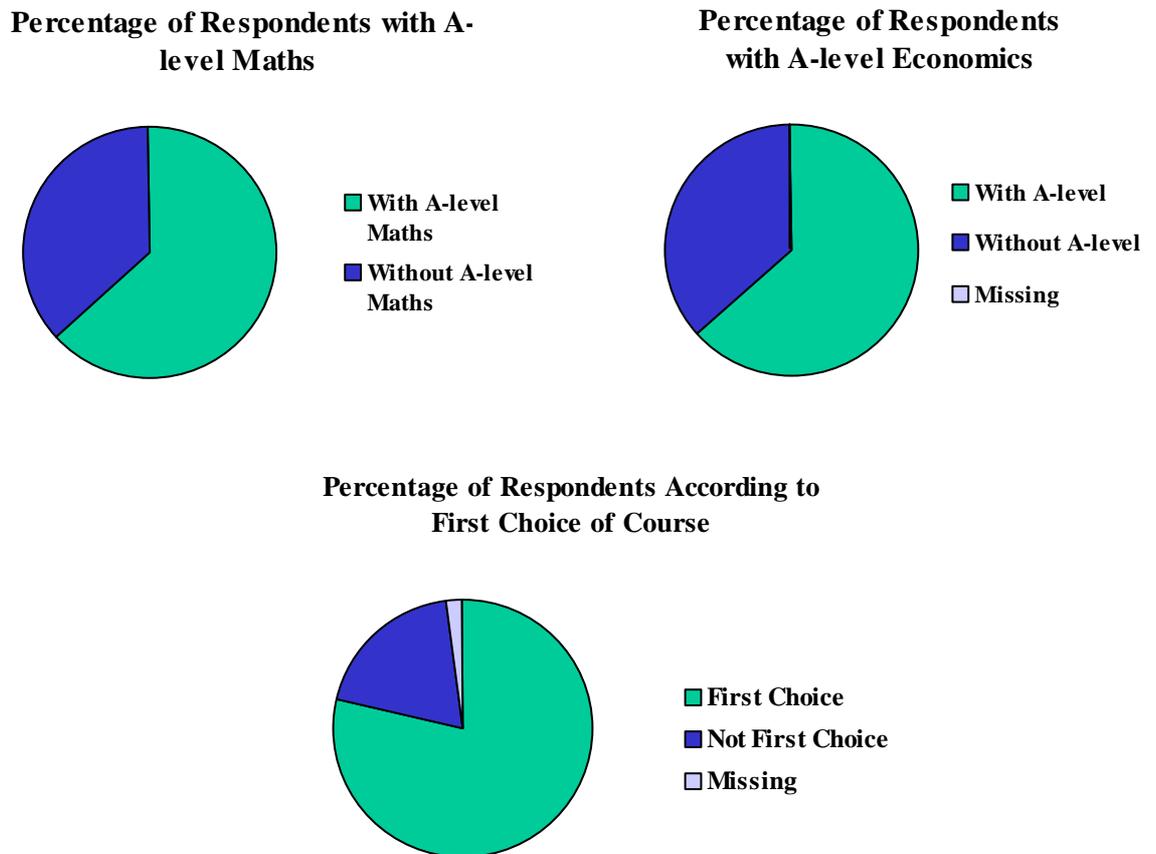


Figure 3 Characteristics of respondents: qualifications and choice of course

The results were as follows: among all the respondents, 62.7% had an A-level in Maths, while 63.1% had an A-level in Economics. As for the choice of the degree, 78.5% stated that Economics was their first choice.

In our analyses of the results, we have found that for each question of the survey described as a dependent variable we could locate potential explanatory variables that are statistically significant. We will discuss it in detail while looking at the responses to each question. These variables were different for undergraduates and postgraduates.

We appreciate that students' experiences vary according to the type of university they are attending. Universities have very different histories and resources to draw on. This is an interesting theme in its own right, and requires further investigation. It was not, however, considered as part of this survey.

We also have not included in the survey questions regarding the facilities provided by the university. Although various facilities, especially the library and computing, are very important to students' perception of learning, they form a separate category and are usually surveyed centrally by the universities themselves.

Students' overall assessment

In the analyses that follow, students' responses to the survey questions are examined separately for undergraduates and postgraduates students and differences in responses are sought due to sex, age on entry, level of study, A-level mathematics, A-level Economics, English as a first language and first choice of course. The methodology for these analyses is similar to the one used in 2002. All the data were analysed using standard statistical methods. Only relationships that are statistically significant at the 0.05 level are discussed.

Responses to each of the questions are summarised in terms of percentage frequency of responses. In each instance the outcome categories have been coded

- 1 – Strongly disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly agree

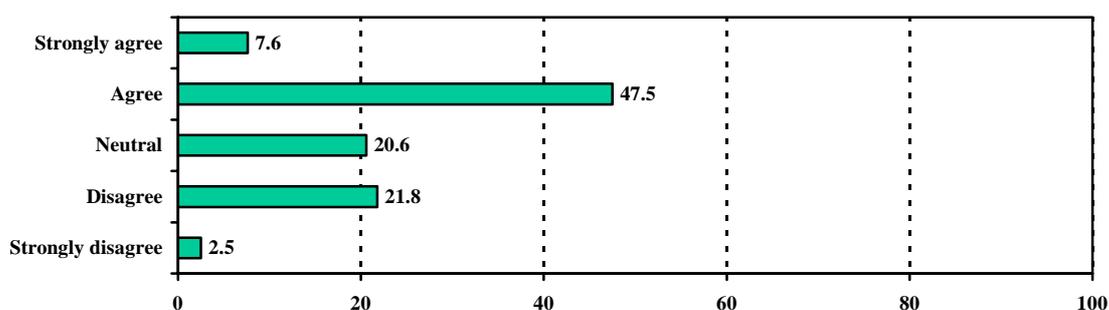
Unless specifically mentioned, in the following analysis the term 'agree' is used for both 'strongly agree' and 'agree' answers and the term 'disagree' for both 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' answers. To aid comparison, the mean and standard deviation for each question have been calculated by using the codes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 as if they were scores of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The percentage responses for each category and summary statistics have been calculated using all of the available data, irrespective of whether some of the demographic information on the respondent is missing. Repeat analysis using only those respondents with complete records gives the same broad conclusions. Students' responses are analysed separately for undergraduates and postgraduates and for each group of students statistically significant factors that influence their answers are determined. As it was very time consuming to separate answers to the open-ended questions between these two groups, we have used answers from the whole survey population in our analysis of the responses to these questions and in their use to substantiate students' answers to the closed-ended questions.

In this report we are not planning to do a full comparison of the results of the two surveys of 2002 and 2004 or speculate on the possible explanations of the difference. The comparison report will be prepared later in the spring of 2005. Data from the survey of 2002 is used this time solely for illustrative purposes.

Responses to individual questions

Question 1 Studying this degree course has turned out to be much as I had expected.

Undergraduates



In the first question, students were asked about their expectations of the whole degree course. The data received showed that 55.1% agreed with the statement that ‘Studying the degree course has turned out to be much as I expected’, 20.6% were neutral on this statement and 24.3% disagreed with it. In their answers to open-ended questions, some of the students gave their own explanations of the way the course differed from their expectations. Though only for half of the students studying the degree course has turned out to be as they expected, more than 70.0% of them were satisfied with the quality of their degree course, as their answers to the Q27 show.

Comparing these results to the 2002 Survey results shows that students’ expectations were met to a similar extent this year as two years ago (in 2002 58.5% agreed with the statement).

There are differences in responses to this question according to several factors, including age, Maths and Economics A-levels, and English as first language.

The older the students, the more their expectations of the course are reached, as probably they enter the course with better understanding of what to expect from it: 54.7% of 18–20 year olds agreed with the statement, 57.1% of 21–25 year olds and 70.0% of those aged 26 years and older.

Students who have done A-level Mathematics are more positive in answering this question, than those who have not: 58.3% versus 49.7%. This is a very important issue, as many students who do not have A-level Mathematics complain that the importance for their degree course of an A-level in Maths was not explained to them at the time of application and they were not expecting it to be necessary.

As for those who have taken A-level Economics at school, the situation is similar. They are more positive in agreeing that their expectations of the degree were met than those who do not have A-level Economics: 57.3% versus 50.6%.

Those for whom English is not their first language have more positive opinions about this statement than those for whom English is their first language: 11.5% of them ‘strongly agreed’ with it, compared to only 6.6% of English speakers; and 17.0% of

them disagreed with it, compared to 23.0% of English speakers. These results are very similar to the ones we got in 2002 Survey. According to students' remarks, some of them expected the course to be similar to Economics A-level and had not expected the level of maths necessary for the course. Comments included "*The level of maths expected has been too high from the information they have given us*", "*Personally what I liked about economics at A-level was the critical analyses and discussion of theories and issues. It seems all I do here is work out formulas and assess data*" and "*The economics side of the course has not always been as relevant as I had hoped to reality.*" These responses suggest that some students would gain from fuller prior information about the courses they will be studying.

Postgraduates

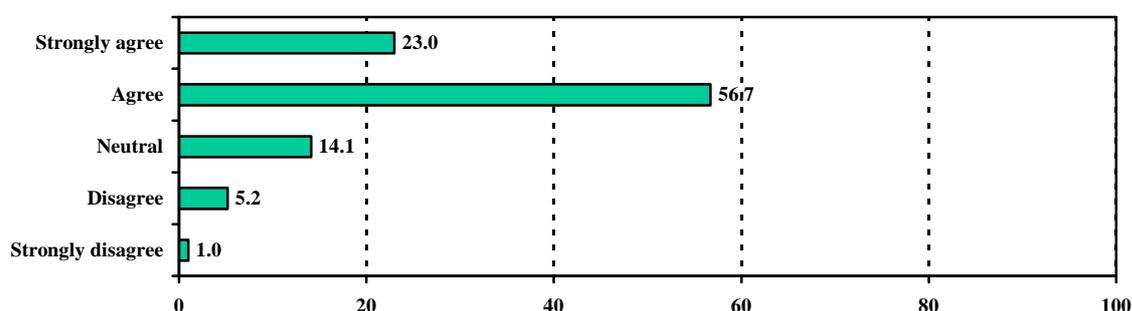
Postgraduate students have a better understanding of what to expect from their course, than undergraduates, so their answers to the first question are more positive: 62.0% agree with it, while 18.4% were undecided and 19.6% disagree with it.

There were differences in the way postgraduates answer this question according to whether it was their first choice and to whether English was their first language. Similar to undergraduates, those who have English as their first language are less positive in answering this question: 8.7% of them strongly agree that their expectations of the course are being met compared to 20.8% of non English speakers and also 25.0% of them disagree with it, compared to only 8.3% of those for whom English is not their first language.

If this course was not a student's first choice, they were far less positive in answering this question. Only 38.9% of them agree that their course turned out to be as they expected, compared to 62.3% for whom it was first choice, and 44.5% disagree with it, compared to only 13.4%. So choice for postgraduates is a very important factor in answering the first question.

Question 2 The degree course is intellectually stimulating.

Undergraduates



The number of students who ‘find [their] degree course intellectually stimulating’ is high, with 79.7% of respondents agreeing with the statement. The results are similar to the 2002 Survey, when 81.6% of the respondents were positive about it.

Three factors turned out to be statistically significant for this question: level of study, whether students have A-level Economics and whether English was their first language. Students at different levels of their degree course seemed to view it slightly differently. The higher the level of students’ studies, the more stimulating they find their course. So among first-year students, 77.3% agreed with the statement; among second years, 79.6% agreed; while among final-year students, 83.4% agreed. Nearly all of the 6.1% increase in the agreement to this statement comes from the undecided group. But one in every 12 to 14 students does not find their course intellectually stimulating at any of the levels of study. What could be done to make it intellectually stimulating for all of the students? This requires further investigation.

Students whose native language is English give more positive answers and more of them find the degree course intellectually stimulating than those for whom English was second language (81.0% compared to 75.4%). Students with A-level Economics disagree more with the statement than those without (mean scores are 3.94 and 3.97).

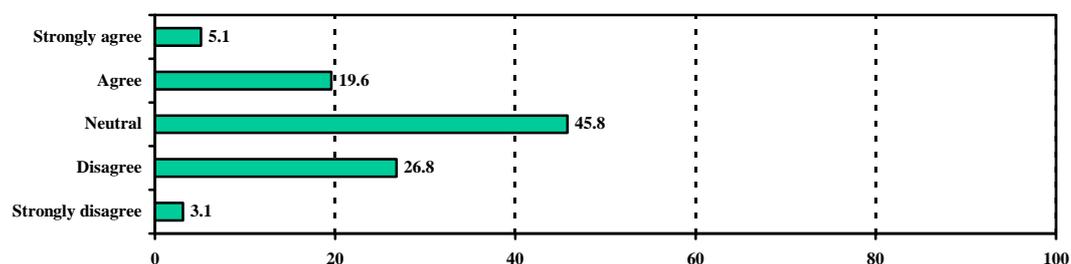
In comments students stressed, “*The course is exceptionally stimulating and you are encouraged to put forward your own understanding and ideas in lectures and tutorials without the fear of ridicule*”. The other one noted, “*The best aspect of my degree is that it encourages independent thinking, is intellectually stimulating and challenging: these are important skills to acquire and prepare one well for later life*”. At the same time, many students express less positive views: “*I think that the course is, at times, highly theoretical with little relevance or linkages to what has already been learnt and real-world applications.*”

Postgraduates

Seven out of eight postgraduates find their course intellectually stimulating and only one out of sixteen disagree with this statement, while one in ten is neutral. So postgraduates in general find their course more stimulating than undergraduates. There are no statistically significant factors that influence the answers to this question.

Question 3 The workload is too heavy.

Undergraduates



Responding to statement 3, ‘The workload is too heavy’, nearly half of the students (45.8%) were neutral, while 29.4% disagreed and a quarter agreed with it. The results are very similar to the ones in 2002 Survey. Whilst clearly only a minority of students felt that the workload was too heavy, the neutrality of approximately half the students suggests that for them the workload was neither excessively heavy nor light. The evidence in the literature supports the general view that heavy workload promotes a surface approach to learning, meaning that the students are unable to spend the time truly to engage with and understand the material they are meant to be learning. Students’ answers to this question require action from departments if they want their students to achieve desired outcomes and to be ‘deep’ learners, as repeatedly students stress that, “*The work load is heavy, especially in the third year. This means that I often do not have time to research all topics in the depth that I would.*”

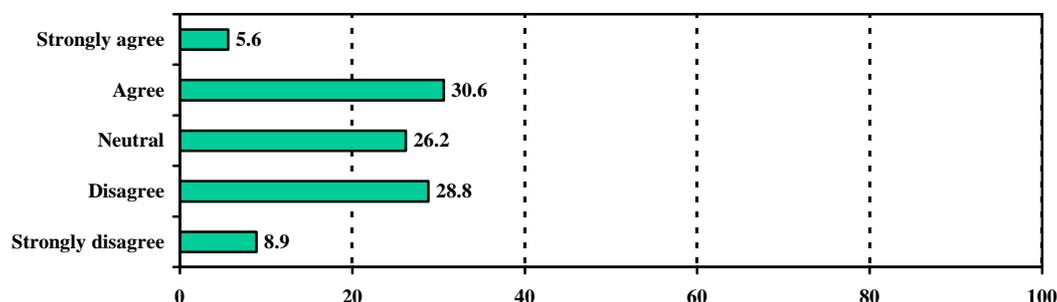
The important variable for this question is gender. Male students tend to disagree more (32.0% of them compared to 26.4% of females) and agree less with this statement (21.3% compared to 29.0% of females). Female students judge their workload to be heavier than do male students, either because they take their studies more seriously or they find economics courses more difficult than male students. This question requires further investigation, as the understanding of the true reason behind these differences could help in narrowing this gap. In their answers to the open-ended questions, students have written statements such as: “*Workload is satisfactory*“ and “*The workload is not too much.*” At the same time, others have written: “*Workload – often uneven and heavy*” and “*The workload is often all or nothing – one semester we have no assessments and the next we have 5 or 6 due in quite close.*“

Postgraduates

Postgraduates view their workload similarly to undergraduates: nearly half were neutral on this issue, while the other half was equally divided between those who disagree with the statement and those who agree with it. There were no differences between various student groups in answer to this question.

Question 4 The degree course has helped me develop my ability to work as a team member.

Undergraduates



More students disagreed with the fourth statement, ‘The degree course has helped me to develop my ability to work as a team member’, than agreed: 37.7% compared to 36.2%. Results are very similar to the ones in the 2002 Survey. That means that more than a third of the students do not view their economics courses as helping them to develop their ability to work as a team member. This is the recurring theme. Thus, given the increased stress on employability as a learning outcome, departments may wish to consider whether there is scope for increasing the opportunities for teamwork and group project work for their students.

There are differences in answering this question according to gender and level of studies. Level of study was also a statistically significant factor for this question in the 2002 Survey. Of first-year students, only 26.7% agreed with the statement, while 39.0% of second years and 47.4% if final-year students agreed with it. So nearly half of the final-year students agree that their course has helped them to develop their ability to work as team members. and this ability has been slowly building during their years of study.

As for the gender differences in answers to this question, females were more positive than males, with 41.8% of females agreeing with it and 31.7% disagreeing. For males the picture is the reverse.

Students express satisfaction with group work: *“The course involves a lot of teamwork, which is very helpful in preparation for work life. It also helps us to understand the work better as you have the knowledge of more than one person.”*

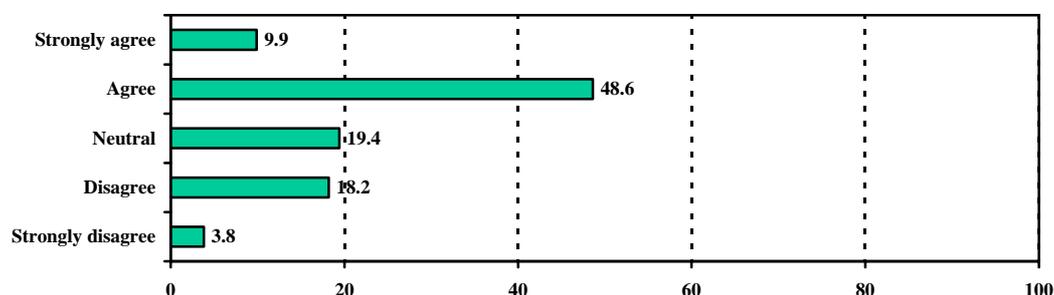
“Group work – meet new people. There is a significant amount of group work, which helps develop our teamwork skills. There are also lots of opportunities to improve our presentation skills.” Students suggest putting *“greater emphasis on group work as the course is orientated towards individual work”* and ask that there should be *“more encouragement to work in groups, to develop group skills!”*

Postgraduates

Nearly half of the postgraduates disagree with the statement; while a quarter was neutral and a quarter agree with it. Probably group work and teamwork is not used much in postgraduate courses. There were no differences between various student categories in answer to this question.

Question 5 I have usually had a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me in this degree course.

Undergraduates



The majority of the students responded very positively to the fifth statement, ‘I have usually had a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me in my degree course’ – 58.6% agreed with it, compared to 63.5% in 2002. There were differences in answers to this question between various age groups. The older the age group of students, the more positive their response is. 70.0% of students coming from the 26 and older age group have agreed with the statement, while only 57.7% from the 18–20 age group have done so. At the same time, the oldest age group has the highest percentage of students disagreeing with this statement – 23.3%, so they seemed to be the most polarised group, who feel strongly about it. Probably even greater clarification of the aims, learning objectives and standards of the courses are needed, since clarity of goals and standards is associated with better learning outcomes.

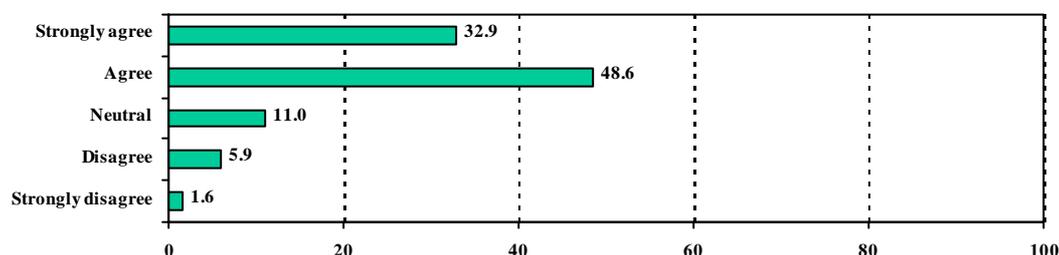
Students’ remarks include “*The requirements for high grades are rarely explained and, if so, poorly. I never know what I truly ought to do to achieve anything more than 65%.*” And “*tutorials need to give more information on what is expected for higher marks in exams*”. “*The teaching is not interactive, and I feel I don’t know what is expected of me*”. Students suggest, “*Some lecturers need to be clearer about where the course is going*”.

Postgraduates

Though the majority of postgraduates agree with this statement (57.0%), nearly one in five was not sure, while the rest disagree. Students who have A-level Mathematics feel more positive about it than those who do not have A-level Mathematics: 62.9% of them feel positive about understanding where they are going and what is expected of them compared to 50.0% of those who lack A-level Mathematics. This could be due to many postgraduate courses being based on quantitative research.

Question 6 I am provided with all the information I need about the course (e.g. timetables, exam dates and regulations).

Undergraduates



The sixth statement, ‘I am provided with all the information I need about the course (e.g. timetables, exam dates and regulations)’ received the highest positive response: 81.5% agreed with it. The results are very similar to the 2002 results. Every thirteenth student disagreed with this statement, implying that they are not happy with the administration of the course.

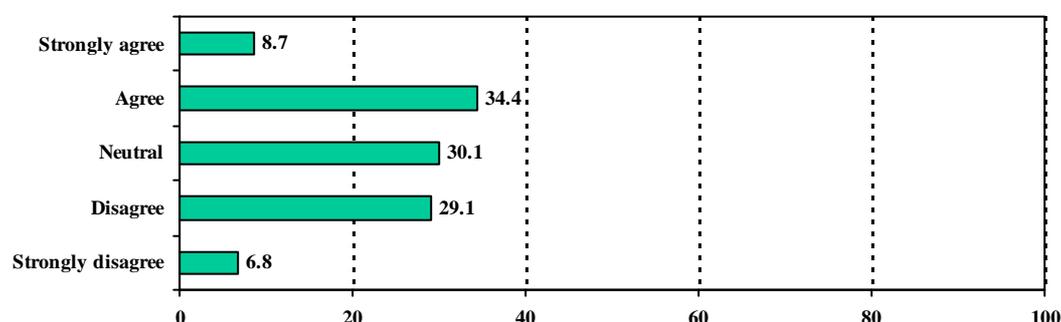
There were differences in students’ answers to this question depending on whether English was their first language or not. Those for whom English is their second language were even more positive about this statement: 85.1% of them agree with it and only one in fifteen students disagree with it. Maybe because they are from overseas they either receive more information than British students, or they took more interest in obtaining this information in order to comply with it. Students suggest that more information should be provided to them “*about what is expected of them, as it can sometimes be difficult to know.*” “*As a student coming from a different educational background it’s hard to know what the test is and how to study for such an important exam. I’m nervous.*” Some students complain that, “*communication is poor e.g. my exam timetable is still not on the student portal*” and “*It’s so disorganised!! We still don’t have exam timetables, things start late, etc.*”.

