UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN STUDENTS' UNION

ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT 2014

Annual Quality Report 2014.

The academic year 2013/14 was a successful year for the Students' Union partnership with the University. Both University and the Students' Union received NSS scores which placed them in the top third when compared nationally to other institutions. Additionally this year, the Students' Union was awarded HE Students' Union of the Year by NUS and the University worked towards their 10 year plan through creation of new and developed space for teaching and learning as well as the welcoming of new members of staff across the University. It has also been a successful year for student representatives:

- This year there were over 500 reps elected and 72% of these were trained
- Over 100 student representatives were invited and attended a feedback event with the Vice Chancellor.
- Across the University, students pushed to become co-chairs of Subject Committee Meetings.

Three key areas that we particularly celebrated this year were:

- Student feedback was used to change the guidelines allowing multiple Turnitin submissions.
- School of Psychology work between staff and students on Assessment and Feedback
- Using student feedback to help create minimum guidelines for Blackboard.
- We influenced the decision for the University to revert back to 15 working days for the return of assessment feedback.

For 2014, University of Lincoln Students' Union started the annual process of creating a student written submission to present to the University and externally. The purpose of this submission is to record and measure the impact our students and representatives, as well as campaigns, have had on the Student Experience here at Lincoln. Through the report there will also be recommendations made both for the University and the Union based on both qualitative and quantitative data, whether these be to expand on opportunities, a push for facilities or researching how students' feel about changes that have happened within the University and Students' Union. Feedback for this has been collected throughout the year using different mediums such as rep forums, GOATing (Go Out And Talk) and student surveys such as NSS. We've also reviewed the document and decided that for the next report we need to tighten the process, include more case studies and keep the current timeframe of September to September.

The top four priorities for this year are:

1. This year the Students' Union to work with the aim of putting the pound back into the pocket of the student. One aspect of this is to create a partnership within the University and the Students' Union to work with the College of Arts Representative to ease the pressures of printing costs linked to achieving a good grade in different courses across the college.

2. Measurement of the effectiveness of the redrafted Assessment and Feedback forms within the School of Psychology, with the view to implement elsewhere within the University. Additionally the Students' Union to encourage other senior representatives to take steps to introduce a similar mechanism.

3. Investigate an electronic attendance monitoring system, with the aim of possibly piloting a system using student cards, within the largest lecture theatres where satisfaction with the current system and accuracy is most acute.

4. We will continue to monitor progress of University strategic aim for qualified teaching staff in Higher Education. We will work initially with a focus on College of Science, then College of Arts as a second. Success should be the University reaching its target of 100% of qualified teaching staff in Higher Education by 2016.

Annual Quality Report 2014.

For the first time here at Lincoln, we would like to present the Students' Union Annual Quality Report for the academic year of 2013/14. This is a report that we are committed to providing year after year when it comes to September, with the intention of measuring different aspects of the previous academic year.

The Annual Quality Report aims to not only address issues that have been brought to the Students' Unions attention but also to celebrate best practise with recommendation to use that elsewhere. Throughout the past academic year we have collected information from different student surveys, forums and committees and this document can be used to show how the students feel about different aspects of their student experience.

The report is split into five key areas of Learning and Teaching, University Facilities, Organisation of the course, Feedback at Lincoln and Academic Support for Students. Different pieces of work and conversations were led by my predecessor Ian Antwi in order to decide that these areas would be the focus of the document. This document is created from the work that he did in regards to Blackboard feedback, supporting students, and recognition of space issues as well as gathering feedback from student representatives, student body and staff members. For each of these areas there have also been different recommendations created for the University and the Students' Union to improve or continue its work. We believe the recommendations would work towards enhancing the Student Experience here at Lincoln, and we hope that the strong partnership we currently have with the University will enable us to work together to ensure these recommendations are considered and progressed.

As a Sabbatical Officer, I look forward to working with both students and staff on the above areas to ensure that we can face the challenges in the year ahead together, and create best practise which can be shared and continued in the years ahead.
If you would like to discuss any of the content or have any questions please contact me at ntakawira@lincoln.ac.uk.

Thank you

Nyasha.