Postgraduates

Postgraduates also replied positively to this statement: 82.4% of them agree with it, although one in ten disagree with it. There were no differences reported in answers to this question between various student groups.

Question 7 The teaching staff of this degree course motivate me to do my best work.

Undergraduates



More than two out of five students (43.1%) agreed with the seventh statement, ‘The teaching staff on this degree course motivate me to do my best work’. This is similar to the 2002 results. But at the same time, nearly every third student is undecided on this question and more than one in four do not find staff motivating them to do their best work. Several factors have a statistically significant effect on students’ answers to this question: age, gender, level of studies, English as second language and whether students have Economics A-level. The more mature students are more positive on this issue: 60.0% of them agree with this statement, while for the 18–20 age group this number is 41.8%. Females feel more motivated by the staff, as 45.9% of them agree with the statement, compared to 40.9% of males.

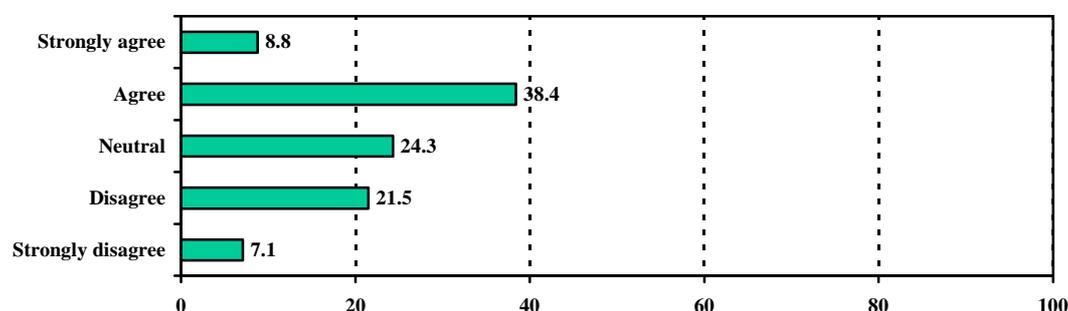
Those, for whom English is not their first language, were more positive than native English speakers: 54.2% of them agree with the statement, compared to 40.6%. As for the level of study, the least positive group were second-year students – only 37.6% of them agree with the statement, nearly the same number as disagree with it 36.2%. Of final-year students 47.3% agree with the statement, while among the first-year students this percentage was 43.8%. Perhaps lecturers of second-year students should pay more attention to students’ motivation in the future. Those without Economics A-levels were feeling more motivated to do their best work by the teaching staff than those with: 45.1% of them agree with the statement, compared to 41.5% with A-level Economics. We are not going to speculate on the reasons behind that, as it requires further investigation. Students wrote, “*The Staff are great and really are inspirational, and encourage me to go the extra mile*”. Others, however, do not agree and complain about lack of “*...encouragement in learning. Repeated courses cause motivational problems for lecturers when motivating pupils*”.

Postgraduates

Postgraduate students were feeling more motivated by the staff than undergraduates, as half of them agreed with this statement. There were no differences between various student groups in answers to this question.

Question 8 The teaching staff normally give me helpful feedback on my work (oral and/or written).

Undergraduates



Nearly half of the students – 47.2% of them – agreed with the eighth statement, ‘The teaching staff normally give me helpful feedback on my work (oral and/or written).’ A quarter of all students were not sure about the helpful feedback and more than one in four did not find it helpful. Students’ answers to this question reveal an area of possible future improvements. The results are consistent with the 2002 results. Again the age of the students, their level of study and whether English is their first language influenced their answers to this question.

The most positive answers came from mature students, from the 26 and older group. Only 16.7% of them disagree with it, compared to 29.6% from the 18–20 age group. Those for whom English was not their first language were more positive, as usual. Only 15.4% of them disagree with a statement, compared to 31.8% of native English speakers. Most pleased with the feedback they received were students from the final year, more than half of them agreeing with the statement. Students from the second year were less pleased – only 40.6% of them agree with it.

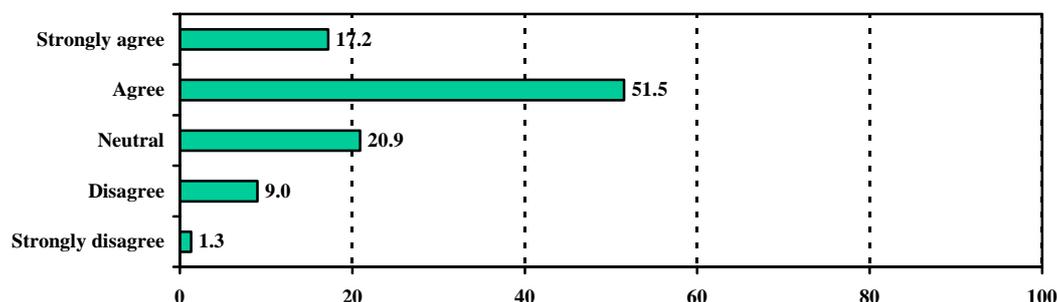
Students praised lecturers who give “...good lecture handouts and feedback from assessments”. Some even say: “The best feature of this course is the feedback students get when there is cause to complain”. More typical, however, are comments such as: “Feedback from tutors gives you a good idea of your progress and where to improve.” “The amount of feedback given to students is the most important part – not enough”. Students complain if “there is no exam feedback making it possible to make the same mistakes for the entirety of the three years without knowing how to improve your level of attainment” and “lack of feedback from essays and tests make it difficult to see where you went wrong.”

Postgraduates

Postgraduates were more pleased with the feedback they received than undergraduates. More than half of them agree with the statement. There were no differences between various students groups in answers to this question.

Question 9 The degree course has sharpened my analytical skills.

Undergraduates



Nearly seven out of ten students agreed with the ninth statement, ‘The degree course has sharpened my analytical skills.’ One in five were undecided and one in ten did not feel that the course had sharpened their analytical skills. The results are similar to the 2002 Survey results.

Students’ opinions were influenced by the level of their studies, by having English as their first language and by having taken A-level Mathematics at school.

Students from the first year were among the least positive about the statement, although 57.5% of them agree to it; while among the final-year students, 84.3% believe that course has sharpened their analytical skills. If English was a student’s first language they were less likely to agree to this statement: 67.5% of English native speakers were positive, compared to 73.8% of others. Students with A-level Mathematics were more positive than those without it: 70.5% versus 65.8%.

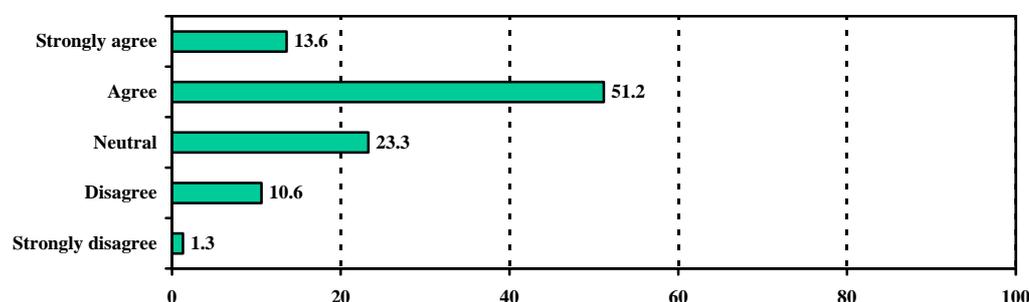
In their own words students put it that, “*economics module helps me to develop a good analytical skills in applying to our economy*” and that “*quantitative analytical skills developed in economics*” will be very useful in their career and “*are some of the most transferable to later on in life such as analytical skills*”.

Postgraduates

Every three out of four postgraduates believe that this course has sharpened their analytical skills, while only 9.0% of them disagree with it. Gender has influenced students’ answers to this question. Males were more positive with nearly four out of five agreeing to it, while among the females the proportion is lower – 71.5% agree with the statement and one in five females were neutral.

Question 10 The degree course has developed my problem-solving skills.

Undergraduates



A majority of the respondents (64.8%) agree with the tenth statement, that the degree course has sharpened their problem-solving skills. At the same time, nearly one in four undergraduates were undecided. We could see that answers to this question differ depending on the level of studies and on English being the first language. The higher the level of study, the more positive the response was to the question. At the first year 54.8% of students agree with this statement, in the second year 66.7%, and in the last year 78.8%. With each year of study students received more practice with their problem-solving skills and they recognise it as a benefit of their course.

Students for whom English was not their first language were more positive in their replies than native English speakers; 69.7% of them agree with this statement compared to 63.6%. It could be due to the difference in teaching methods in UK and their home country and a higher emphasis on problem-solving exercises in UK universities.

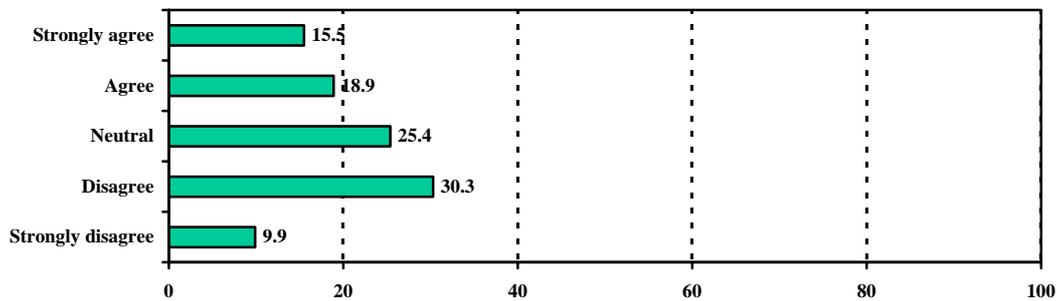
Students' answers to this question in this year's survey were similar to the 2002 Survey results, when 68.2% agreed with the statement. Level of studies was also a statistically significant factor for this question in 2002. In their answers to open-ended questions, students have written: "*The status of doing economics is excellent as a signal to employers that I have strong analytical and problem solving skills,*" and that the course "*develops analytical and problem solving skills as well as other transferable skills.*"

Postgraduates

Postgraduates were more positive in answering this question than undergraduates: 68.2% of them agreed with it. Among postgraduates, males were more positive than females: 73.7% versus 62.5%. Nearly one in three female postgraduates were undecided on this question.

Question 11 The degree course contains too much maths and stats.

Undergraduates



The eleventh statement, ‘The degree course contains too much maths and stats’, was included because over the years a general impression had arisen that economics undergraduates have negative attitudes towards the amount of maths and statistics included in their course.

Answers to this question showed that students are more positive towards maths and statistics than anticipated. The results are similar to the 2002 Survey results. A total of 40.2% of respondents disagreed with the statement, while more than one-third agreed with it and more than a quarter were neutral. Answers to this question were influenced by various characteristics of the students. There were differences in agreement with this statement according to their gender, level of study, whether the respondents had A-level Mathematics, whether they had A-level Economics, and whether English was their first language.

Female students have more polarised opinions than male students: 42.6% of them disagree with the statement, compared to 38.3% of males, and 35.1% agree compared to 33.9% of males.

Among students with A-level Mathematics, only 25.0% agreed with the statement that there is too much maths and stats, compared to 51.0% of those who do not have the qualification. The situation is reversed for those who disagree with the statement: 48.3% of those who do have A-level Mathematics, and 25.6% of those who do not. The situation is similar for those who do not have English as a first language. Only 26.5% of them agree with the statement, while the agreement among those with English, as a first language is higher at 36.0%. This could be the result of better mathematics training of non-native English speakers.

But the situation is different for those who have A-level Economics. Both the 2002 and 2004 data show a higher level of agreement with the statement that there is too much maths on their course among those who have A-level Economics (37.0% in 2002, 38.5% in 2004) than among those who do not (26.0% in 2002, 27.1% in 2004).

There was also a difference in responses between students at different levels of study. 33.9% of first-year and 30.5% of final-year students, but 37.3% of second-year students agree with the statement that there is too much maths and stats on their course – a similar picture to 2002.

Maths was a frequently occurring topic in student responses to the open-ended questions and their comments are deeply divided. Students have written “*To be honest not the best at maths and stats, but these modules are great at again being able to*

apply theory to actual data. These modules are also great at helping analytical and problem solving skills.” At the same time others stress that courses are “*Extremely mathematical theoretical – Should be more focused on what goes on in real world*” and ask for changes in “*Methodologies of teaching Mathematical material. Too complex, and no detailed methods given.*” Some students complain: “*The Mathematics Content is poorly taught and the goals are unclear*” and “*Economics is far too mathematical. It will be good if we can have more theoretical discussions*”. They also suggest “*I think extra information needs to be provided about the level of Maths required. I have struggled having only a B Grade GCSE Maths qualification*” and “*The maths part of the course is exceptionally hard. No mention is made of needing A-level Mathematics and it is certainly necessary*”, “*There is not enough support for students who have not taken A-level Maths.*”

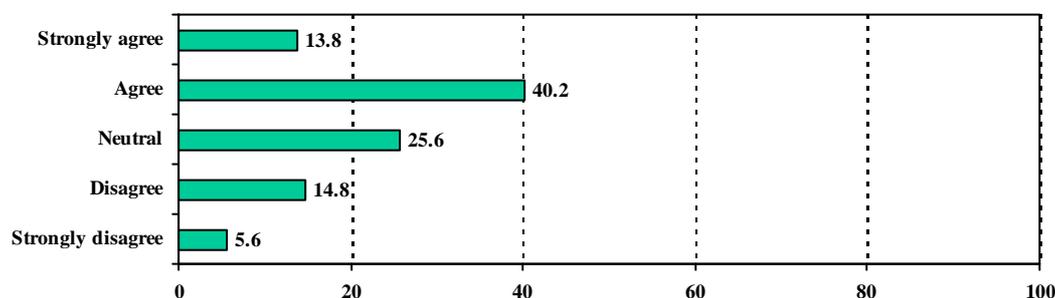
The following quote best describes the situation with maths and stats “*The maths component of the course is found incredibly difficult by some and incredibly easy by others which tends to make both groups switch off a little.*”

Postgraduates

Postgraduates feel positive or neutral about the amount of maths and stats in their degree – more than half of them, actually 52.3% disagree with a statement, while 26.1% are neutral. Only one in five postgraduates think that their course contains too much maths and stats. There are differences in answers to this question depending on whether English was their first language or not. The picture here is different from the one we have for undergraduates. More than half of postgraduate students for whom English is their first language disagree with the statement and 18.3% were neutral, while the figures were 37.5% and 37.5% for those whose first language was not English. We do not speculate on the reasons behind these responses, as it requires further investigation.

Question 12 My degree course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.

Undergraduates



The majority of the students (54.0%), as in the 2002 Survey, agreed with the statement, ‘My degree course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.’ However, this was not the case for every fifth student and more than a quarter of the students were undecided on this matter. The important variables for this question are age, level of study and whether English is their first language.

The enthusiasm of mature students was stimulated more by their degree course than that of their younger colleagues, with three out of four students older than 26 agreeing with this statement, compared to 60.6% from the 21–25 age group and 53.0% from the 18–20 age group.

Students for whom English was not their first language were more positive in answering this question than those who were native English speakers: 62.9% versus 51.7%.

There were differences in the way students at different levels of study answer this question: surprisingly the most positive answers came from first-year students – 55.2% of them agree with statement; students from the second year were slightly less positive – 52.8%, and the final-year students came third with 52.8% agreeing to the statement.

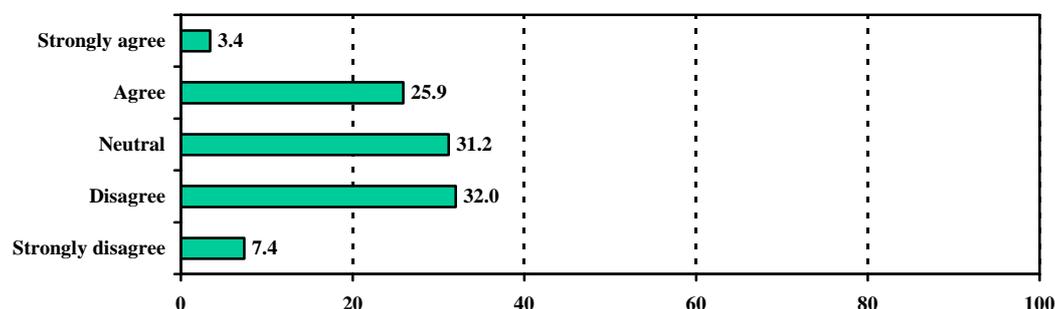
Answering a question about what career the students would like to pursue, a group of students said that they would like to continue their education: “*I strongly wish to go on studying economics*“ and “*I wanted to do a PhD in economics – now I'm not so sure as economics is very, very hard (though it's still great)*” Talking about their course students said “*I find economics as a subject highly interesting, and find that generally the things I learn stimulate me mentally.*”

Postgraduates

Postgraduate courses have stimulated more enthusiasm for further learning than undergraduate ones, with 65.9% of students agreeing with the statement. There were differences in answers to this question according to the age of the students. Mature students were more positive in their answer, with nearly six out of seven of those older than 26 agreeing with it, while for the younger ones this figure is three out of five.

Question 13 It is always easy to know the standard of work expected.

Undergraduates



The students were not so certain about statement 13, 'It is always easy to know the standard of work expected': 39.4% of them disagreed, 31.2% were neutral and 29.3% agreed with it. Greater clarity here by departments, which might involve more individual support, could help students to appreciate the standard required of them and to achieve better results. The results are similar to the 2002 Survey, when 37.0% agreed with the statement.

Mature students tend to be more positive regarding this issue: 43.3% of those older than 26 agreed with it, comparing to 28.4% of those from 18–20 age group. If a student's first language was not English they were less negative towards this statement: 29.1% of them tend to disagree with it, comparing to 42.4% of native English speakers.

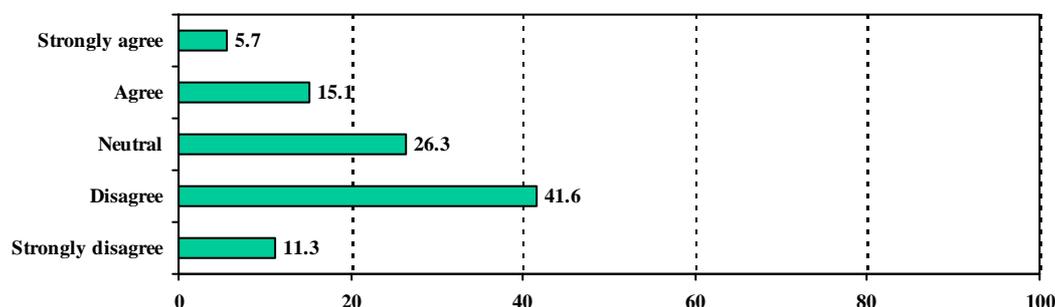
Some of the students are very positive about work standards: *"Assessment is clearly set out and easy to understand what you need to do"*, while others at the same time are not happy at all: *"I feel that it is important to provide stricter guidelines on marking exam scripts, so students can gain a better insight into what is expected of them"*, *"It's really hard to know what is expected of you, especially when it comes to applications in economics. I think the staff should strive to make students know what exactly is expected of them"* and *"We don't know what is expected of us and are not informed about administration we have to complete on time."*

Postgraduates

Postgraduate students seemed to understand the standard of work expected of them even less than undergraduates: half of them disagree with the statement, and nearly one third were neutral. It could be advisable for departments to pay more attention to explaining to students what standard of work is expected from them. This is especially so where student groups are large.

Question 14 The staff seem more interested in testing what I have memorised than what I have understood.

Undergraduates



Students' responses to this question were very similar to those in the 2002 Survey. The majority (52.9%) of the students disagreed with statement 14, 'The staff seem more interested in testing what I have memorised than what I have understood.' At the same time, every fifth student agreed with it, implying that they do not see their understanding as being assessed, only their knowledge of facts. Students with A-level Mathematics disagreed more with this statement (55.9%) than those without A-level Mathematics (47.6%).

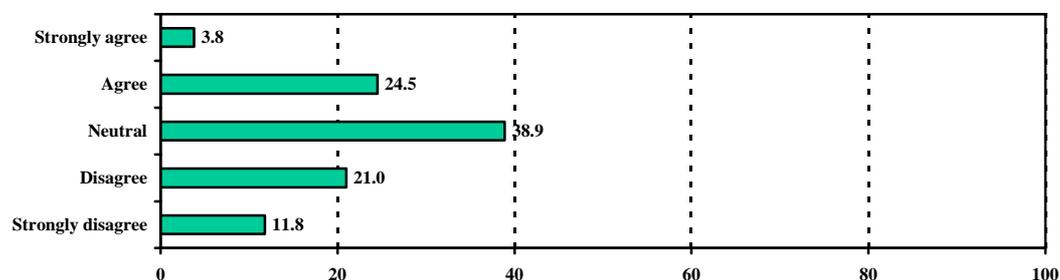
Positive remarks from students stress that *"The fact that the staffs put so much effort to ensure that students understand the materials given to them is extremely good because I have done other courses in secondary school where the staffs didn't care about students understanding but what they can memorise and produce."* As well as *"The study involves analysis and makes us think rather than depend on rote learning memorising material."* At the same time students notice that *"There may be an over-reliance on exam based testing and these tend to be biased towards how much a student can remember as opposed to the student's understanding of the subject"* and *"Testing is mainly done by students having to memorise formulas instead of testing the thoughts, understanding and problem solving skills of the student."*

Postgraduates

Postgraduates replied similarly to the undergraduates on this question: more than half of them (55.6%) disagree with it, while the rest nearly equally agree with it or were neutral. That means that even at postgraduate level nearly a quarter of the students felt that it is not their understanding that is being assessed, but their memorisation of facts, which encourages so called 'surface' learning.

Question 15 The use of economics software in my course is effective in helping me to learn.

Undergraduates



Similarly to the 2002 results, students were fairly evenly divided when responding to statement 15, “The use of economics software in my course is effective in helping me to learn”: 38.9% were neutral, compared to 32.8% who disagreed with it and 28.3% who agreed. That means that less than one-third of the students find the use of economics software effective in helping them to learn. Departments might wish to look closely at this issue given the rapid development of e-learning and the importance of developing C&IT skills. Several factors were statistically significant for this question: level of studies, whether students have Economics A-levels and whether English was their first language.

As far as students’ level of studies is concerned, first-year students are the least positive on this issue – only 23.2% of them agree with the statement, while nearly double this number are neutral and so are not sure whether the use of economics software is benefiting their learning. The most positive response is from second-year students, where 32.0% of them agree with the statement and 30.9% disagree with it, while the final-year students are least neutral 33.0% and most negative 35.6% about this issue.

As for language, native English speakers were more negative than those for whom English was not their first language (27.0% versus 32.2% who agreed with the statement). Those who have A-level Economics at school were more positive than those who have not (29.8% versus 25.7)

Students’ remarks show wide variation, ranging from “*I have never been introduced to any economics software, which is disappointing*” and “*economics software in my course does not really help*” to “*Use of online resources – Blackboard in particular is very useful*” and “*Most of the lecture notes and information about the course is accessible from a very good website.*” Some suggest “*The department should also have invested more in economic software because it stimulates the interest for economics*” and “*more stress could be put on the use of statistical software, is only a supplementary feature of our econometrics degree but we are not really taught how to use it*”.

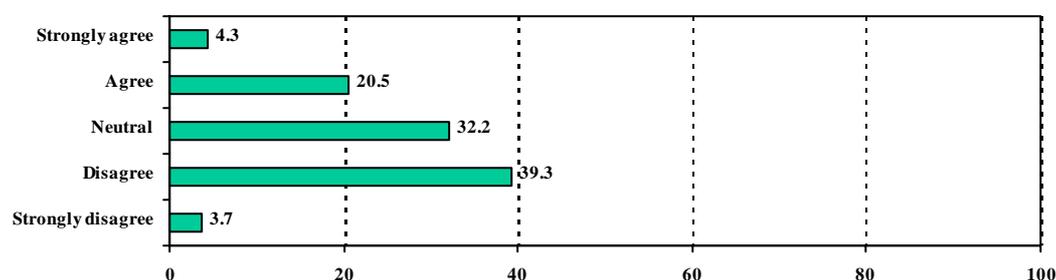
Postgraduates

Postgraduates were much more positive than undergraduates on this issue – 44.9% of them agree with the statement and see the benefit from the use of Economics Software. There were gender differences in answers to this question. One-third of

females were undecided on this issue, while for males the figure was one in five. Males have stronger opinions and gave more of both positive and negative answers than females. Contrary to undergraduates, postgraduate English native speakers were more positive than those for whom English was not first language (46.6% versus 41.7%). We are not going to speculate on the causes for this, as the issue of use of Economics software requires further investigation. As more and more Economics Departments are using Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) in teaching, perhaps in future surveys it could be advisable to reformulate the question to distinguish between VLEs and software packages.

Question 16 The pace of my course is too fast.

Undergraduates



Students' answers to this question are not very different from the ones in the 2002 Survey. More than two out of five students (43.0%) disagreed with statement 16, "The pace of the course is too fast." One-third of the students were neutral about it; so for them the pace of the course was probably about right, while one in four find it too fast. The evidence from the research into student learning suggests that a fast pace will stimulate students to adopt a surface rather than a deep approach to learning. For the vast majority of Economics students the pace of the course was not too fast. Several factors were significant for this question: students' age, the level of studies, whether one has A-level Mathematics and whether English is the first language.

Mature students are more content with the pace of their course: 43.3% of the 26-and-older age group were neutral on this issue, compared to 38.8% from the 21–25 age group and 31.5% from the 18–20 age group.

Half of the students in their final year disagree with the statement and do not find the pace of the course too fast; while less than one in five of them agree with the statement. A quarter of the second-year students agreed with the statement and slightly more from the first year – 27.9%. But even though the first-year students had the highest percentage agreeing that the pace was too fast, more than two thirds of them either disagree with or were neutral about the statement and so do not find the pace too fast.

The other factor that influenced students' replies to this question was their first language. Those for whom English was not their first language tended to agree slightly more with this statement (27.9% agreement) than those whose first language was English (23.7%), maybe due to a language problem.

Students that have A-level Mathematics tend to disagree more than those who do not have (45.6% versus 38.1%), maybe due to a better understanding of the course materials.

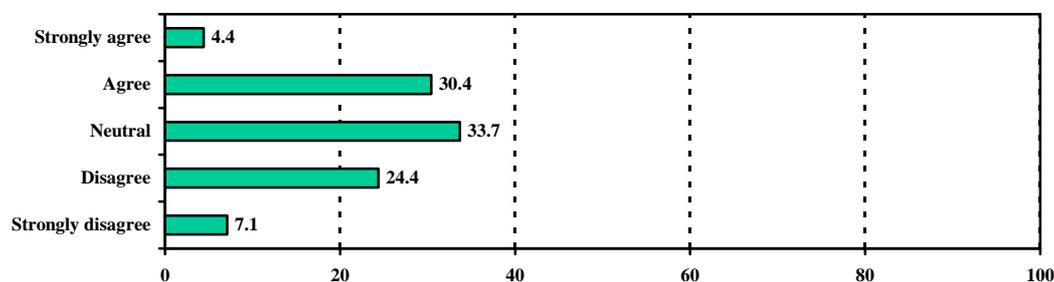
Comments from students who are not happy with the pace include: "*The pace is just mad, I put a lot of work in, and still don't get time for most of my reading*" and "*The pace of the course is too fast and the workload is too much. Many of the topics discussed are very interesting, but I feel I don't have enough time to spend on reading the course material, as there is always another deadline coming up*". Some suggested that "*The pace at which we are expected to understand material should be reduced, and the teaching time increased.*"

Postgraduates

Postgraduate students give similar answers to this question to undergraduate ones. Nearly two out of five disagree with the statement, one third were neutral and the rest agree with it. There were significant differences in answers due to the language factor. Half of the native English speakers disagree with the statement, compared to less than a quarter of those whose first language was not English.

Question 17 The staff make a real effort to understand the difficulties I may be having with my work.

Undergraduates



In answering the question 17, “The staff make a real effort to understand the difficulties I may be having with my work”, students responses were nearly equally split between those who agree with the statement, disagree with it or were undecided, as in 2002 Survey. The agreement was higher among more mature students: 60.0% of those aged 26 or older agreed, compared to 33.9% from the 18–20 age group.

The language factor was also very important. The replies were more positive from those whose first language is not English – 23.6% of them disagree (versus 33.4% of native English speakers) and 38.2% agree (versus 33.9%).

A third important factor was the level of students’ studies. Second-year students were the most disappointed with the staff – 35.7% of them disagree with the statement, compared to 29.2% of first-year students and 29.6% of final-year students.

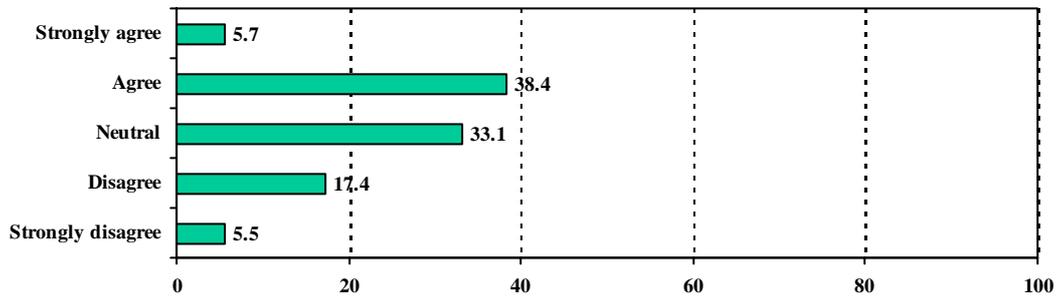
Students find “*the single greatest problem is that there are still some bad lecturers, more concerned with their own research than helping me*” and “*I don’t feel that we get enough attention from the staff and that undergraduates are not the priority for the economics department.*” Other students, however, find that “*lecturers are very approachable and understanding if I have a problem*” and enjoy “*coming across challenges within the course and through help from the lecturers being able to achieve a level of economic analysis that was previously impossible.*”

Postgraduates

Postgraduate students were slightly more positive than undergraduates on this issue. More than two out of five of them were undecided on this issue, while about a third of them agree with it.

Question 18 My lecturers are extremely good at explaining things.

Undergraduates



Positive responses dominate answers to question 18, “My lecturers are extremely good at explaining things”: 44.1% of the students agreed with this – similar to the 2002 results. At the same time, a third of the students were undecided on this matter and more than one in five students disagreed with it. Although this represents a minority of students, the size of the minority suggests that departments might wish to devote more time to staff development targeted at improving lecturers’ explanatory and presentational skills. Students’ answers were influenced by several factors: age, level of study, first language, A-level Economics.

The maturity of students corresponds with more positive answers to this question. More than half (56.7%) of those aged 26 or above agreed with the statement, compared to 43.4% from the 18–20 age group. Correspondence is less straightforward with the level of studies. First-year students are the most positive ones, with 47.2% agreeing with the statement; students from the final year come a close second with 45.4%, while the second-year students were less satisfied with the staff – only 38.1% of them agree with the statement and 35.0% were undecided. English native speakers were more negative in their answers than those for whom English was not first language: 23.2% disagreed versus 20.8%. Students without A-level Economics were more positive than those with: 7.0% of them strongly agree with the statement, compared to 5.0%, with the similar numbers just agreeing.

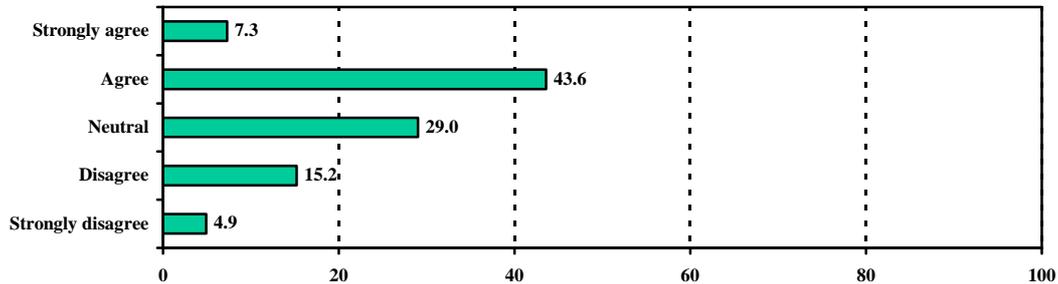
Students enjoyed their courses if “*the lecturer was clear and very helpful. We could discuss our ideas and make critiques about the subjects. Moreover, the sources which were recommended were useful. I feel like I have really learnt a lot.*” There were also others who claim that, “*Some of the lecturers aren’t very good at explaining and cannot put their points across... This isn’t good because if a lecture is bad or boring and if you don’t feel a connection with who’s talking you loose interest, and since people don’t check who does or doesn’t go, many student are disincentivised to go to some lectures since it is literally a waste of time!*”

Postgraduates

Postgraduate students were more positive in their response than undergraduates, with just 16.4% disagreeing with the statement. This disagreement was lower among those who don’t have A-level in maths – only 11.4% of them disagree, comparing to 20.4% of those who has it. Language was also a statistically significant factor for this question. Those whose first language was not English were less negative than those, for whom it was: 11.2% versus 20.2%.

Question 19 The teaching staff stimulate my interest in their subject.

Undergraduates



Half of the students (50.9%) agreed with statement 19, “The teaching staff stimulate my interest in their subject,” a similar result to the 2002 Survey. At the same time, less than a third of them were undecided on this question and one in five disagreed. The important variables for this question are age of entry, level of studies and Mathematics A-level.

Mature students are more positive than the younger ones: 60.0% of those aged 26 or older agree with the statement and 6.6% disagree, compared to only 50.3% agreeing and 20.8% disagreeing in the 18–20 age group. Those with A-level Mathematics were more positive than those without: 17.6% of them disagree with the statement compared to 24.8% of those without it. Probably, knowledge of A-level Mathematics helped in understanding the course and staff are accredited with stimulating higher interest in the subject.

Students from different levels of study answer this question differently. Most positive answers came from the final-year students with 57.0% of them agreeing with the statement, while the most negative came from second-year students with 45.7% agreeing with the statement and 25.2% disagreeing with it. As with answers to Question 18, second-year students were the most disappointed with lecturers and their abilities to stimulate interest and explain things.

Among the remarks were: *‘Some of the lecturers are truly inspiring and motivating’* and *“Course material (particularly econometrics and experimental) draws on most recent research. This makes me interested in economics as a science and makes me want to study further.”* At the same time, some of the lecturers or seminar leaders are seen as unable to create enthusiasm for the subject: *“Economics is a rather dull subject at the best of times and having lecturers who lecture you rather than involve you doesn’t help with student motivation,”* and suggest *“I think that having more inspirational lectures would encourage students to understand more (rather than memorising) and want to study more”*.

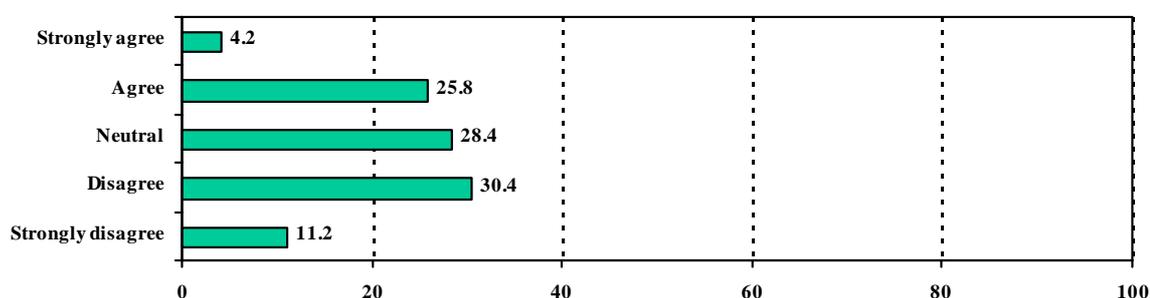
Postgraduates

In general postgraduates are more positive in their responses to this question. Three out of five of them agree with the statement and only one in seven disagree with it.

Students whose first language is not English are less negative than native English speakers: only 11.3% of them disagree, comparing to 17.3% and 19.7% strongly agree comparing to 7.7%.

Question 20 I feel that I am actively engaged in most lectures.

Undergraduates



The situation has not changed much since 2002 in students' responses to this question. Only 30.0% of students agreed with statement 20, "I feel that I am actively engaged in most lectures." A larger percentage (41.6%) disagreed with it. Active engagement in lectures and tutorials is an important part of a deep approach to learning, which most departments seek to encourage. Staff development sessions in the promotion of active and deep learning could help to address this issue.

The important variables for this question were age, A-level Economics, and English as a first language and whether that course was their first choice. Mature students are more positive regarding this question: 53.3% of those aged 26 or older agree with it, while only 28.2% agree from the 18–20 age group. Those who have A-level Economics were less positive (28.0% agreement) than those who have not (33.6%). Those who have English as their first language were more negative (43.9% disagreement) than those who have not (32.5%). Whether the course was students' first choice is a statistically significant factor for this question only and, surprisingly enough, students for whom this course was their first choice were less positive about their active engagement in lectures than those for whom it was not (6.7% strongly agree versus 3.5%).

Some students stressed that *'The best aspect is the fact that lecturers try to relate every piece of theory with real world examples, making it easier for students to understand and reflect on it. Moreover, I believe it leaves students better prepared for jobs in Economics after leaving University'* and like *"Interactive lecture (with a who wants to be a millionaire style audience vote) greatly improves motivation"*.

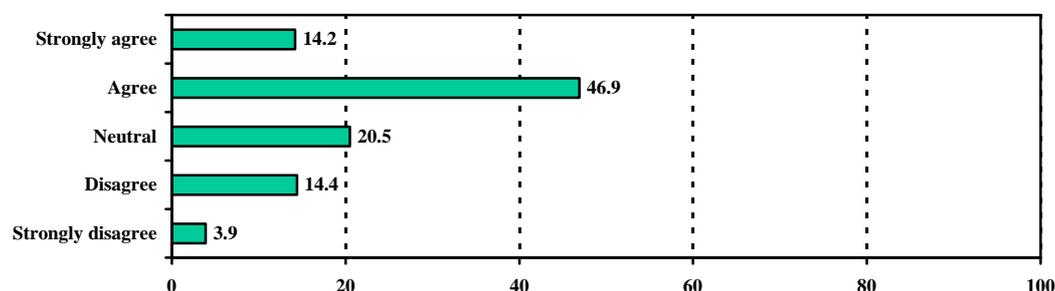
Unfortunately there were more negative replies about lectures and lecturers, such as *"Lectures are, on the whole, rather dull. Some lecturers seem to make little effort to keep students interested."* and *"some lecturers seem content that the lecture theatre has taken in what is being said simply by the fact that they are standing in front of students and reading off a PowerPoint. This is not the case. It is hard to appreciate the content of a lecture if the lecturer seems as about as enthusiastic as someone is about having head lice. I think it is extremely important for lecturers to be animated enough in lectures to keep the students attention for more than 5 minutes."*

Postgraduates

Postgraduates are more positive in answering this question than undergraduates: more of them tend to agree with the statement than disagree with it (36.2% compared to 33.3%). No factors were statistically significant for this statement

Question 21 I feel that I am actively engaged in most seminars/ tutorials.

Undergraduates



Students were more positive about their active engagement in most seminars/tutorials than in lectures: 61.1% agreed with this, similar to the 2002 results. At the same time, nearly one in five students did not feel actively engaged in seminars and another one in five were undecided. Active engagement in tutorials is an important strategy for students who are looking to learn and is part of the deep approach to learning. The significant variables for this question are age and whether English was students' first language.

Mature students felt more engaged in seminars/tutorials than younger ones: 86.2% of those who were 26 and older agree with the statement, compared to 60.8% of those from the 18–20 age group. If students' first language is English, they tend to agree more, and feel more engaged in tutorials than those for whom English is not their first language (62.3% versus 54.6%), probably through better understanding of what is happening in the seminar.

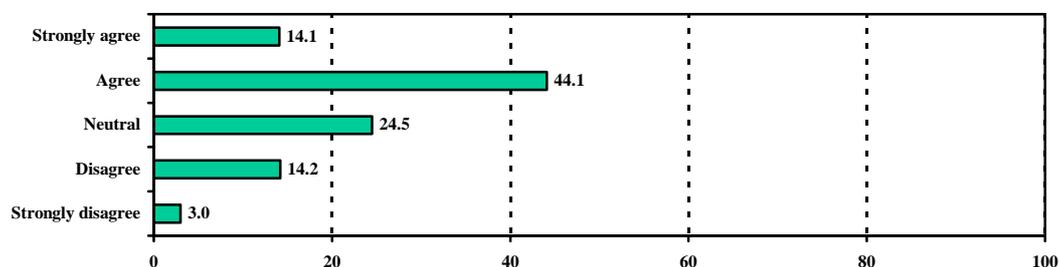
Students like *“the tutorials, as they help me understand aspects that I didn't in the lecture, feeling part of a group of students”* and they find that *“It has improved my skills and knowledge by being actively included in all lectures and seminars. The course has made me a more motivated person by some of the students and committed staff I have met during my 3 year course.”* At the same time they complain *“The tutorials are too much like mini lectures, with very little participation”* and ask for *“more active tutorials – some modules' lecturers are very good – others are very impersonal and just lecture at you both in lectures and tutorials instead of engaging us”* and *“a lot of the tutorials don't seem beneficial, they seemed to be pitched either too high or low in comparison to the lecture material, as if the tutors are not aware of how we are being taught.”*

Postgraduates

Responding to a question about engagement in tutorials/workshops postgraduates were more negative than undergraduates, though more than half of them agree with the statement (55.6%). No factors were statistically significant for this statement

Question 22 The degree course has improved my skills in written communication.

Undergraduates



A large majority of students (58.2%) agreed with statement 22, “The degree course has improved my skills in written communication.” But every fourth student was undecided on this matter and every sixth felt that the course had not improved his or her written communication.

Statistically significant factors for this question were gender, level of studies and English as first language. Females gave more positive answers to this question – 59.6% of them agree and 15.7% disagree with the statement – while for males it was 57.3% and 18.4% correspondingly. Students whose first language was not English were more positive than native English speakers: 17.7% of them strongly agree with the statement, compared to 13.3% of native English speakers, and 13.8% of them disagree with it, compared to 18.4%. Another important factor is the level of study. At the highest level, more students seemed to agree with this statement: of the first years 47.7% agreed with it, of the second years 57.8% agreed and of the final-year students 76.1% agreed. These results are similar to the 2002 results, though the total agreement is slightly lower in 2004.

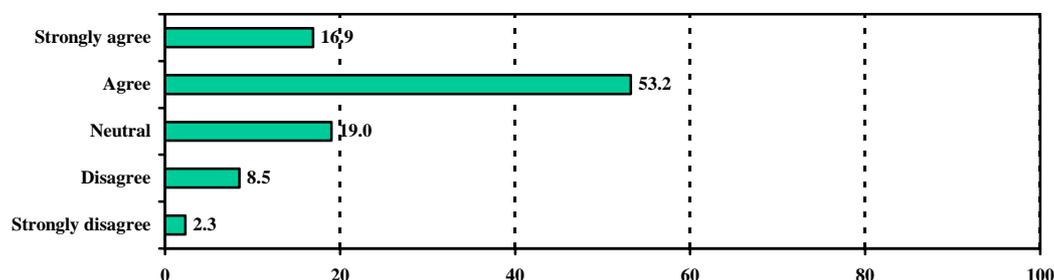
Students suggest that “*The standard in, e.g. essays, should be demonstrated more fully. Not only grammar and diction, but content guidelines. E.g. how much of what.*” and that “*Some best essays should be shown to all the students so that we can learn how to write an excellent essay.*”

Postgraduates

The results for the postgraduates were slightly more positive than for undergraduates: three out of five agree with the statement, while one in five are neutral and one in five disagree with it. No factors were statistically significant for this statement.

Question 23 My degree course has helped me to develop my ability to plan my own work.

Undergraduates



Responses to statement 23, “My degree course has helped me to develop my ability to plan my own work”, were positive and similar to the ones in 2002: 70.1% of the students agreed with it. Still, every fifth student was undecided on this question. The answers vary for different levels of study, gender, and on whether English was first language.

Females as usual were more positive than males: 19.7% of them strongly agree with the statement compared to 14.8% of males, while on the whole 72.8% females agree with it comparing to 68.1% of males.

Students’ confidence in their ability to plan their work grows as they study. The final-year students were the most positive about it with 82.2% agreeing, while 64.0% of the first-year students and 69.5% of the second-year students agreed.