Nyasha Takawira
VP Academic Affairs

Quality of Teaching Staff

At the start of the Academic year of 13/14 the Students' Union Executive Committee identified the need to progress towards fulfilling the strategic objective for teaching staff at the University to have a teaching qualification by 2016. When using NSS scores we need to recommend prioritisation of all staff within the College of Arts, after scores within the NSS 2013 showed the lowest across the University for Teaching and Learning of an average of 4.0 compared to the University average of 4.1 and the national average of 4.2. Within the NSS results 2014, the area of 'The teaching on my course' increased by 0.1 to 4.2 showing that as an institution there has been improvement. In the College of Arts two schools achieved results above that of the University average but there were still some areas with low scores for this aspect. NSS 2014 has also flagged up the issue that within the College of Science all current schools that can be measured in this survey, have scored below the University average. Within both of these Colleges there has either been a restructure or expansion in facilities and schools, leading to a recruitment drive. This recruitment drive could help with the strategic aim of qualified teaching staff as well as addressing the below average teaching that students feel they're receiving.

However, there has been progress in that a new Educational Development Enhancement Unit (EDEU) has been introduced, which includes teaching education and opportunities to review programmes. With this in mind, going forward there should be much more progression on the recommendation and strategic objective to gain more teaching staff within the University with Higher Education teaching qualifications. For this reason, as a Union we feel that this should be continuously monitored in the future by sabbatical officers within the Executive Committee of the Students' Union. Methods of achieving this is to continue the support of the University's strategic aim of 100% teaching staff who hold a teaching qualification by 2016, but also through support of the re-introduction of the Student Consultants on Teaching (SCoTs).

Hidden Course Costs

Late in the first term of the academic year, an issue was brought to our attention by the senior representatives within the College of Arts and that was of Hidden Costs. It was a discussion point at a senior representative catch up and subsequently became the basis of a motion for student council to be passed as an action for the Students' Union to assist with the College of Arts representative elect in a campaign to lower costs specifically printing within the College of Arts. Currently there are courses within the College which have to print projects and assessments in order to gain a certain mark for their work. Within courses such as Graphic Design, if work is not printed in a certain way, size or with certain materials then the work will not gain a mark and so students struggle with the high costs that have to be paid in order to complete their work in this way. A further issue that the students are facing is the amount that this costs in comparison to the amount of printing credit that they receive, at the beginning of the year. Previously as the School of Art and Design, students had a serious issue with the printing costs for their courses in comparison to their allocated credit each year. Within the school, allocation of credit varied, with one course receiving £10.00 for second years and another such as Product Design received £25.00 for second years to use. This variation shows that some programmes recognised the need to give their students more credit but it also shows in comparison to the other Colleges how much these students may use on printing. Not only is it the allocation that students weren't happy with, but the amount they had to print for each project – for instance one graphic design student said that her projects cost a minimum of £30.00 for each due to printing of a portfolio, without which she'd fail.

Looking forward to academic year 14/15, there will be a need to review the organisation within Schools now that the courses that were within the School of Art and Design have been reallocated to others due to the College restructure. We as a Union feel that, there may be some issues for students with regard to staff support who they discuss assignment hand ins, attendance and other such factors with. The reorganisation of budgets for printing credits could lead to the college of Arts representative becoming a part of that conversation.

The combination of the high costs and varied allocation is something which the students across the College are concerned about. The School of Art and Design representative for last year gathered some students thoughts, where one second year Jewellery and Object student stated that, "Printing is something that everyone in my year has problems with as they have to spend so much", and a level two Graphic Design student stated that, "we spend £30.00 on each project but we only get £30.00 printing credit a year and we have 8 projects a year – so it doesn't really cover much."

This problem has been seen nationally before and something which has never been a big concern at Lincoln before this year, but was commented on within the Undergraduate Level One/Two Survey 2013, with 7% of comments made by College of Arts students about the cost of printing, further supported by comments within the NSS where some students said that it not only cost too much, but it was disproportionate to its quality and that it wasn't subsidised enough. Current and prospective students are concerned more and more about their finances whilst they're at University, and the pressure of ensuring you have enough money to pass your assessments within your degree make them feel that they're now "paying for their grade" – an idea which they're strongly against.

Part of the solution may be to raise awareness of the "hidden costs" before students apply and arrive in Lincoln. Most of these courses that are heavily affected are sometimes told that they will need to create a portfolio when they arrive at University, when they attend an Open or Applicant day. However, they aren't told how varied in size the portfolio will be nor are they told how much printing costs will be at the University. Some students go one step further and say that once they've got here they still aren't told how much the printing costs are – particularly when using plotter printers within the library or studio space and workshops.