Students whose first language was English disagreed more with the statement, than those for whom it wasn’t: 12.3% compared to 5.9%.

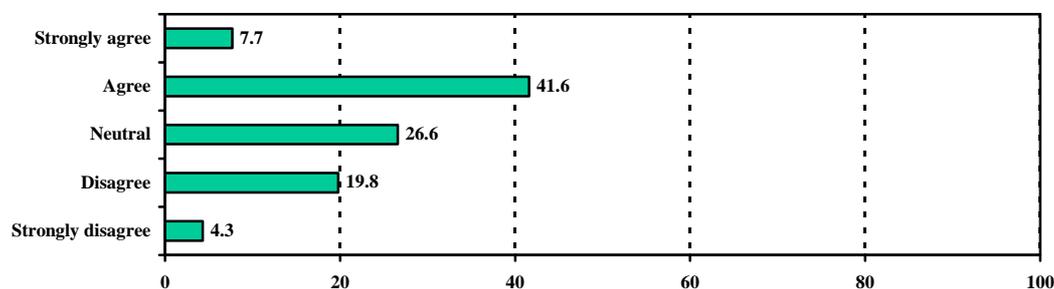
Students remarked that, “*The degree course has helped me to learn how to work. I have understood how to handle deadline and to organise my work to meet them; I have learned to interact with teachers and other students. Mainly working on my own I have been able to understand the problems in my way of working and to try to correct them.*”

Postgraduates

In general postgraduates gave very similar answers to undergraduates to this question; 71.7 % of them agree that their degree course has helped them to develop the ability to plan their own work. There were differences in students’ answers depending on whether they have A-level Economics or not. Those who do not have it were more positive than those who do: 23.0% of them strongly agree with the statement, compared to just 6.5% of those who do not have A-level Economics.

Question 24 It has been made clear to me right from the start of each module/unit what is required of me.

Undergraduates



Statement 24, “It has been made clear to me right from the start of each module/unit what is required of me”, received a positive response from less than a half of students – 49.3%, not much different from the 2002 results. More than one in four were undecided and another one in four disagreed. That means that more than half of the students were not clear from the start of each of their modules about what was required from them. And if the students are not clear on the module requirements, their learning outcomes will inevitably suffer.

The only factor that was statistically significant was English as first language. Native English speakers were more negative in their answers – one in four of them disagree with the statement, comparing to one in five of those for whom English was not their first language.

Students wrote “*It’s really hard to know what is expected of you, especially when it comes to applications in economics. I think the staffs should strive to make students know what exactly is expected of them*” and “*We don’t know what is expected of us and are not informed about administration we have to complete on time*” as well as “*Some of the courses could do with being revised and clear learning outcomes stated that are actually achieved.*”

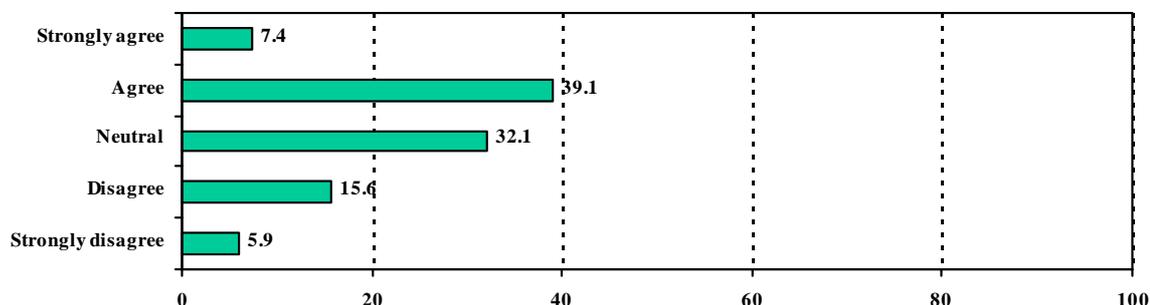
Postgraduates

Postgraduates reply very similarly to the undergraduates: less than half of them agree and more than a quarter disagree and the same number were neutral on whether it has been made clear from the start of each module of what was expected of them.

Those who do not have A-level Economics were more positive than those who have it: 55.0% of them agree with the statement compared to 43.5%.

Question 25 I feel part of a group of students and staff committed to learning.

Undergraduates



Results for this question were similar to the 2002 Survey results. About a third of all students were undecided about statement 25, “I feel part of a group of students and staff committed to learning”; one in four students disagreed with the statement, while 46.5% of them were positive. That means that more than half of all students do not feel part of a group of students and staff committed to learning, or are unsure about it. This sense of belonging is very important and could boost students’ motivation. This is something that departments may wish to address in a variety of ways, from group projects and other activities, to support arrangements and social interactions.

Students’ responses were influenced by their gender and by English being their first language. Females were more positive in their answers than males, with 50.6% of them agreeing with the statement, compared to 43.3%. Non native English speakers were more positive than those for whom English was their first language: 48.3% versus 45.9%.

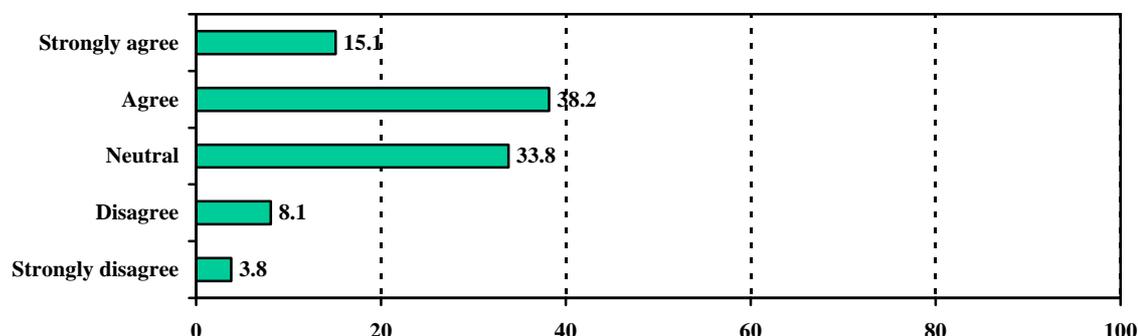
Some of the students complained that “*no-one seems to care if you are not performing*” and “*motivation of other students is despicable at times with pathetic and immature attitudes to work and study*” as well as “*Lecturers/tutors are dedicated to other pursuits, i.e. research, and do not dedicate enough time/effort to genuine teaching/helping*” Others are talking about “*Some excellent and engaging lecturers, good discussion in lectures, fellow students who are interested in the issues and have different and interesting perspectives.*”

Postgraduates

Postgraduates feel more positive about this statement than undergraduates – 53.6% of them feel being part of the group committed to learning. Age influenced their answers: those who started their undergraduate education being 26 and older were more positive (60.8%) about the statement than those who started at 18–20 (44.2%).

Question 26 I feel that contact with active researchers is beneficial to undergraduate students.

Undergraduates



Students responses to statement 26, “I feel that contact with active researchers is beneficial to undergraduate students” were positive and similar to the responses in 2002. More than half of them (53.3%) agree with it, while a third of all students were undecided on this matter, which means that they are not sure of any benefit to them from contact with active researchers. Students’ gender, A-level Mathematics and level of study seemed to influence their attitudes on this matter.

This time males were more positive than females – 55.6% of them agree with the statement compared to 50.4% of females. Those who have A-level Mathematics were more positive than those who do not. This agreement is higher for final-year students than it is for first-year students (61.1% versus 49.2%). A big group of first year students were undecided on this matter (37.1%).

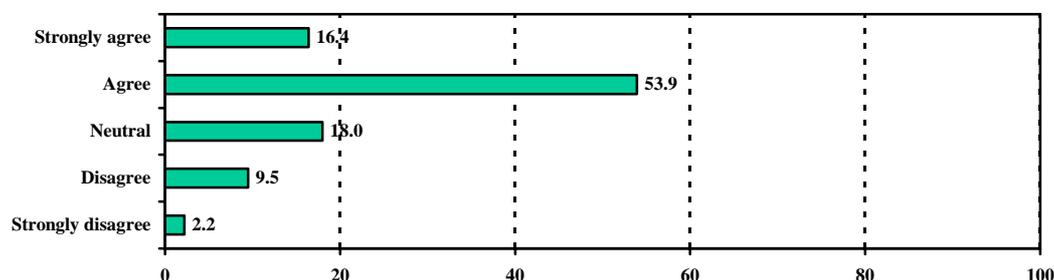
In their answers to open-ended questions students wrote: “*some of our lectures are clearly at the university to do research but are useless at teaching. It is good to get in contact with people who do research but it is not necessary for them to teach in case they don’t really enjoy it!*” Others at the same time find “*Lecturers are very renowned in their individual fields of research thus I feel I am learning from some of the best*” and “*It’s indeed encouraging when your lecturers are have passion for their topics of interest and are leading figures in their fields*”.

Postgraduates

Postgraduates were more positive in their answers, with only one in sixteen of them disagreeing with the statement, while the rest are either positive or neutral. None of the factors was statistically significant for this question.

Question 27 Overall I am satisfied with the quality of this degree course.

Undergraduates



Students' overall satisfaction with the course was very high, as in 2002. Over 70 per cent them agreed with the statement, "Overall I am satisfied with the quality of this degree course"; 18.0% were 'neutral' and only 11.7% disagreed. It is interesting to see that, although only 55.1% of students were positive about the degree course meeting their expectations, 70.3% were satisfied with the course. The similar picture was in 2002. This requires further investigation. There is difference in agreement with this statement according to age, Mathematics A-levels, level of study and English as the first language.

Students coming from the 26 and older age group were more satisfied with the quality of their degree course than those coming from the 18–20 age group – 76.7% versus 70.2%.

Students who have A-level Mathematics were more positive in their answers than those who do not – 72.6% versus 66.1%.

Students from the second year seemed to be less satisfied with the course than those from the first and final year: 67.7% of them agree with the statement, comparing to 71.4% from the first year and 72.7% from the final year.

Students, whose first language was not English were less negative, while answering this question than those for whom it was native: 8.2% disagreement compared to 12.6%.

Students have written about their degree course "*I feel we are over worked and under tested. I feel this is good as there is so much to learn in economics. You push yourself hard and come out with a grade you deserve. I love this course as [it] teaches you everything you need to know about life and the world.*" and "*I find economics as a subject highly interesting, and find that generally the things I learn stimulate me mentally.*"

Postgraduates

Postgraduate students seemed to be also satisfied with their degree course – 71.6% of them agree with the statement and only one in sixteen disagree with it. No factors were statistically significant for this statement.

Open-ended questions

Question 28 Identify the best one or two aspects of your degree course and say why.

In the answers to this question, students most frequently mentioned the following themes:

- the variety of modules on the degree
- the quality of teaching staff
- the employability of graduates

The first two of these themes were also mentioned in the 2002 Survey, but the third theme, which in 2002 was more idealistic – the intrinsic interest of economics as a subject – has now changed to the more down-to-earth values associated with the employability aspects of the course: possible skills developed, relevance of issues discussed in the course to the future jobs, respect from employers to the degree.

Students enjoyed the variety of modules in the degree, their range and flexibility, as that enables them to tailor their degree to their specific interests.

Staff were praised for the following: passion for their field of economics, enthusiasm, use of different teaching methods, for being approachable, engaging and understanding.

Students praised aspects of the course, that makes them better prepared for the future jobs - development of transferable skills, placement year, reputation of the degree in the job market. As one of the students summarise it “...today a degree is not enough. In terms of getting a graduate job (a major reason for getting a degree!) additional qualities are required. A course which provides a range of learning approaches including such useful skills as presentation and project management are vital for the types of jobs many economics students aim for. The well balanced course of economics (theory), business management (critical thinking) and placement (work experience) is fantastic in terms of preparing you for the future. It makes four years of university worthwhile.”

Other positive comments made by students this year refer to the use of on-line resources, support from the department and the application of maths and statistics to economics.

Question 29 Identify one or two aspects of your degree course that could be improved and say why.

Students' answers to this question address various aspects of teaching. Their responses are very similar to the ones we received in 2002 Survey, but there are differences. Students suggested a need for improvement in the following areas:

- Teaching quality in general, so that lectures would be more engaging and motivating, and seminars more interactive (also mentioned in 2002);
- English language issues for international teaching assistants and lecturers (also mentioned in 2002);
- Teaching and assessment methods. Issues included: not enough feedback on work, too little or poorly organised group work with free-rider problems, lack of focus

on the development of skills, patchy and inconsistent use of on-line resources, lack of real-life applications of theories, too little assessed coursework, poor course administration;

Access to staff for academic support, which was a very important issue in 2002, this time is rarely mentioned. By contrast, lack of pastoral care (e.g. by personal tutors), is mentioned by many students.

Teaching Maths was another frequently occurring topic in both surveys, usually in complaints of the subject being too mathematical, or in complaints that there was insufficient help for those without A-level Mathematics. Also this year there were more complaints about lack of learning resources (library resources, on-line resources) and poor discipline on lectures.

Question 30 What one or two aspects of your degree have you found the hardest?

Students' responses to this question were similar to the ones in 2002. They find the mathematical and statistical elements of the course to be the hardest and they complain about a lack of warning that A-level Mathematics is very helpful (or even virtually essential) for the course.

Many students reported difficulties adjusting to university life, mostly with independent working and time management – *“Time management and university life management is harder than any aspect of the degree programme.”*

Another frequently mentioned difficulty was uncertainty about what was expected in essays: *“It frustrates me that tutors and indeed lecturers never really tell you what they are looking for in terms of your work.”* This issue was raised by many international students, who also find language to be the biggest barrier.

Postgraduate students find writing their dissertation to be the hardest aspect of course. Respondents also find it hard not only to study, but also to have a part-time job, raise the family or have a social life. However, some students pointed out that, *“Economics in general is a hard degree but gives satisfaction.”*

Question 31 What types of activities in seminars/tutorials have you found the most useful?

Students' answers to this question were similar to the ones made in the 2002 Survey. They all spoke positively about “active workshops” with group discussion, presentations and problem-solving exercises. Students find activities associated with the following themes most useful:

- Better understanding of the subject through discussions, debates and higher level of interaction with other students and the seminar tutor, as well as getting an alternative slant on lecture material and obtaining clarification on key points and analysing the past exam questions;
- Developing skills useful for the future employment, such as team-working, presentation and communication skills. The team component of the activities was stressed as a useful one by many students.

There were a few students who did not find seminars or tutorials useful at all, and there were those who regret not having tutorials.

Question 32 What types of activities in seminars/tutorials have you found the least useful?

The majority of the students find their seminars useful and make positive comments about them and teaching in general – *“I think everything in seminars is useful.... Getting the students properly involved has a huge impact on how the tutorial goes – many of our tutors have this skill, but not all.”* In general their responses are similar to the 2002 responses.

Their suggestions on how to make seminars better, include: better explanations to the answers for problem sets, more feedback, less *“parrot-fashion repetition of answers”*, smaller groups, and more interaction. They again complained about tutors who cannot speak English well, and lack of communication between lecturer and students. *“Who would like to volunteer to come to the board and talk for a while? – everyone looks at the floor.”* Although in general students support group work, the *“free-ride members”* worry them. Students also made negative comments about *“long student presentations”* and other students who *“turn up without preparing in advance”*.

Question 33 If you know what career you intend to pursue, please identify it.

Nearly half of the students did not answer this question. Those who did give replies similar to ones we received in 2002, probably with fewer ‘odd’ ones. The most popular future careers for economics graduates are therefore in banking, finance, accountancy, the civil service, consultancy and economics journalism, with some of the graduates continuing their education through postgraduate studies.

See Appendix 4 for representative answers to the open-ended questions.

Factor scale analyses

It was mentioned earlier that the current survey was based upon the questions from the University of Sydney Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ). These questions have been shown to cluster together to form factor scales:

- Good Teaching Scale (GTS)
- Clear Goals and Standards Scale (CGSS)
- Appropriate Assessment Scale (AAS)
- Appropriate Workload Scale (AWS)
- Generic Skills Scale (GSS)
- Environment Scale (ES)

Other questions that were included in the Economics Network survey do not contribute to these scales, but are relevant to the economics studies context: for example, “My degree course contains too much maths and stats.” In addition, the questions included in the scales have been altered slightly from those in the SCEQ scales, due to the fact that the survey was adapted by Economics Network. The relation of each question to a particular scale is indicated below.

- **Good Teaching Scale (GTS), including questions 2, 7, 8, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21.** The GTS is characterised by practices such as providing students with helpful feedback on their work, explaining things, stimulating interest in the subject, actively engaging students in lectures and seminars, stimulating students intellectually, using economics software effectively and understanding students’ problems. Higher scores on the GTS are associated with the perception that these practices are present. Lower scores reflect that these practices occur less often.
- **Clear Goals and Standards Scale (CGSS), including questions 5, 6, 13 and 24.** Although establishing clear goals and standards could be considered part of good teaching in a broader sense, it is important to see how this aspect of teaching is perceived. This is also linked with the first question regarding the overall expectations of the course.
- **Appropriate Assessment Scale (AAS) – question 14r (r = item scoring reversed to allow for negative phrasing).** Only one question was included from this scale, which concentrates on a particular aspect of assessment: the extent to which assessment emphasised recall of what students had memorised, rather than higher-order thinking. The assumption behind this question is that assessment that does not focus on memorising concentrates on higher-order processes. This scale is not comprehensive in its measurement of assessment and questions regarding assessment should probably be added in future.
- **Appropriate Workload Scale (AWS), including questions 3r and 16r (r = item scoring reversed to allow for negative phrasing).** High scores on AWS indicate reasonable workloads. These are the students who disagree with the statements “My workload is too heavy” and “The pace of my course is too fast”. As research

on student learning has shown, heavy workloads and a fast-paced course encourage students to adopt surface learning, and they are unable to spend time reflecting on the material they are supposed to learn.

- **Generic Skills Scale (GSS), including questions 4, 9, 10, 22 and 23.** Aggregating data on skills is an attempt to take into account how economics courses contribute to the development of the generic skills that graduates are expected to possess. Employers are now looking for graduates who are able to work in teams, can plan their work, have good communication skills and have developed analytical and problem-solving skills.
- **Environment Scale (ES), including questions 25 and 26.** We believe that the learning environment plays an important role in students' perception of the degree course. Feeling part of a group of students and teachers committed to learning, and being in contact with active researchers, creates a better climate for learning.

Besides these, there are additional items concerning students' expectations of the whole degree course (Q1), students' overall satisfaction with the degree course (Q27), and adequate inclusion of maths and statistics in the course (Q11r).

Summary statistics for the factor scales are presented in Table 1 for undergraduates. As in the previous parts of the report, the results for undergraduates and postgraduates are analysed separately. In this report we examine the factor scale analyses solely for undergraduates, as the one for postgraduates will be done later. The table also includes *students' expectation* of the course (SE) and *students' satisfaction* with the course (SS). It should be stressed that, although these results are interesting as they are, their main value lies in forming the base for comparison in future surveys. We have included mean value for the scales in 2002 in the table. Their use as part of time-series data will enable changes and patterns in students' perceptions over a period of time to be seen. The full comparison report of two consecutive surveys will be prepared in 2005.

Table 1 Summary statistics for the factor scales for undergraduates

Scale	N	Mean in 2004	Mean in 2002	Standard Deviation
GTS	1821	3.25	3.34	0.66
CGSS	1823	3.40	3.50	0.71
AWS	1829	3.10	3.13	0.78
AAS	1836	3.38	3.47	1.05
GSS	1809	3.52	3.59	0.69
ES	1822	3.39	3.45	0.78
SE	1843	3.36	3.42	0.98
SS	1835	3.72	3.84	0.92

The data in Table 1 show that, although in general students are very satisfied with the whole degree course, they are less satisfied with different aspects of the course. This is consistent both with the results from Australian universities, which have been using SCEQ for a long time, and with our results of the 2002 Survey. In the Appropriate Workload Scale and the Appropriate Assessment Scale, the data from agreement to disagreement were reversed to allow for the negative phrasing of the questions, and the results were recalculated. In future, additional questions concerning student assessment should be included in the survey, as the single question used in this survey is not enough to get the full picture of this important aspect of learning. It should be further investigated.

It is difficult meaningfully to interpret the difference in results of the means from 2002 and 2004 surveys. Although the results of 2004 seemed lower, the difference is small and could be due to random variation.

The means presented in Table 1 for different scales cannot be compared directly. Just because the mean of GSS is 3.52 and the mean for GTS is 3.25, for example, one cannot conclude that the generic skills that the students are taught are of higher quality than the general quality of teaching. The means of the scales are an artefact of the wording of the items from which they are formed. Their significance is as time-series data for tracking possible future changes.

Comparisons of data between universities may also be misleading, as students differ in terms of personal, educational and family backgrounds, which may have a profound effect on their perceptions of learning. The main value of the survey results lies in forming the base for comparison in future surveys.

Good Teaching Scale

The GTS is calculated as a simple average of the coded responses to questions 2,7,8,12,15,17,18,19,20 and 21. These questions cover different aspects of teaching. The answers to them varied from highly positive – 79.7% agreed with the statement “The degree course is intellectually stimulating” and 61.1% agreed with “I feel that I am actively engaged in most seminars/tutorials” – to more critical: only 28.3% agreed with “The use of economics software in my course is effective in helping me to learn” and 30.0% agreed with “I feel that I am actively engaged in most lectures.”

For GTS the following potential explanatory variables are significant: English as a First language, level of study, two way interaction between English and level of study, etc. The mean score for those whose first language is English is lower (3.22) than the sample score for those whose first language is not English (3.38). Application of the two-sample t-test indicates that the observed difference in means cannot readily be attributed to a chance effect due to sampling and is statistically significant ($t = 4.156$, $df = 1768$, $p < 0.001$, two tailed). A bar chart showing the difference in the mean values is given in Figure 4 below.

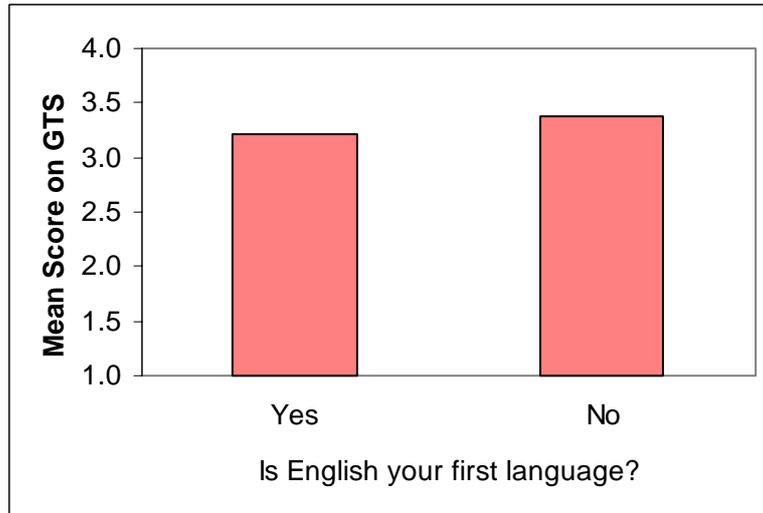


Figure 4

This is not surprising, as English as first language is an important variable for 7 out of the 10 questions included in GTS. It is also an important variable for Q27 about Student satisfaction. Those for whom English was not first language gave less negative answers to Q27 and have higher mean score for GTS.

Level of study is another factor. The mean score for those in the Second Year (3.16) is lower than the means at either First Year (3.28) or Final Year (3.31). Application of the one-way analysis of variance indicates that the observed difference is statistically significant. A bar chart showing the difference in the mean values is given in Figure 5 below.

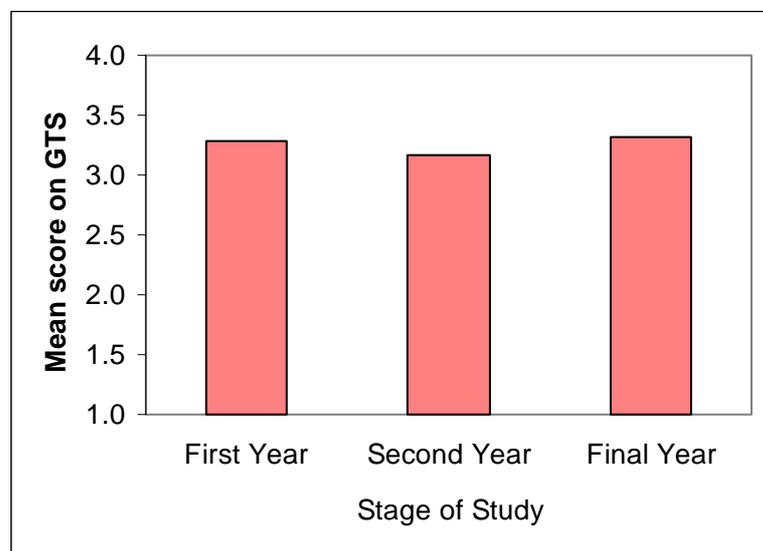


Figure 5

This is also in line with level of study being an important variable for 8 out of the 10 questions included in GTS. Students' responses to Q27 show that second-year students were less satisfied with their experience than students of first and final year, similar to the difference in their mean scores for GTS.

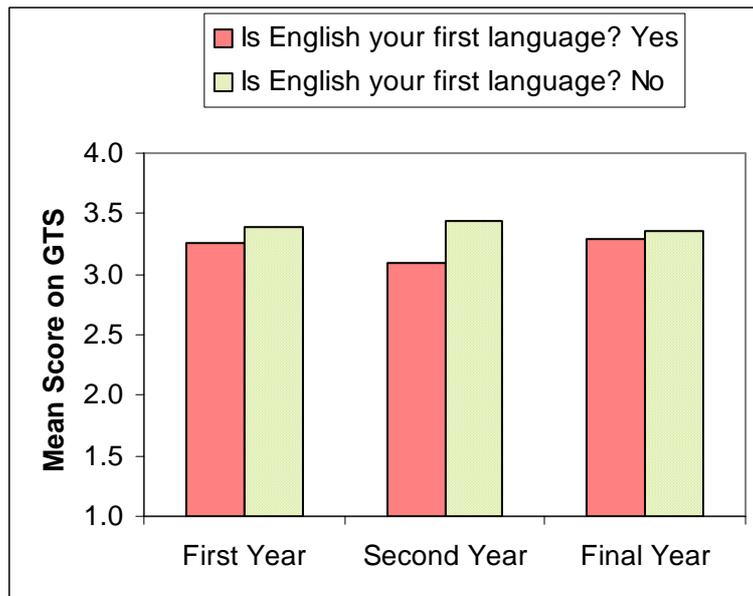


Figure 6

Application of the two-way analysis of variance indicates that there is statistically significant interaction between English as a first language and level of study on GTS (see Figure 6).

At a three-way interaction Economics A-levels, English as first language and gender were statistically significant. These results will be discussed in our next report in spring 2005.

In students' answers to open-ended questions, the quality of teaching staff was the most frequently cited aspect of the course both in positive and in critical statements. Students praised staff for showing distinct passion for their field of economics and enthusiasm and thus motivating students; for using different ways of teaching and making the course enjoyable; for being good explainers, receptive to student problems, approachable and knowledgeable. They also described as one of the best aspects of the course *"...the fact that lecturers try to relate every piece of theory with real-world examples, making it easier for students to understand and reflect on it. Moreover, I believe it leaves students better prepared for jobs in Economics after leaving University."* The most frequent point of criticism of lecturers was, as last time, their inability to create enthusiasm for the subject: *"Economics is a rather dull subject at the best of times and having lecturers who lecture you rather than involve you doesn't help with student motivation. I think that having more inspirational lectures would encourage students to understand more (rather than memorising) and want to study more."*

Students often contrasted the lecturers' manifest knowledge of economics with their difficulty in explaining it or bringing it alive: *"Some lecturers know their stuff but don't know how to teach!"* and, *"Way too many poor lecturers and tutors, many of whom are inarticulate and appear to have had little teaching experience."* They suggest a need for *"variation in teaching. Not just reading off an OHP"* and appeal for more real-world illustrations of the concepts they are learning: *"There is lack of real examples in economics lectures, I find that most of the time were learning only the theory with no real idea of how to apply it in the real world. If we were given more examples it would make the lectures more interesting and motivating."*

One particular recurring complaint this year, as well as in 2002, was about teaching staff whose first language is not English. Students felt that the “*fact that many of the tutor staff is international postgraduate students, is good in a way (I’m not trying to sound anti-international people, on the contrary, I am very international myself!), but most of the times, their English is very very poor and, since tutorials are supposed to help you understand and deepen your understanding of lectures, the fact that the tutor cannot speak or express him/herself isn’t very helpful! Maybe if they had a course or something before hand...?*”

The survey indicated that students are aware of the detriment to the quality of their education resulting from the enormous time pressures on staff. On the topic of the least favourite aspects of the course, many answers were about the insufficiency of contact with lecturers, as it was in 2002.

Generic Skills Scale

The Generic Skills Scale (GSS) is calculated as a simple average of the coded responses to questions 4, 9, 10, 22 and 23. As in 2002, it has one of the highest means (3.52). But even within the scales there was a big difference between the mean responses. Students were very satisfied with the way their degree course has helped them to develop the ability to plan their own work (mean 3.74), but were not sure whether it helped them to develop their ability to work as a team member (mean 2.95). For GSS the following potential explanatory variables are significant: gender, English as first language, level of studies, as well as a two-way interaction between gender and English as first language.

The mean score for males is lower (3.48) than the mean score for females (3.56). Application of the independent samples test indicates that the observed difference in means cannot readily be attributed to a chance effect due to sampling and is statistically significant ($t = 2.346$, $df = 1807$, $p = 0.019$, two tailed). A bar chart showing the difference in the mean values is given in Figure 7 below.

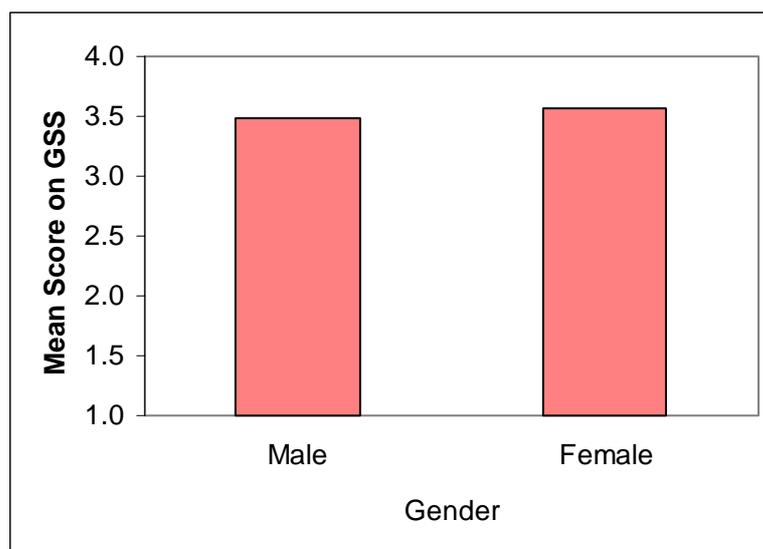


Figure 7

Gender is an important variable for 3 out of 5 variables included in this scale. Level of studies is an important variable for all variables included in the scale and for the GSS itself. This time, in contrast to the GTS, students from the first year have the lowest mean score of 3.33, while for second-year students it is 3.52 and for final-year students it is 3.80. Application of the ANOVA indicates that the observed difference is statistically significant. A bar chart showing the difference in the mean values is given in the Figure 8 below.

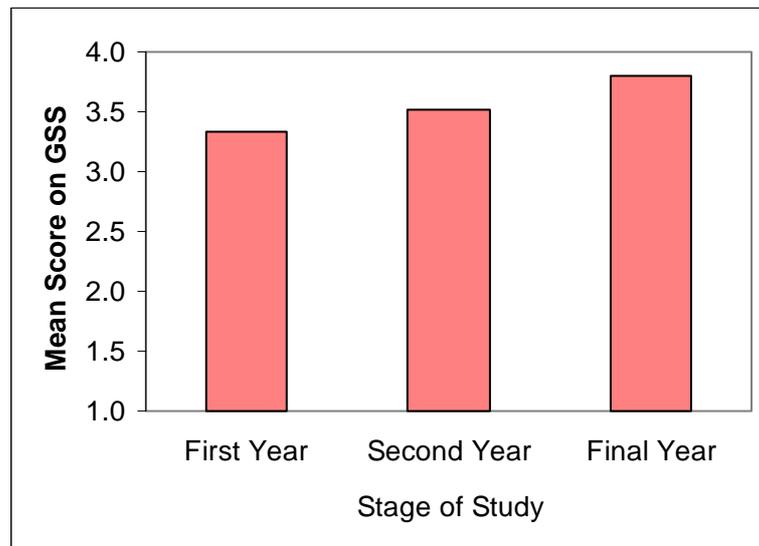


Figure 8

Another important variable, which is statistically significant for 4 out of 5 variables is English as first language. For those with English as their first language the mean score is lower (3.49) then for those whose first language is not English (3.61). Both ANOVA and independent samples test indicate that the observed difference is statistically significant ($t = 2.928$, $df = 1764$, $p = 0.003$ two tailed). A bar chart showing the difference in the mean values is given in Figure 9 below.

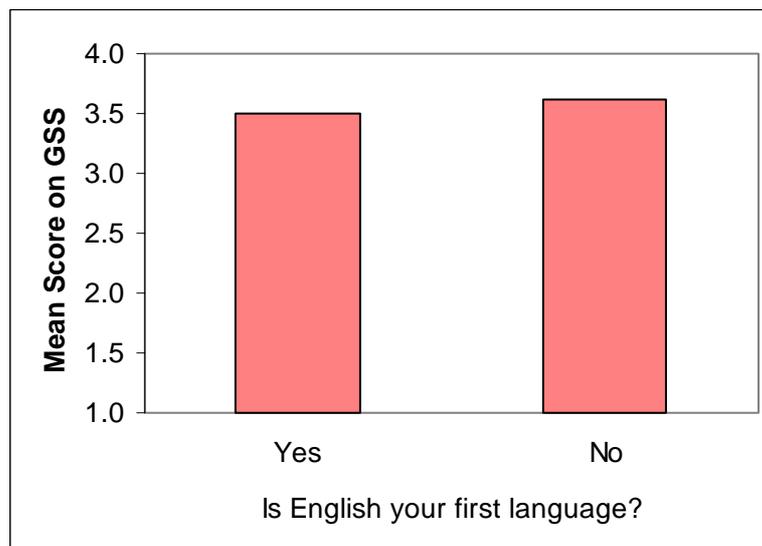


Figure 9

Two-way interaction between gender and English as first language is also statistically significant. A bar chart, showing both variables is given in Figure 10. As can be seen from the chart, the biggest difference between estimated marginal means of GSS is between males whose first language is English (3.45) and those for whom it is not (3.66). A further analysis of these results will be done in our next report in spring of 2005.

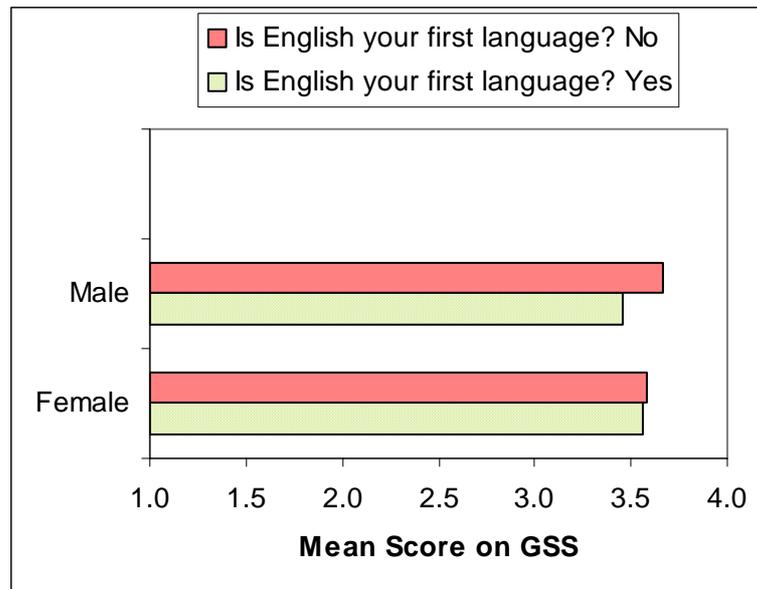


Figure 10

In their answers to open-ended questions, students pointed to the lack of group work as one of the aspects in their degree that was in need of improvement: *“More encouragement to work in groups, to develop group skills!”* and, *“Greater emphasis on group work as the course is orientated towards individual work.”*

At the same time, they showed their appreciation with the way their analytical, problem-solving skills and written communication skills were developed. *“The best aspects of my degree course have been the development of my analytical skills and stimulation to aim for the best”, “Problem-solving skills are developed to a great degree, which is good”* and *“Good teaching of writing and communication skills. Learning of independent thinking”*.

Appropriate Workload Scale

The Appropriate Workload Scale is calculated as a simple average of two reversed questions, 3 and 16. It has the lowest score in 2004, as it did in 2002. Nearly half of the students were neutral in response to the statement, *“My workload is too heavy”* and about a third were neutral concerning the statement *“The pace of the course is too fast”*. Also more than one in four students agreed with the statements, finding their workloads too heavy and the pace too fast, which is a worrying sign. The evidence from research on student learning is that heavy workloads require students to adopt an approach to learning which emphasises skimming across the surface of topics without

being able to spend the time truly engaging with and understanding the material they are meant to be learning.

For AWS, the potential explanatory variables that are statistically significant are gender, A-level Mathematics and English as first language.

Those who have A-level Mathematics were more content with the pace and workload of the course than those who do not, which is understandable. Students suggested changing “*the speed at which the Maths modules are taken: people doing the same modules may have single maths or further maths at A-level, so people are at different levels and it is hard for the lecturers to gauge how fast to go*”.

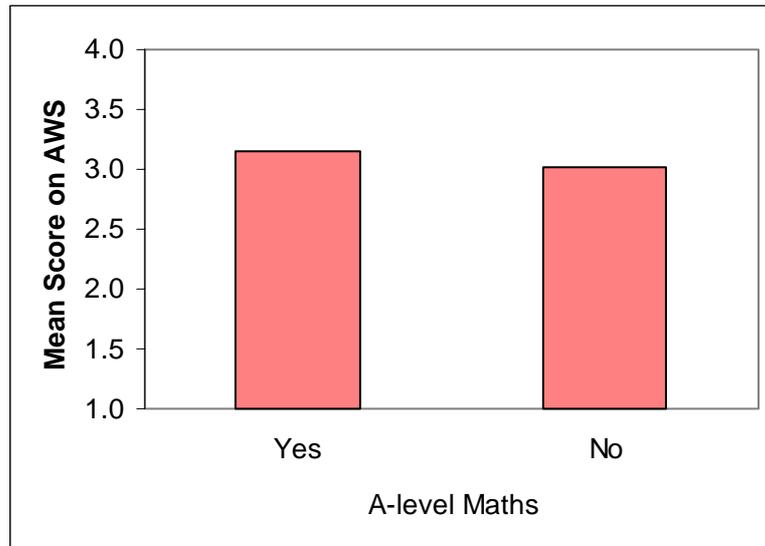


Figure 11

The situation is very similar for English as first language. Those who have it have higher scores in AWS than do those for whom it is a second language, as they have one less barrier in their studies.

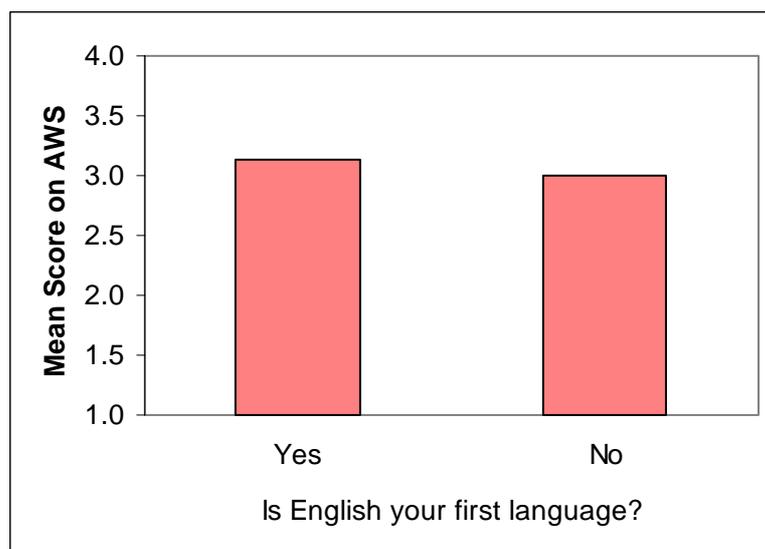


Figure 12

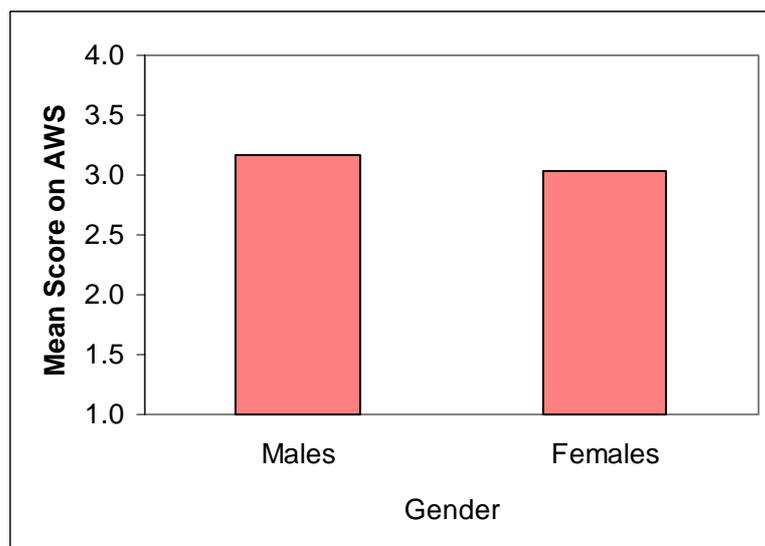


Figure 13

As for the gender difference, males have less problems with pace and workloads than females.

In their answers to open-ended questions, some students complain that “*the pace of the course is very fast with a lot of content covered in a short space of time*” and ask for a “*slightly slower pace*”. Others argue that the “*Pace of lectures is unreasonable and unrealistic*” and that “*work needs to be explained more thoroughly and with more care.*”

They also stress that the workload is uneven and sometimes heavy: “The workload is often all or nothing – one semester we have no assessments and the next we have 5–6 due in quite close”.

Clear Goals and Standards Scale

The Clear Goals and Standards Scale is calculated as an average of questions 5, 6, 13 and 24. The mean score for CGSS is 3.40. Within the scales there is a big difference between the mean scores of individual questions: Q13 (“It is always easy to know the standard of work expected”) has the lowest score among all the questions of 2.88, while Q6 (“I am provided with all the information I need about the course”) has the highest score of 4.05.

For CGSS potential statistically significant explanatory variables are age and English as first language, as well as two-way interaction between gender and age.

The older students have higher score in the CGSS and better understanding of their goals and the standards of work expected of them.

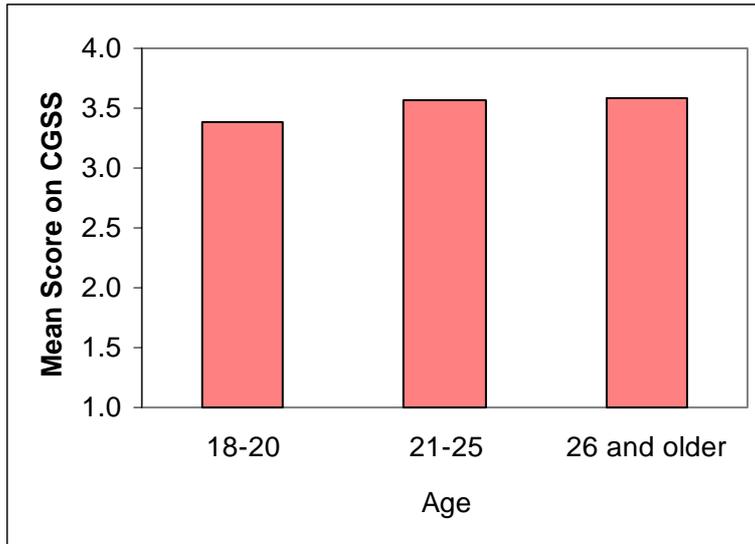


Figure 14

As for the English as first language, the results for CGSS are surprisingly opposite to the ones for AWS. Those whose first language was not English have a higher score than those for whom it was: 3.49 and 3.38.

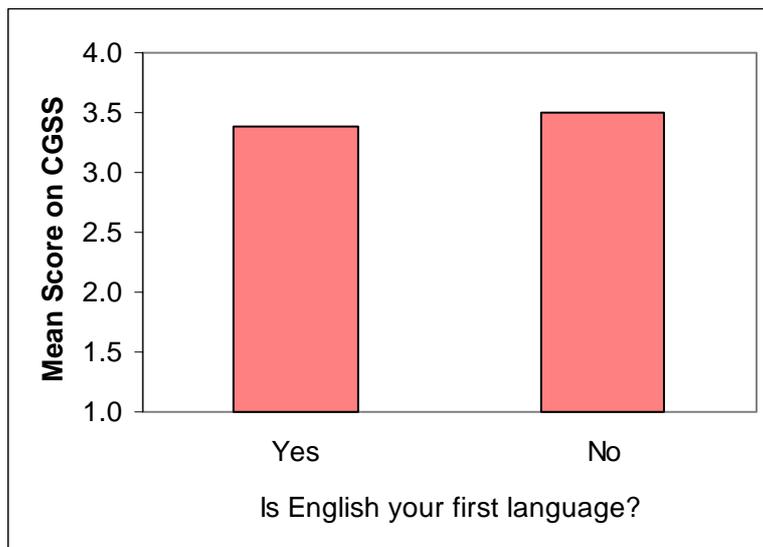


Figure 15

The two-way interaction between age and gender is more complex. In the 18–20 year-olds the mean score is nearly the same for males and females, while in the 21–25 age group males have a higher mean score, and in the 26 and older group females have a higher score. This requires further investigation.

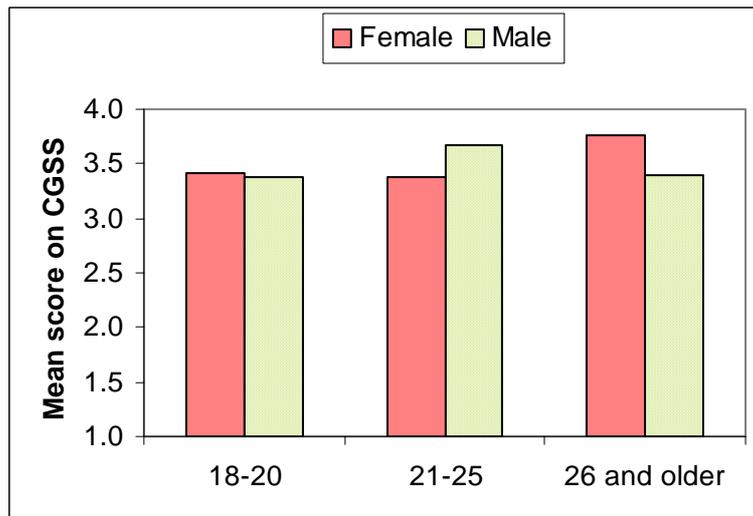


Figure 16

In their answers to open-ended questions, students stress the need for “*Explaining what we should expect on exam, what is the format. As a student coming from a different educational background it’s hard to know what the test is and how to study for such an important exam. I’m nervous*”. They also complain that “*the requirements for high grades are rarely explained and, if so, poorly. I never know what I truly ought to do to achieve anything more than 65%*.” Other students praise the course, as “*the degree course follows a very clear and structured pattern and I like the fact that a website is set up for each module for reference, downloads, forums and news*” and “*clear identification of goals allows one to identify where work needs to be focused. Broad range of principles explored and explained*”.

Environment Scale

The Environment Scale mean is calculated as a simple average of two questions – 25 and 26. The mean score for ES is 3.39. Students are more positive about the benefit to them from contact with active researchers (Q26) than for being part of a group of students and staff committed to learning (Q25).

Potential explanatory variables for ES are English as first language, level of studies and A-level Mathematics.

Those for whom English is first language have lower scores than those for whom it is not (they are less satisfied with the environment of their degree course).

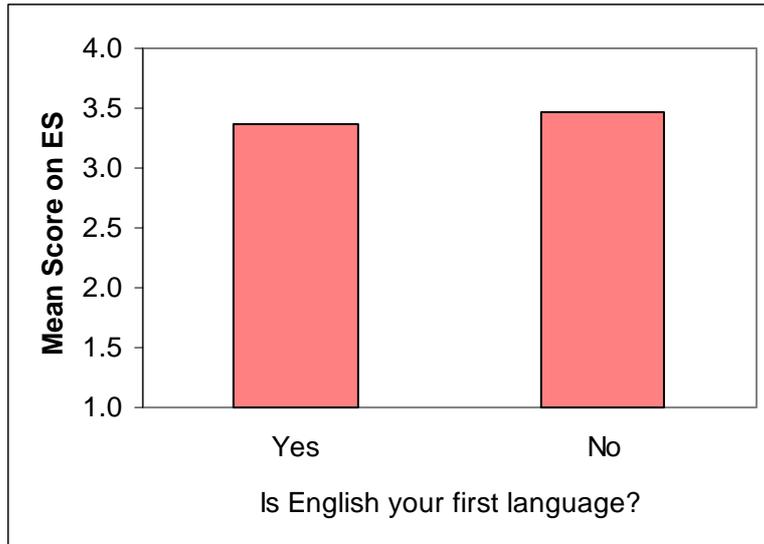


Figure 17

The situation is more complex for the difference in score between levels of study. Second-year students have the lowest score of 3.30, while first-year students have 3.37 and final year students have 3.49.

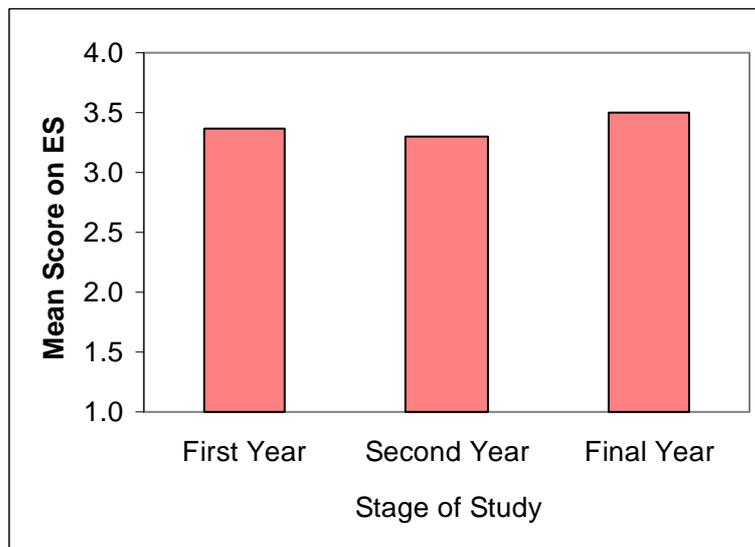


Figure 18

Those who have A-level Mathematics scored higher in ES (3.42) than those who do not (3.33). They benefit more from contacts with active researchers and more of them feel being part of a group committed to learning.

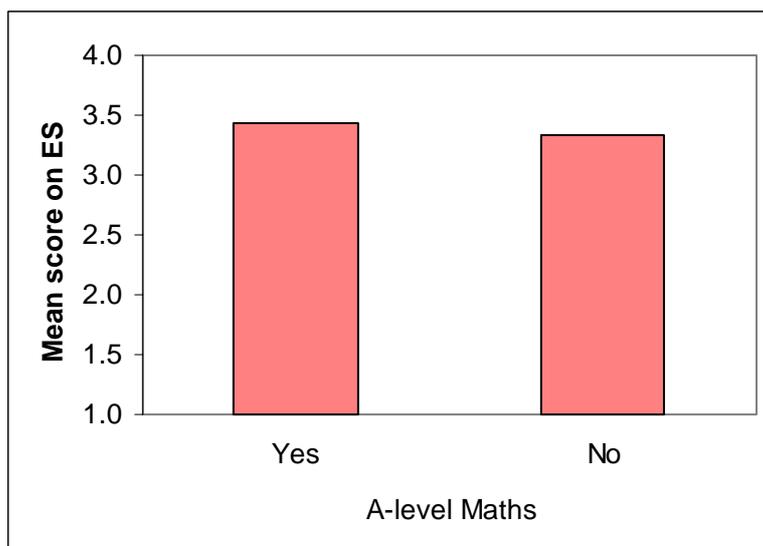


Figure 19

In their answers to open-ended questions, students praise *“the people and friends that I have met. The student–staff consultative committee is really responsive and those members of staff connected to it really do help drive improvements”*. They said that they benefited from *“meeting various people. You grow a greater understanding of knowledge from both lecturers and fellow students. Greater understanding of views, nationally and internationally, as I have learnt to apply economic theory to everyday situations.”* They enjoyed *“being taught by people at the top of their field and are up-to-date with current ideas. This has given lectures a more practical outlook”*

Perhaps the questions need to be reformulated in future surveys to produce more decisive responses. It could be that the negative phrasing of the statements was not very clear to the students and it needs additional stressing. Also additional questions concerning student assessment should be included in future surveys, as the single question used in this year’s survey is not enough to get the full picture of this important aspect of learning. This matter requires further investigation.

Correlation analysis

In analysing the scores on each scale, it is important to know how independent the factor scales are and, if they are not independent, what the correlation is between various scales.

Having tested the null hypothesis on the independence of scales, we have to reject it. The correlation coefficients are included in the matrix shown in Table 2.

The correlation coefficients in 2004 are similar to the ones in 2002. Data from the table indicate that some of the observed relationships are very strong. To illustrate it we have included in this report 3 scatter plots of the strongest relationships between the Good Teaching Scale and three other scales: the Generic Skills Scale ($r = 0.591$), the Environment Scale ($r = 0.582$) and the Clear Goals and Standards Scale ($r = 0.538$). That could be interpreted to mean that if a student is satisfied with the teaching aspects of the course he/she is more likely to be satisfied with the generic skills provided by the course, with the environment of the course and have a clear understanding of the goals and standards of the course.

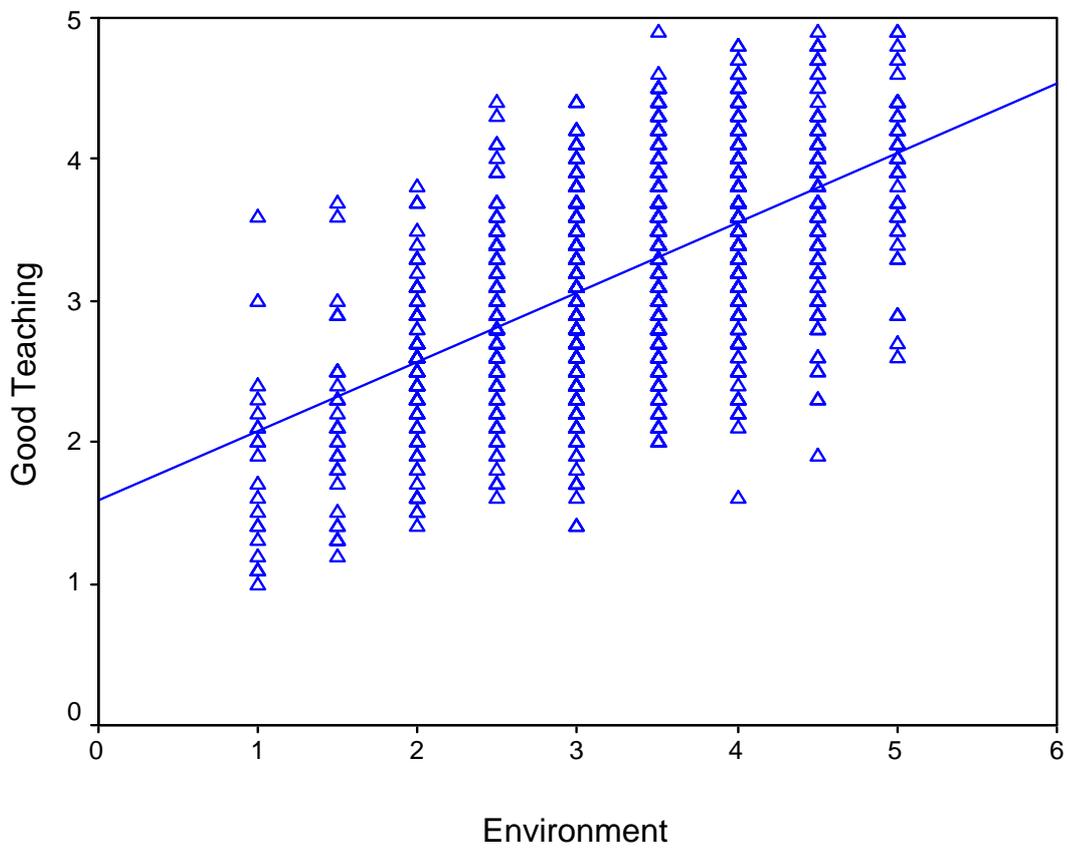
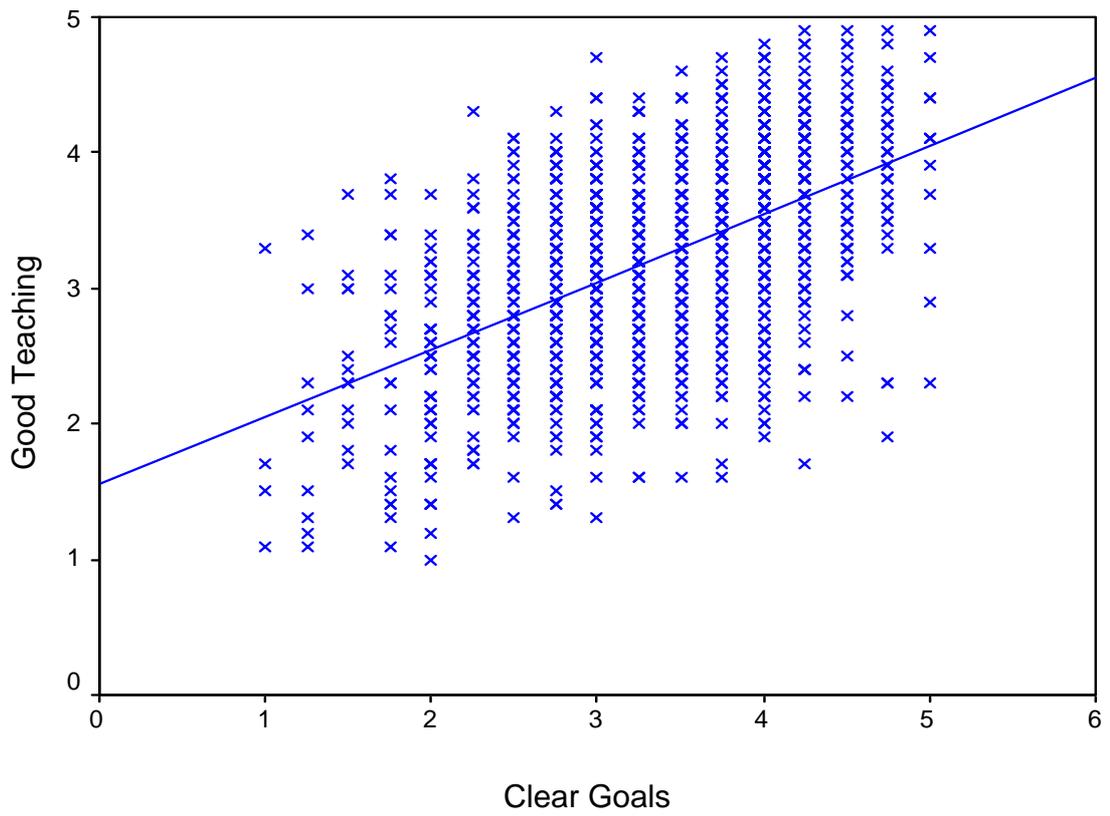
The Generic Skills Scale is moderately correlated with the Environment Scale ($r = 0.473$) and Clear Goals and Standards Scale ($r = 0.445$), which indicates that if students agree with the positive statements regarding the acquisition of generic skills during their course they are more likely to agree with the positive statements regarding course environment and its clear goals and standards.

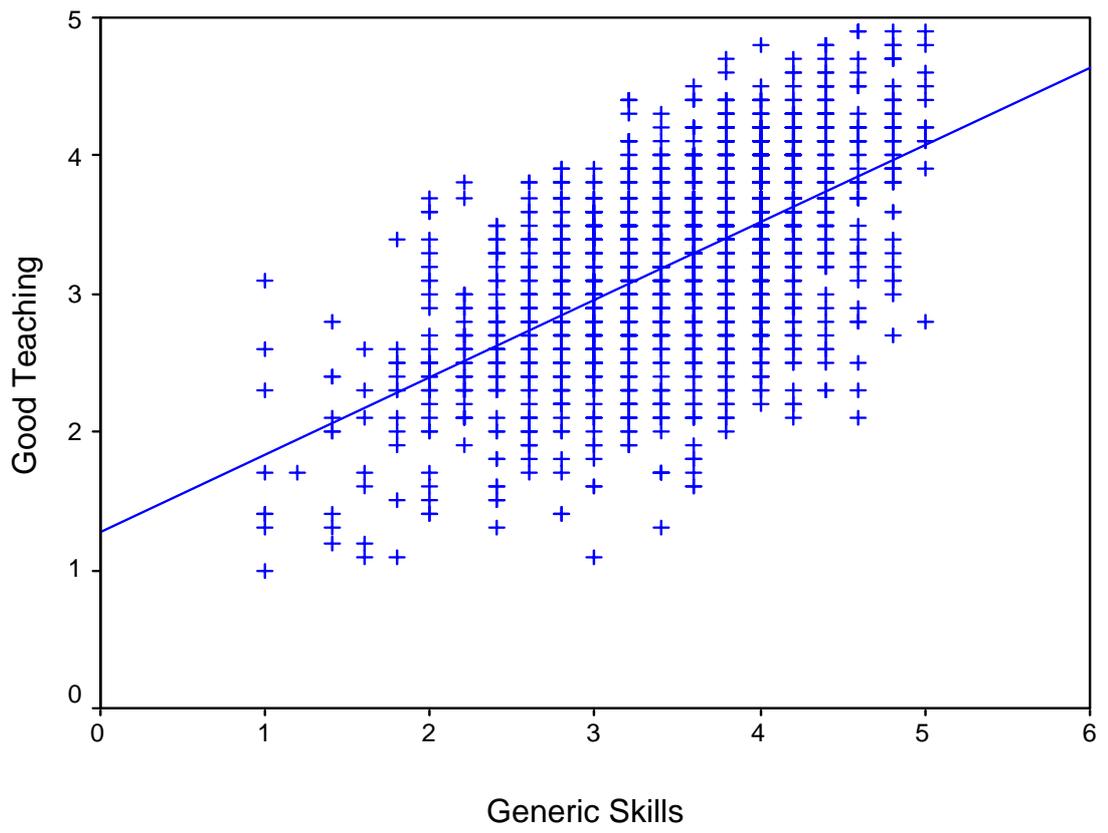
The relationship between Appropriate Workload Scale and the Appropriate Assessment Scale with the rest of the scales and between themselves is positive but rather weak (correlation coefficients are less than 0.245).

Table 2 Correlation coefficients

		Undergrad				
		GTS	CGS	GSS	ES	AWS
GTS	Pearson Correlation	1	.538**	.591**	.582**	.184**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
CGS	Pearson Correlation	.538**	1	.445**	.398**	.244**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
GSS	Pearson Correlation	.591**	.445**	1	.473**	.071**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.003
ES	Pearson Correlation	.582**	.398**	.473**	1	.088**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
AWS	Pearson Correlation	.184**	.244**	.071**	.088**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.003	.000	.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).





Conclusions

The Economics Network has conducted its second on-line national students survey to obtain information about students' perceptions of learning Economics. The survey is based on a questionnaire developed by Paul Ramsden and used in Australia for more than 20 years. It is part of the Network's programme of research into the needs of our different stakeholders along with the Lecturers, Alumni and Employers surveys.

A total of 2022 students took part in the survey: 1843 undergraduates and 179 postgraduates. It was an observational survey and the data analysed in this report do not represent the opinions of all Economics students. These data at the same time provide an important source of information because they reflect the views of a large number of students who accepted our invitation to participate in the survey.

Students' responses to the survey questions were analysed separately for undergraduates and postgraduates, with particular attention paid to the differences in responses according to gender, age of entry, level of study, A level Mathematics, A-level Economics, English as first language and whether Economics was the first choice of course.

Standard statistical methods were applied. Responses to each of the questions are summarised in terms of percentage frequency of responses accompanied by quotes from answers to open-ended questions. Using both types of data enables us to draw a better picture of students' perceptions of learning Economics.

All the acquired data are confidential, so only aggregated national results are included in this report. Confidential reports will be sent to all participating institutions with more than 20 students' responses. Results of the 2002 survey were used by some of the departments to improve their teaching quality.

We highly value the possibility of the survey results being used in the future as part of the time-series data for tracing significant changes and patterns in students' perceptions of learning economics. With just two surveys conducted so far, it is too early to speak about tendencies, but the results of 2002 and 2004 surveys are largely consistent with each other. The results of the survey are also consistent with similar results from Australian universities.

There were some differences in the way undergraduates and postgraduates answered their questions.

In general, Economics students were satisfied with the quality of their degree courses (70.3% of undergraduates and 71.6% of postgraduates). When asked more detailed questions about different aspects of the course, students expressed critical opinions on topics including active engagement in lectures, heavy workloads and fast pace, use of group work, use of Economics software and good understanding of standards of work expected of them. Answering the open-ended questions on aspects that could be improved, students stress passive teaching, the poor level of English of many non-native English-speaking lecturers and teaching assistants, and inadequate feedback on assessment.

At the same time, respondents generally find their courses intellectually stimulating, agree that they sharpen their analytical, communication and problem-solving skills, provided them with all the information they needed for the course, helped to develop

the ability to plan their own work and find benefit from contacts with active researchers.

Answering the open-ended question about the best aspects of their course, respondents praise the variety of modules, quality of teaching staff and employability prospects of the graduates. Students find the hardest aspects of the course to be adjusting to university life, and the maths and stats aspects of the degree.

They regard the most useful activities in seminars to be: active workshops with group discussions, presentations, problem-solving exercises and developing skills useful for future employment. Among the least useful activities in seminars respondents mention lack of interaction, “parrot-fashion repetition of answers” and lack of feedback.

The most commonly cited future careers were in banking, the civil service, consultancy and journalism.

Along with the analyses of students’ responses to individual questions, the report looked at their responses grouped into six factor scales: Good Teaching, Clear Goals and Standards, Appropriate Assessment, Appropriate Workload, Generic Skills and Environment. For each scale, statistically significant explanatory variables are identified. Correlation analysis of the scales shows that they are not independent and there was a strong linear relationship between Good Teaching Scale and some other scales – Generic Skills Scale, Environment Scale and Clear Goals and Standards Scale.

The results of the survey could be used by the departments along with other sources of information to reflect on their own practices. We have no intention for the survey to be used as a ranking exercise. Comparison of data between universities may be misleading, as students differ in terms of personal, educational and family backgrounds, which may have a profound effect on their perceptions of learning.

National results that are provided in the report could, nevertheless, be used as a benchmark for comparing a department’s own results. Clearly, the difference in scores required to be statistically significant will vary according to the number of student responses. A higher mean value for each scale indicates higher student satisfaction.

We hope that this survey will not only provide the Economics community with useful information, but will play an important role in the improvement of teaching and learning in economics. The Economics Network will be happy to provide workshops and advice to interested departments on the issues raised by the survey.

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Appendix 1: Student Course Experience Questionnaire

A. About you

1. What university do you attend? (drop-down box with the names of Universities)
2. Please state whether you are Female or Male
3. What was your age on entry to your course? (drop-down box (18-21) (22-25) (26 & above))
4. Do you have A level Maths or equivalent? Yes No If yes, what grade?
5. Do you have A level Economics or equivalent? Yes No If yes, what grade?
6. What A-levels did you take and what grades did you achieve?
Put a highest grade if you took a subject more than once.

Subject 1	(drop-down box)	Grade	<input type="text"/>
Subject 2	(drop-down box)	Grade	<input type="text"/>
Subject 3	(drop-down box)	Grade	<input type="text"/>
7. What AS subjects did you take, which were NOT taken at A2?

Subject 1	(drop-down box)	Grade	<input type="text"/>
Subject 2	(drop-down box)	Grade	<input type="text"/>
8. If you entered university on qualifications other than A level, please specify:

Qualification	<input type="text"/>
Subjects	<input type="text"/>
9. Is English your first language? Yes No
10. Please name your Degree Programme and/or Award and year/level on the programme:

Degree	<input type="text"/>	Year/level	<input type="text"/>
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11. When you were applying for university, was this degree your first choice? Yes No

B. Your opinions about your course

The survey asks about your opinion of **the teaching and your learning experiences in your current degree course**. To answer, please click on the relevant button next to each statement that most accurately reflects the extent to which you **agree** or **disagree** with the statement.

You may choose from a scale where:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

		SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Studying this degree course has turned out to be much as I had expected.					
2	The degree course is intellectually stimulating.					
3	The workload is too heavy.					
4	The degree course has helped me develop my ability to work as a team member.					
5	I have usually had a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me in this degree course.					
6	I am provided with all the information I need about the course (e.g. timetables, exam dates and regulations).					
7	The teaching staff of this degree course motivate me to do my best work.					
8	The teaching staff normally give me helpful feedback on my work (oral and/or written).					
9	The degree course has sharpened my analytical skills.					
10	The degree course has developed my problem-solving skills.					
11	My degree course contains too much maths and stats.					
12	My degree course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.					
13	It is always easy to know the standard of work expected.					
14	The staff seem more interested in testing what I have memorised than what I have understood.					
15	The use of Economics software in my course is effective in helping me to learn.					
16	The pace of my course is too fast.					
17	The staff make a real effort to understand difficulties I may be having with my work.					
18	My lecturers are extremely good at explaining things.					
19	The teaching staff stimulate my interest in their subjects.					
20	I feel that I am actively engaged in most lectures.					
21	I feel that I am actively involved in most seminars/tutorials.					
22	The degree course has improved my skills in written communication.					
23	My degree course has helped me to develop the ability to plan my own work.					
24	It has been made clear to me right from the start of each module/unit what is expected of me.					
25	I feel part of a group of students and staff committed to learning.					
26	I feel that contact with active researchers is beneficial to undergraduate students.					

27	Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of this degree course.					
28	Identify the best one or two aspects of your degree course and say why.					
29	Identify one or two aspects of your degree course that could be improved and say why.					
30	What one or two aspects of your degree have you found the hardest?					
31	What types of activities in seminars/tutorials have you found the most useful?					
32	What types of activities in seminars/tutorials have you found the least useful?					
33	If you know what career you intend to pursue, please identify it. (Otherwise leave blank.)					

Thank you very much for taking part in our survey.

Appendix 2: Percentage of Responses to Q1 to Q27: Undergraduates

	1	2	3	4	5	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Q1	2.5	21.8	20.6	47.5	7.6	1843	3.36	0.984
Q2	1.0	5.2	14.1	56.7	23.0	1843	3.95	0.817
Q3	3.1	26.4	45.8	19.6	5.1	1839	2.97	0.888
Q4	8.9	28.8	26.2	30.6	5.6	1840	2.95	1.083
Q5	3.8	18.2	19.4	48.6	9.9	1841	3.43	1.018
Q6	1.6	5.9	11.0	48.6	32.9	1841	4.05	0.906
Q7	6.8	20.1	30.1	34.4	8.7	1842	3.18	1.064
Q8	7.1	21.5	24.3	38.4	8.8	1841	3.20	1.094
Q9	1.3	9.0	20.9	51.5	17.2	1841	3.75	0.892
Q10	1.3	10.6	23.3	51.2	13.6	1835	3.65	0.891
Q11	9.9	30.3	25.4	18.9	15.5	1838	3.00	1.227
Q12	5.6	14.8	25.6	40.2	13.8	1842	3.42	1.073
Q13	7.4	32.0	31.2	25.9	3.4	1840	2.86	0.996
Q14	11.3	41.6	26.3	15.1	5.7	1838	2.62	1.053
Q15	11.8	21.0	38.9	24.5	3.8	1838	2.88	1.033
Q16	3.7	39.3	32.2	20.5	4.3	1842	2.82	0.941
Q17	7.1	24.4	33.7	30.4	4.4	1838	3.01	1.008
Q18	5.5	17.4	33.1	38.4	5.7	1841	3.21	0.978
Q19	4.9	15.2	29.0	43.6	7.3	1836	3.33	0.985
Q20	11.2	30.2	28.4	25.8	4.2	1837	2.81	1.070
Q21	3.9	14.4	20.5	46.9	14.2	1836	3.53	1.029
Q22	3.0	14.2	24.5	44.1	14.1	1835	3.52	1.000
Q23	2.3	8.5	19.0	53.2	16.9	1834	3.74	0.917
Q24	4.3	19.8	26.6	41.6	7.7	1838	3.29	1.008
Q25	5.9	15.6	32.1	39.1	7.4	1837	3.26	1.005
Q26	3.8	9.1	33.8	38.2	15.1	1832	3.52	0.980
Q27	2.2	9.5	18.0	53.9	16.4	1835	3.72	0.925

Appendix 3: Percentage of Responses to Q1 to Q27: Postgraduates

	1	2	3	4	5	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q1	1.7	17.9	18.4	48.0	14.0	179	3.55	0.995
Q2	0.6	6.1	10.6	49.2	33.5	179	4.09	0.856
Q3	2.2	24.5	46.0	20.5	6.8	179	3.04	0.908
Q4	16.2	31.3	26.8	25.1	0.6	179	2.63	1.049
Q5	4.5	19.2	19.2	42.9	14.1	177	3.43	1.091
Q6	4.0	5.7	8.0	48.3	34.1	179	4.04	1.002
Q7	5.7	16.5	27.8	39.8	10.2	179	3.32	1.041
Q8	6.7	15.6	26.8	41.9	8.9	179	3.31	1.055
Q9	1.7	7.3	15.6	50.8	24.6	179	3.89	0.915
Q10	2.2	6.7	22.9	45.3	22.9	179	3.80	0.944
Q11	15.9	36.4	26.1	12.5	9.1	179	2.62	1.166
Q12	2.2	11.2	2.7	51.4	14.5	179	3.65	0.939
Q13	7.3	32.8	29.9	28.8	1.1	178	2.83	0.965
Q14	15.7	39.9	21.3	16.3	6.7	179	2.59	1.135
Q15	10.7	18.5	25.8	39.3	5.6	178	3.11	1.107
Q16	1.7	37.5	33.5	19.9	7.4	179	2.92	0.977
Q17	5.1	21.1	42.9	26.9	4.0	178	3.04	0.929
Q18	3.4	13.0	39.0	39.5	5.1	179	3.29	0.883
Q19	1.7	13.1	25.1	47.4	12.6	178	3.55	0.927
Q20	6.9	26.4	30.5	28.7	7.5	178	3.04	1.054
Q21	4.0	17.6	22.7	42.0	13.6	179	3.44	1.049
Q22	4.0	15.9	19.9	46.0	14.2	179	3.52	1.046
Q23	2.8	7.3	18.1	54.8	16.9	179	3.75	0.915
Q24	3.4	21.8	25.7	43.0	6.1	179	3.27	0.981
Q25	6.1	19.6	20.7	44.7	8.9	179	3.31	1.076
Q26	2.3	4.0	29.5	43.4	20.8	179	3.76	0.906
Q27	1.7	5.0	21.8	52.0	19.6	179	3.83	0.860

Appendix 4: Representative answers to the open-ended questions

Q28. Identify the best one or two aspects of your degree course and say why.

The three themes that came up most frequently were: the variety of modules in the degree, quality of teaching staff and skills and employability prospects of the graduates.

Variety of modules

- Variety of modules. Range and flexibility
- Varied range of modules available to study, which helps in your understanding and application of economics
- The ability to choose your own modules gives great flexibility for your degree.
- The freedom to choose which modules I wish to study
- Flexibility of course and choice of modules
- The variety of the course - this means that I never get bored, which is something I worried about when specialising in Economics. I have the chance to do very different modules, still linked by Economics
- Broadness of the modules on offer allows an in depth look at varying areas of economics
- Wide variety of different modules available to study in each year
- Large choice of modules enables you to tailor your degree to your specific interests
- Variety in the subject matter covered keeps my interest in the subject
- The range of modules available is extremely good, especially applied economics modules

Quality of teaching staff

- Quality of teaching – distinct passion for their field of economics and enthusiasm; that helps to motivate the students; using different ways of teaching, all very effective – make the course enjoyable; passionate about their subject and pass that to students
- The best aspect of my degree course is the standard of the lecturers. I feel that a much greater sense of involvement is achieved by having leading economists in their respective areas teaching
- Good quality lecturers - clear presentation of lectures
- Quality lecturers, who had a distinct passion for their various fields in economics
- Some excellent and engaging lecturers, good discussion in lectures, fellow students who are interested in the issues and have different and interesting perspectives
- Enthusiastic lecturers and supervisors, making both lectures and supervisions interesting and helping with my understanding of the course material.
- The lecturers always present their lecture at their best thus made the lectures very interesting
- The Lecturers use various topical and sometimes humorous examples to explain theories and help us understand. Makes the lecturers more approachable and more interesting to listen to
- My Lecturers: They really try hard to allow us the understanding and skills necessary for the best marks
- Lecturers are very approachable and understanding if I have a problem
- Some of the lecturers are truly inspiring and motivating Quality of lecturers; easy to get in touch and talk with professors and staff
- Some lecturers are outstanding, which really makes you interested in the module

- My lecturers are all talented people who know what they are doing.
- The lecturers, they are usually always welcoming and engaging. Their approachability and enthusiasm is definitely the best aspect the course

Skills and employability prospects of the graduates

- Develops analytical and problem solving skills as well as other transferable skills
- Developing our analytical skills, which are vital for many jobs
- It will help me in future careers because economics is an important part of everyday life and I am now better at maths than many people - this course will help me find the job I want
- Relevant, current issues discussed – applying economics to real life situations
- The best aspect of my course is the fact that one can relate to most of the things talked about. Most of which are usually about the economy or things that affect the economy, such as govt policies, welfare, efficiency, productivity etc. Its been the best aspect, simply because one can easily relate to such things and make sense faster of them as they are not abstract.
- The best aspect is the fact that lecturers try to relate every piece of theory with real world examples, making it easier for students to understand and reflect on it. Moreover, I believe it leaves students better prepared for jobs in Economics after leaving University
- The course has allowed myself to apply economics into the real world, which I think is one of the greatest lessons to learn.
- How economics is applied to everyday life, and how numbers (statistics) can actually mean so much more
- Placement Year - today a degree is not enough. In terms of getting a graduate job (a major reason for getting a degree!) additional qualities are required. A course which provides a range of learning approaches including such useful skills as presentation and project management are vital for the types of jobs many economics students aim for. The well balanced course of economics (theory), business management (critical thinking) and placement (work experience)is fantastic in terms of preparing you for the future. It makes four years of university worthwhile
- Placement year in 3rd year- further economics skills in the real world, gives a more rounded view for final year
- Degree in economics is respected by the employers
- The status of doing economics is excellent as a signal to employers that I have strong analytical an problem solving skills
- Excellent reputation in the job market

Others

- The maths and quants side of economics and its application to economics
- The application of mathematics to economics-helps me to understand the logic behind theories
- Department is supportive in providing office hours, mentoring and replying to e-mails
- The degree course has helped me to learn how to work. I have understood how to handle deadline and to organise my work to meet them; I have learned to interact with teachers and other students. Mainly working on my own I have been able to understand the problems in my way of working and to try to correct them.
- Use of on-line resources – web – much more positive comments this year
- Well structured courses clear structure of tutorials and lectures 820
- The seminar tutors are excellent in planning for seminars and assisting learning.

Q29 Identify one or two aspects of your degree course that could be improved and say why

Quality of staff was the most frequently cited both positive and negative aspect of the course. Among the problems, associated with the staff respondents mention the following: boring, passive teaching, poor level of English language of lecturers and teaching assistants, lack of feedback on assessment. Students not just criticise teaching staff, many of them offer solutions to the problems – include more real life examples in the lectures, use multi-media, provide teaching training for teaching assistants. Among the other themes mention are bad administration, use of on-line resources, expensive books, pace and workload, opposite opinions on maths and stats, tutoring system. Some students praised their courses and didn't find anything in need of improvement.

Boring, passive teaching

- Teaching quality. Economics is a rather dull subject at the best of times and having lecturers who lecture you rather than involve you doesn't help with student motivation. I think that having more inspirational lectures would encourage students to understand more (rather than memorising) and want to study more.
- Some of the lecturers aren't very good at explaining and cannot put their points across... This isn't good because if a lecture is bad or boring and if you don't feel a connection with who's talking you lose interest, and since people don't check who does or doesn't go, many students are disincentivated to go to some lectures since it is literally a waste of time!
- I would like to see an improvement in the quality of some lecturers
- Having more interactive seminars so that there is more directed learning - making the students actually prepare
- The quality of teaching. There seem to be too many foreign lecturers who may be experts but have difficulty getting their point across
- The organization and teaching methods of our Economics lecturers. In addition poor the quality and competence of our tutors
- The single greatest problem is that there are still some bad lecturers, more concerned with their own research than helping me. This annoys me more than when someone just has trouble teaching things. Also, visiting overseas lecturers sometimes don't have the fluency of English to teach at degree level.
- Some lecturers know their stuff but don't know how to teach!
- Way too many poor lecturers and tutors, many of whom are inarticulate and appear to have had little teaching experience. The vast majority of tutors and lecturers do not speak English as their first language and although this should not necessarily be a problem, it often is.
- Improvement in teaching, some tutors are not that interested in teaching and certainly not interested in the fact that their subject matter has been understood, often left feeling "what has just been taught?"
- Most of the lecturers are awful. They do not really care, they are there to do research and lecturing is just what they have to do in order to do the research.
- I think that the course is, at times, highly theoretical with little relevance or linkages to what has already been learnt and real world applications. Some of the lecturers and class tutors are not very able.
- Some of the lecturers are not as proficient as others. There's a difference between being an expert at their subject and being able to teach it.
- Some of the lecturers were extremely poor and had never taught the subjects they were being asked to teach before
- Some of the teaching staff are obviously only there to research and have few skills at lecturing

- The approachability of some staff members and their interest in what they are teaching.
- The enthusiasm of the teaching staff. How can we enjoy our degree when they sound so bored themselves.
- Some of the teaching staff do not have English as their first language and this can be a barrier when they are trying to teach.
- some lousy teachers who don't appear interested in teaching
- There were some lecturers who were merely reading from prepared text, extracted from the textbook
- The delivery of the economics lectures - some of the lecturers make a very subject very hard to engage in.
- Some lecturers seem to be masochists and enjoy making their lectures as dull and disorganised as possible
- Although the teaching staff was good, I think lecturers might be able to make lectures more interesting at times. This could often be done by using more references to the real world and case studies.
- Use of multi-media in teaching needed to be encouraged such that the lectures and tutorials will be made more attractive
- There is lack of real examples in economics lectures, I find that most of the time were learning only the theory with no real idea of how to apply it in the real world. If we were given more examples it would make the lectures more interesting and motivating.
- I would think that by making economics a more enjoyable subject would be the most important to improve. for example, using interesting examples that students could relate to more for examples of economic situations would make students remember more aspects of it instead of trying to remember things that do not make sense.
- Which aspect could be improved? It would be desirable to see that what we are currently learning is actually useful in the real world. What use is there to be able to model certain behaviour on paper and develop highly simplified theories for it, when things in the real world act differently. There obviously has to be theory in everything one studies - but its link with the world we live in would make the course not only more interesting but much more valuable. After all, it is the real world students will be facing (in most cases) once they have their degrees. At least for myself, I am looking forward to applying what I have learnt to real life situations - or so I should think.
- I was disappointed this year to discover that a number of my lecturers (even in this very important year) were new to the profession, and therefore had not had time to refine their teaching skills. I have had to reassess my module selections in order to avoid such lecturers, feeling that they were becoming a hindrance to my learning. This has left me with little remaining choice, and has forced me to choose modules that I would otherwise not have undertaken. I feel that this issue of teaching quality is one that seriously needs to be addressed. We need a far more rigorous set of basic standards. If one lecturer supplies handouts, then every lecturer should, so students know what to expect and can then get the most out of the learning opportunities they are presented with. I also feel that it is important to provide stricter guidelines on marking exam scripts, so students can gain a better insight into what is expected of them. In addition, I feel it is necessary to reiterate the importance of feedback. I spent months working on my dissertation, to receive only a mark and not a word of explanation. How can I improve myself if I don't know where I am going wrong?
- The overall quality of lecturers is worrying, whilst some are proficient, effective and motivating, others are disenfranchised with education and should not be within the educational infrastructure. The way in which information is imparted to students is crucial and lecturers are the key element, therefore their ability, not only technically, but also as effective communicators within a genuine interest in seeing others develop must be critically

measured. The course would benefit greatly from new ideas, with closer links to the industries it purports to provide graduates to. Without these links the academic content taught becomes too estranged from the elements that are required within a modern business context.

English language issues

- Fact that many of the tutor staff is international postgraduate students, is good in a way (I'm not trying to sound anti-international people, on the contrary, I am very international myself!), but most of the times, there English is very very poor and, since tutorials are supposed to help you understand and deepen your understanding of lectures, the fact that the tutor cannot speak or express him herself isn't very helpful! Maybe if they had a course or something before hand...?
- PhD students, which I am not fond of. Primarily because they tend not to teach at a higher standard and also because I have a lot of foreign students teaching in my classes and there have been a lot of conflicts due to the language barriers. I would recommend a more extensive selection process if qualified lecturers are unavailable for classes
- Some lecturers lack of fluent English makes lectures difficult to follow.
- With foreign lecturers it is sometimes very difficult to understand there accents, which makes it very difficult to follow some of the lectures.
- Teaching quality of the lecturers. Some are foreign and don't have a huge ability to keep a class interested and crucially understanding the subject
- Very difficult to understand certain lecturers, particularly where English isn't their first language. There often could be a clearer structure to lectures, with regular backward referrals to clearly set out aims of the lecture. Sometimes it is hard to know where the lecture is going.
- the varying nationalities of lecturers is advertised as a good thing, but is actually not very helpful as communication with them, and understanding their accents in lectures is quite difficult
- They have too strong their own countries accent, it is more difficult to understand for overseas student. Especially in Economics, many new terminology, cant understand in the lecture when the lecturer with strong accent.
- Quality of English spoken by tutors, particularly with regard to paternal support - my current tutor hardly grasps English so I am unable to discuss my exam results etc with him.
- I don't mean this as a racist comment but the language barrier has been a big one for myself with a couple of my tutors. I have had to try and learn things from people without any prior experience of hearing their accent or manner of speech. I simply cant understand what they say.

Feedback on student's work

- Not enough feedback: There is little feedback of economics work just a mark, this needs to be improved.
- There is not enough feedback from the economics department about individual work, as tutorials are in large groups Need more tutorials, and more feedback. Not enough assessed work so do not know how I am progressing throughout the year
- More essay work could be given, as a good feedback on the work means we will know how to improve for ourselves.
- I believe the work handed in should have more comments on it so that I can gain better feedback and improve.

- Feedback on work - help to improve, Lack of personal tutor contact - as above
- The level of feedback on assignments to help identify why a certain level has been achieved. A greater understanding of what is require to achieve a certain level would be helpful for assignments and examinations.
- More formal (i.e. written) feedback on research would be helpful. At present feedback is mostly oral, either in meetings with my supervisor, or in PhD seminars.
- Need feedback but don't get any! Haven't got a clue where going wrong!!!!
- Exam coursework feedback- feel little is said about where you are going wrong
- It is not always clear what the standard of my work is. It would be better if this were clearer so that I could keep better track of my progress over the year.
- lack of guidance (as a first year student I have obv never taken a degree before and am still unsure of the standard of work expected from me)

Others

Bad administration:

- Badly administered: All deadlines set for roughly the same day, work could be done to a better standard if deadlines were spread out, also assignment questions are often only released shortly before they have to be in. Not enough contact hours: 2 of my units contain no tutorials at all and feedback on work handed in is exceptionally poor/brief.

Use of on-line resources

- think that all of the lectures should be made available on the Blackboard learning service, as should the coursework deadlines, I feel it is a largely underused resource.
- The department should also have invested more in economic software because it stimulates the interest for economics

Expensive books

- I think that textbooks are too expensive to buy brand new, and should be more readily available from the library.

Group work

- More encouragement to work in groups, to develop group skills!
- Greater emphasis on group work as the course is orientated towards individual work.

Pace, workload

- the pace of the course is too fast and the work load is too much. many of the topics discussed are very interesting, but I feel I don't have enough time to spend on reading the course material, as there is always another deadline coming up.
- The work load is heavy, especially in the third year. This means that I often do not have time to research all topics in the depth that I would

Level of Maths and stats

- Before entering the degree I was unaware of the amount of maths stats involved, perhaps this could be explained more in prospectus.
- More class based lessons for maths teaching. Better quality tutors
- Maths and statistics courses need much more structure and clarity. The pace of the course is too fast. Little coordination between staff, tutors don't know what their doing.
- Amount of maths in first year is too much and there is no need for it.
- The amount of maths involved can be increased so that if any one wants to pursue his PHD after his graduation, it may not be very difficult for him
- Increase the amount of maths used to create more understanding as to what is happening
- Less maths More small group tutorials
- The maths component of the course is found incredibly difficult by some and incredibly easy by others which tends to make both groups switch off a little.

Tutors

- We are not assigned personal tutors. As subject tutors change quite frequently, it would have been nice to have had a personal tutor from the very start, who followed our progress. This would have meant there would be somebody who we felt we could have approached for advice, or even someone who we felt could give a reliable reference.
- I think one of the largest problems at current is that although there is a personal tutor system, it can be hard to know, for example, what options can be taken. I.e. tutors do not necessarily know things that they should know if they are to help us. Also, I would say, that at times it is hard to understand where the parts of the course are going and exam timetables are still not known over the Easter break.

No need for improvement

- I don't think there is anything as such that can be done to improve the course. The course is fantastic!
- Nothing on the course itself can I pinpoint as needing improvement.

Q30 What one or two aspects of your degree have you found the hardest?

Student's responses include the mathematical and statistical elements of the course as the hardest as they are complain about lack of warning that A-level maths is necessary for the course. Many students reported difficulties adjusting to university life, mostly with independent working and time management and uncertainty about what was expected of them. This issue was raised also by many foreign students, who find a language as the biggest barrier. Postgraduate students find writing dissertation as the hardest aspect of course. Respondents also find it hard not only to study, but also to have a part-time job, raise the family or have a social life. However, some students pointed out that "Economics in general is a hard degree but gives satisfaction."

Mathematics and Statistics

- Maths and stats - catching up with the students that did maths at a-level.
- Maths and stats. because I didn't do maths a level I feel at a bit of a disadvantage to other students who did.
- As I have no a level in maths the stats was the hardest part. Econometrics in the 2nd year was considerably better than quantitative techniques in the first.
- I find the maths and stats the hardest as it is presumed that everyone on the course can understand to a certain level even though an A Level maths is not a requirement of the course. The maths and stats courses offered are a level higher than that which I left school with and therefore I found it required a lot of independent study to follow the lectures.
- Without a doubt the maths, stats and econometrics!!!i didn't do A-level maths so it is very hard for me. Economics in general is a hard degree but gives satisfaction
- I have found the mathematical content of the degree very difficult and I feel it should have been made clear to me when applying just how much maths was involved. I feel that you need at least AS level maths for this course
- THE MATHS!! - learning to apply it to the real world.
- Maths, at first but eventually you get used to it. The sheer amount of information one is expected to remember.
- Bloody STATS and QUANTS!! Lectures confused me a lot and the final exams where nothing to do with the lectures basically anyway! Still I passed them both, so I don't mind too much.

Adjusting to University Life

- The main thing is the work load and the pace. The reading is also very time consuming and not very productive.
- Driving myself to do the work due to its fairly lax approach until exam time
- Getting coursework in on time. Towards the end of this year we have had several long pieces of course work due in weeks 9-11 of term and exam revision. Not left enough time for revision for exams.
- Trying to study, have a part-time job and have a social life as well. I also found it difficult not having the opportunity to work as part of a team.
- Time management and university life management is harder than any aspect of the degree program.
- The hardest part of my degree was having to learn things you were not necessarily interested in i.e. its harder to learn things you're not interested in.

- Waking up for early lessons and exams. I advocate shifting the timetables forward. 9am classes are a lot more cumbersome to attend rather than 6pm ones due to the morning rush hour.
- Getting to grips with having to self-motivate yourself and organise your own time. Also improving essay writing skills
- Its difficult to juggle a masters degree with part time work and having to hunt for a proper job for when I graduate. I don't think there is very much scope to put an opinion forward, certainly not in assessed work, other than the standard
- As I have many other personal duties - working part time and bringing up three children, I felt that time was short but not due to any academic reasons
- Keeping up with the big amount of reading
- The jump from A-levels to degree level.

Lack of guidance

- It frustrates me that tutors and indeed lectures never really tell you what they are looking for in terms of your work
- Knowing what is being asked of me in written assignments, (i.e. written explanation worked example)
- As a foreign student the language is obviously the biggest barrier. Apart from that I find it relatively hard to know exactly what is being expected from projects and essays. I'm sure everyone has tried handing in an excellent essay in their opinion, but getting it back with a mark and all negative comments!
- Understanding what is expected in exams, the type of answer etc
- Lack of information on the criteria used to mark work.
- I will say, knowing what is expected of me as concerns writing essays and exams.
- As for some assignments there was a difficulty in understanding some parts of the task
- Understanding what the examiners want from an answer, structures etc
- Some courses are very intensive and the assessments criterion tend to reward detailed and meticulous memory as opposed to understanding and ability to apply the material

Others

- To write well structured essays in a very limited time for some exams that are less quantitative. Not enough time to structure the essay in order to express my knowledge and understanding of the subject
- The modules taught by the aforementioned poor lecturers have been impossible to follow and as such have required a disproportionate amount of revision time. In general in depth revision of the subject is very challenging given the fact that with the current academic structure in the UK we have been on an endless cycle of exam-work-revise-exam for around 6 years by the time we reach the middle of our degrees
- The requirement of students to display a masterful analysis of the theory taught and relate it to practice - which is an irony since real world applicability is often ignored
- Learning to do my own independent learning and being confident to do it. Some material is tough as well
- Trying to imagine how, for example, indifference curves relate to consumers when they, probably, have never heard of them let alone apply them. Also, use of language, as stated previously with income but also in relation to increases in demand as opposed to increases in

quantity demanded. There is a difference that was drummed into me at a level but does not seem to apply so strictly at degree level!

- The hardest aspect of the course has been managing the workload requirements for each of the modules.
- Writing the dissertation, especial when you are meant to be original which is kind of stupid when there are a million and one research students out there who do this sort of thing all day long
- The dissertation because it was to be done more independently and looking for the data required as it wasn't available in my university library and I have limited inter library loan access
- Self evaluation, considering there are very few assessments during the whole year the pace of the course
- Having no pressure from tutors, you have to motivate yourself
- All the deadlines always seem to approach at the same time which sometimes means the work you do isn't your best. Also with my two subjects I always find my exam times are on top of each other in which I know I perform badly.
- The hardest aspect of the course has been managing the workload requirements for each of the modules.
- Nothing is hard if you try
- Economics in general is a hard degree but gives satisfaction

Q31 What types of activities in seminars/tutorials have you found the most useful?

Students spoke positively about “active workshops” with group discussion, presentations and problem-solving exercises. Students find activities associated with the following themes most useful:

- Better understanding of the subject through discussions, debates and higher level of interaction with other students and seminar teacher, as well as getting an alternative slant on lecture material and obtaining clarification on key points and analysing the past exam questions;
- Developing skills useful for the future employment, like team working, presentation and communication skills. The team component of the activities was stressed as a useful one by many students.

There were a few students who didn't find seminars or tutorials useful at all, and there were those who regret not to have tutorials (both of the groups were a minority).

Active participation

- In problem-centred tutorials, larger numbers of short, focused problems are optimal.
- Discussion-based sessions are useful if there is no agenda in terms of what are good attitudes from an economist so that differences of opinion are regarded positively
- Problem solving
- I find active workshops where discussions take place and questions are answered because economics does not have only one answer for every question.
- Getting an alternative slant on lecture material and the chance to ask questions and obtain clarification on key points. Also with seminar work the opportunity to work as a team has been very useful along with the opportunity to present to groups which will be a vital skill when in full time employment
- Actively going through problems relevant to the study and later exams - 10 question problem sheets for instance - though these are rare in our courses.
- Discussion. Many tutorials are not discussion based and tend to result in another lecture. Those which incorporate teamwork are the most interesting as they generate new ideas and questions which help further the lecture material
- Open discussion - Breaking way from rigid class structures, if only for a short while.
- The most beneficial activity I have found is the teacher or lecture throwing a topic open to the floor and the students discuss different points of view.
- Self prepared activities by students, preferably as a team
- The discussion between students and the teachers helped me a lot in my understanding of a certain topic.
- Problem-solving practice. Deeper discussion of theory
- In some role playing, in another's working as a pair
- Something that requires independent thought and the ability to use your mind in a way that isn't purely analytical
- Debates, high levels of interaction with other students and seminar teacher
- I have found students themselves explaining problems to the rest of the class useful - though much more so if you are the explainer than if you are the explained.
- Tutorials which are more open, students can walk in in within the time of the lecture to have a tutorial with the lecturer on a one to one basis
- Interaction between students and seminar instructors

Exams connected

- Analysis of past exam questions and focussing on particular theoretical points that could easily be missed
- Discussion of past exam questions and related issues, especially those linking different sections of the courses together.
- Going through past exam style questions as examples
- Going through past paper problems or likely exam questions
- Going through exam questions. It shows us the kind of analysis and evaluation that we need to be able to put into practice.
- Example exam questions and types of questions we can expect are useful. It shows how to apply the theory
- Mock exam questions and various other questions because they test our knowledge of topics and help give an indication of what to expect
- The most useful aspect of tutorials is having the tutor going through and solving example questions, and showing us the step-by-step procedure for each one.
- Going over the questions right from the beginning allows one to gain a better understanding of how to approach questions it allows highlights the areas where one may have made errors. This helps to prevent such errors in future and allows the student to learn how to approach particular questions and the path to follow during the questions which will maximise the total marks.
- Having the supervisor explain exactly what they expect to see in an exam, positive criticism on my essays and then a broader discussion
- Going over problems, demonstrating answers to questions set as "homework"
- Having the supervisor explain exactly what they expect to see in an exam, positive criticism on my essays and then a broader discussion

Presentations

- Giving and preparing presentations to other students
- Presentations. Before I give presentations I research what I need to. The fear of making a bad presentation motivates me to really make sure I understand my topic well. Also, it is very useful if when we are set questions before the tutorials; then we can discuss our answers in class the most constructive tutorials are where its more discursive and less question answer. maybe those without specific worksheet questions but with areas that should be looked at beforehand
- The most useful thing though is (unique to my college I think) a weekly presentation done by one of my peers. Each student distributes a 5000 word essay 14hours prior to the presentation. They then do a 15 min presentation (usually on PowerPoint) focusing in depth on a topic that we have studied. Another student is then chosen at random to act as discussant for about 15-20 mins. The debate is then opened to the floor. This is done with 9 students and 1 to 3 fellows.
- Preparing my own seminar and presenting it to the rest of the class, this method is very useful in improving my presentational and communication skills.
- Group work and presentations

Class involvement

- I find it most useful when questions, or assignments are issued prior to the seminar. This allows for adequate time to prepare the work and also to find problems or concerns I wish to address.
- The worksheets where the seminar leader goes round the class asking questions to EVERYBODY are the best as it motivates you to actually do the work well so you're not made to look stupid. In some of the other seminars, doing the work isn't compulsory, and while you may mean to do it, the fact that there is no disciplinary measure to make you do it kind of puts it down your list of priorities.
- Simply going through exercise questions which I've found difficult have really helped my understanding
- Types of activities?, well the classes are run like school college classes. Just 10 people, going over questions, helpful explaining, intellectually stimulating and Q&A sessions, etc, in fact I could say its all been helpful in general The more questions we get to play around with prior to a supervision the more I tend to learn. Macro supervisions have tended to contain lots of stimulating questions that enable one to grasp the concept more solidly
- The seminars are designed to complement the lectures, to offer additional material outside lectures and to broaden our thinking. Therefore all the exercises set in seminars are very useful. Different tutors approach seminars differently. However, at the end of the day its more about what is learnt rather than the style of teaching. The exercises are structured to encourage reading into the subject.
- Economics is quite hard to teach, especially the more mathematical content, its hard to gain an understanding of someone's knowledge of the subject through exams.... some tutorials where the tutor actually tested your understanding by asking you direct question where the most useful as you felt the need to prepare more thoroughly in advance
- Simple fact that you can go one on one with your tutorial teacher in an attempt to solve your problems is awesome and encouraging

Others

What makes a good seminar/tutorial

- I would find it very useful if we even had tutorials or seminars!! I cant necessarily think of any particular activity, but instead I think the most useful tutorials arise when you are learning from someone who is good at conveying and teaching the material, this makes an enormous difference. Student led tutorials, team building exercises. When essays are critically reviewed by the tutor and feedback given, and when the essay title is expanded upon and discussed further in many directions. This helps to put everything into perspective and aids the formation of opinions and answers on topics. Workshops might be a good way of learning

Don't find them helpful

- I don't usually find tutorials helpful, as students rarely contribute, so it turns into a mini lecture!
- Activities..what activates? the tutor writes we copy
- They're all useless: the tutors don't speak English, and Id rather not go to them anyway, as all the material is so obvious, even a trained monkey could do it.

Don't have them

- Do not have economics tutorials or seminars regularly which is disappointing and unhelpful. tutorials are very beneficial, as get to discuss problems and questions with other students and tutor.

Q32 What types of activities in seminars/tutorials have you found the least useful?

The majority of the students find their seminars useful and make positive comments about them and teaching in general. Their suggestions on how to make seminars better, include: better explanations to the answers for problem sets, more feedback, less “parrot-fashion repetition of answers”, smaller groups, and more interaction. They again complained about tutors who cannot speak English well, and lack of communication between lecturer and students. Though in general students support group work, but the “free ride members” worry them. Students also made negative comments about “long student presentations” and other students who “turn up without preparing in advance.”

Poor teaching

- The tutor working through set questions without explanations having not prepared the answers in advance. The answers were also submitted later on the internet, in a clearer way, so the tutorials seemed even more pointless
- Questions set and then no explanation to the answers. Also when the tutor just talks for the whole seminar, it becomes boring.
- Being set questions out of the text books and then being given the answers as it doesn't lead to problem solving and showing an understanding as the answers are given.
- The way some tutors simply tell you the answers to the questions and don't explain the theory behind each question
- Those that fail to provide answers that advances learning, such as essay type questions that are too broad to cover in tutorials.
- Just tutors telling us the answers to questions without showing why.
- Students given questions to answer for the tutorial but no student completes these questions as they know that the lecturer will solve these problems in class without student input. Waste of time.
- In first year simply going through the questions in the homework...I could have done that at home with an answer sheet, I do not feel in that case that I benefited as much as could have been from having a tutorial...the opportunity for engaging the students was wasted
- The tutor talking about the subject at hand without asking for any feedback from the students. Also the tutor going through questions that have been set on the board, because they should be able to do it. the students should go through the questions and the tutors help them along the way, therefore if you didn't understand it, a person with roughly the same learning as you can show you the way.
- When you turn up to a tutorial at 9am on a Thursday morning, given your work back and sit in a circle referring to the mark scheme and told to ask any questions if you have any. I find this a very poor method of teaching. People will tend to only ask questions on things they get wrong. They may neglect to understand material they answered correctly without fully understanding this. Mistakes are built on a limited understanding. If you don't understand the fundamentals, how are you meant to understand the intricacies?
- Preparing end-of-chapter questions These ones relate mostly to what is in the chapter and rarely evoke any further analysis or free your imagination.
- Occasionally we have a supervision when the supervisor has not prepared anything to teach us. Instead we just get our essays back and then he simply asks us for any questions.
- Lack of explanation of questions at times, much knowledge is simply assumed
- The size of class is a deterrent - came to University expecting tutorials with one senior lecturer and a handful of students, not an unqualified Postgraduate and 30 students. Defeats the entire purpose. Continual requests for an answer from an unwilling audience do grate

somewhat. Either the questions being posed are too difficult, the students are unprepared, or indeed the details are not explained in sufficient detail, but for those shy members of the audience it does not help.

- Where one person presents a topic. Perhaps setting groups to answer questions might be better, but most people don't seem to bother after a while. (Although I do) The classes where the class teacher just sits and talks for an hour without time for student questions. And also the classes where the class teacher cannot speak understand English to the level that is necessary to teach a class on a degree program The ones which end up as another lecture as it does not allow you to ask questions or give more time to explanation.
- Spending a lot of time going over things that are simple and do not deserve the time because people have not bothered looking at the tutorial questions We often get assigned one question to do per seminar per person, and I feel that's not effective enough. The tutor should ask us all to do the questions, so that we all have a go at the questions, rather than just copying it off the board.
- I find tutors who attempt to run the tutorial with a rod of iron far too boring and oppressive. If people have to just listen to the ideas of a lecturer or tutor then they are hardly establishing the thought necessary for determining their own ideas. University is about equipping people with the tools to think and express thought in a logical and reasoned fashion, talking like a parrot only undermines this. Being talked to as opposed to talk with. Being taught by some of the biggest intellectuals in the field of economics can be pretty intimidating and it takes a very good tutor to understand that and make concessions for it. Some will never make good teachers. Well, in some the tutor turns up and seems not to have a clue what he is there for so that obviously isn't particularly useful.
- Dictation by the teacher - this often leaves pupils bored and disengaging ones where you are simply talked AT for an hour and not engaged. where the dialogue is just one way.

Less useful activities

Group work

- Group work can lead to some people free riding although it is a valuable skill.
- Group project work when other students do not pull their weight. Would much prefer to do an individual end of term essay. Where the tutor simply talks for an hour with little interaction with the group as I find that I take little away from those classes Evaluation of group presentations that result in a valid grade on conclusion. Differences in attitudes and work effect between group members can serious effect grades and the groups are not selectively chosen but left for the students to decide. This leaves strong groups always together and weaker groups always together. Suddenly group work is counter balanced by individuals running the show and other members having a free ride though the degree.
- Group work, since most other students don't prepare for seminars. PDP and progress report is of no use.
- Group work was the least useful activity, as in all honesty, you end up not talking about economics at all!
- Group work- because although it is trying to build other skills for employment I feel we don't learn enough about the subject. They seem to feel obliged to give us pointless group activities. it doesn't really seem all that constructive when there is an extensive worksheet set before the tutorial, as there is often not really enough time to do anything but go through answers, rather than discuss the area in more general and allow students to voice ideas and queries. that has a less school class feel. I feel that some tutorials are trying to catch you out

on the work you have/haven't done. All tutorials are useful if you come prepared. However, if you know you get the answers, you are likely prioritise other work. Hence, those tutorials where I was allowed to come unprepared was the least useful. I know it is up to your self, but I think that tutors should give extra incentives to prepare by marking assignments.

Presentations

- Long student presentations- If they are short and relevant then they are of great use, but sometimes they take time away from the teacher. Presentations - whilst they are useful when it is your own group presenting, and you gain a good knowledge of your area, I find it difficult to learn through other peoples presentations so find there are often gaps in my understanding or the subject.
- Honestly - individual presentations since they have proved to be very disengaging. Better to discuss as a group by planning ahead and attending tutorials having read the materials.
- Group presentations
- The damn presentations! The only people they help are the people giving them, the rest of the class just slowly drift off to sleep. *Zzz.*

Others

- When we must stay and hear a monologue of our tutor. Also when they explain the last problem set answers ...(too boring and also no-one give any attention in what they say) and they don't explain the lecture. I strongly suggest that the seminars is better to analyse the lecture and give us interactive the knowledge than to listen monologues and just solve the last problem set.
- Just simply reeling off the answers to a problem sheet
- The lecturer simply goes over a standard set of answers without the option of going over them again if a particular student has trouble
- Tutorials with little or no interaction - pointless just giving us the answers
- Parrot-fashion repetition of answers
- Simple running through of answers When tutors treat the tutorial like a second lecture on the material in question without interacting with the students.
- When the class doesn't take part and it is just the lecture running through examples.
- When they expect us to know what we are doing when we don't understand the lectures to start with
- When there is no or little communication between the tutor and the students, I think there should be a distinct difference between these and lectures, there should be a lot more interaction, and students should be treated as individuals. I become a lot more motivated and interested if I think the teacher is interested in our personal understanding.
- Where the tutor just talks

- A few seminars that were based totally on reading a couple of huge articles were shockingly bad. The articles were around 200 pages in length and it simply wasn't possible to take in all of the information so early in the course. The seminar itself was pointless as nobody had really properly read the material so there was in effect nothing to discuss. Seminars provide little benefit as little is learned or done in them.
- The least useful tutorials are those that students turn up without preparing in advance, which most of the students in my course do. I don't see the point of organising tutorials where tutor is the only who does the work. Haven't had enough tutorials to check understanding of work as going along.

- Reviewing each others work as we don't yet know what is considered good or otherwise
- Copying work straight from board or sheet.

All are useful

- I believe all activities in tutorials have been useful, because they reinforce the theory covered in lectures, which at times, can be slightly hard to follow.
- None, the seminars all feel of good use in enhancing my learning
- I think everything in seminars is useful Who would like to volunteer to come to the board and talk for a while? - everyone looks at the floor. Getting the students properly involved has a huge impact on how the tutorial goes - many of our tutors have this skill, but not all. While I find essay writing extremely useful, I find that tutors will often only pick up on the parts of the essay that are incorrect, and say nothing if what you have written is right. I find that this approach to teaching knocks my confidence. Personal confidence has a huge effect on my motivation to learn. Therefore, I feel that a few positive comments would not go amiss every now and again. One particular individual who has taken a couple of my seminar groups this year, places only a mark on the actual essay and then sends out an email with general comments (e.g. if you received a mark between 50 and 60 these are the things you need to improve...etc) How is this helpful?
- It is useful, but sometimes the teachers do not speak clear English and also do not have class solutions, so therefore give inaccurate teaching.

Q33 If you know what career you intend to pursue, please identify it.

Nearly half of the students didn't answer this question. Those who did give replies similar to ones we received in 2002, probably with less number of odd ones. The most popular future careers for economics graduates are therefore in banking, finance, accountancy, the civil service and consultancy, economics journalism, with some of the graduates continuing their education through postgraduate studies.

- Corporate Finance, Investment Banking – about 25.0% of all replies
- Economist or something in the banking sector.
- Some kind of job in the banking sector perhaps
- I enjoy economics but as I move into the third year I am choosing more financial market orientated modules. I would therefore like to work in an investment bank or an asset management company starting off as an equity or option or some other kind of asset analyst. Eventually I would like maybe to be a strategist.
- As an economist, either with the Civil Service (GES), or with the Bank of England, with an eye to transferring to Brussels in the future.
- Economist (preferably in the civil service)
- Government Economist
- Welfare Economist for government
- Working with finance
- I wish to become a lawyer and from there become a politician once I have a firm financial base. The importance of economics is that of its crucial nature to every government policy, and should I wish to be a successful politician I must understand important fundamentals of economics
- I know what career I want to pursue, but the problem is getting a start in that career, due to competition, and the similarities with my degree and tens of thousands of other graduates. If I was leaving school just now, University wouldn't even be considered as the financial rewards from a degree are very limited as opposed to leaving school and starting a career right away. The Government are preaching the totally wrong policy in trying to achieve an entry rate of 50% of school leavers going onto further education. Where are they going to work??
- Most likely a career within Accountancy
- I would like to be an economics correspondent of a television firm
- I want to pursue a career in economic development or a job closely linked to this, which could hopefully involve travelling worldwide
- Teaching.
- An economist – less than 10.0% of all replies