Secondly there needs to be better allocation of budget for the College. More budget allocated to certain courses across the college to allow for higher printer credits, could help to reduce this cost for students. Some of the courses which only get £5.00 each year printing credit are those which need to print in a certain size or quality using equipment such as plotters. When one print on the plotter costs £5.00, printing credit will not last the year, and these students will be spending chunks of money each project on printing in order to pass their assessments. If this was not possible then the alternative would be to cut the costs of printing to ensure it was more affordable for all students across the College. The solution has to address the issue that students within the College of Arts are in a position where if they don't spend this money on printing they may not pass – leading to an unwanted financial struggle.

The College of Arts Representative elect is currently compiling the feedback that has been gathered by himself and the school representatives within his College into a report which is to go to College and Institutional Committees in order to find a resolution. To assist in this process he will be speaking to staff within ICT, the Pro Vice Chancellor/Head of College as well as to other Unions who have carried out a similar campaign about hidden costs to see what to avoid and where to take this issue. We hope to see the reps recommendation discussed and adopted within the first term of 14/15.

Organisation of Blackboard

Within the first student representation forum the issue of Blackboard was raised. Students didn't like it and found that it wasn't very useful due to lack of updates or that their tutors didn't know how to use it in an intuitive and student friendly way. Other students found that there were too many updates leading to too much information and an issue with Blackboard then becoming too messy and they were unable to use it. Not only did this affect their ability to access learning resources or teaching notes, but it also made students believe the course was unorganised and should be improved.

With regards to tutors' lack of knowledge of using Blackboard, the University did set up and deliver training for use of Blackboard as well as how to get the most out of it, but this hasn't run now for several years. Student feedback told us that their tutors were unable to use Blackboard which could be an indication that such training is needed. Support mechanisms that may help this is EDEU's drop-in's and workshops with digital education developers for academic staff members which have been introduced for 14/15, alongside the guidance videos that have been included within the new version of Blackboard, by ICT.

To try and create a resolution to the issue of Blackboard, the next student rep forum was used to complete a Blackboard activity with reps grouped as their schools. The aim of this was to try and achieve a collective view as to how the schools would like their blackboard to be. The activity involved a worksheet with the basic layout of blackboard on which the students included what tabs they would have, and then within that how many tabs or modules there would be. Generally students wanted between 5 and 8 tabs, dependent on the school, and within these there was to at least be lecture slides, information about modules, information about assessments, module handbooks and staff details of module and subject level staff. These requirements are known as minimum standards within EDEU's guidelines for staff when using blackboard and providing information to students.

Ian Antwi , VPAA 2013/14, took these findings from the rep forum, and met with every Head of School to discuss the idea of 'renovating' Blackboard and making it more student friendly. The suggestions that have been made would be of a positive affect to staff members as Blackboard would, in theory, become easier to organise and navigate and they wouldn't be spending time uploading information which students aren't necessarily asking for. These discussions have also taken place with students who were not available to attend the Rep Forum in order to have a collective view of what students want, so that if changes are agreed then these changes represent the student population within that school. This activity has fed into ICT Blackboard project group who have launched Blackboard Learn 9.1 SP14, Blackboard Collaborate and have used the feedback as part of the launch. Staff members involved with the project have found this feedback experience useful to understand what the students liked or disliked with the current blackboard. This knowledge has been used to incorporate new features to certain schools where both staff and students seem to want them. However, there has been some misunderstandings between those who gave feedback and those who received it, leading to the idea that if we as a Union were to collect feedback on something as specific as Blackboard again, then we may need to try and have somebody in the room from that project group, for instance a member of staff from EDEU or ICT.

Another recommendation is involvement in the monitoring process of this. At the moment it's difficult to see a clear way as to how much of an impact the input will have had to students' experience or how much of an impact the new version of Blackboard will have on students. Due to Blackboard including things such as email, timetable or lecture slides it's difficult to measure impact from usage stats and there may need to be discussions with the Educational Development and Enhancement Unit about how the monitoring of this software will take place whether that be focus groups or forums or something alike.

Turnitin

Towards the start of the year, there was a look at what restrictions there should be for a student before they submit and the amount of times a student could submit to Turnitin, the electronic assignment software. In a committee it was raised and questioned how students would feel about this and it was brought to a Rep Forum to be discussed by the students who were present. 90% of students asked stated that they would like to be able to check their originality report when they submitted a piece of work, as it helps to prevent plagiarism. This was communicated by the VPAA to the Education and Students committee where the topic was first discussed and the representative from the Centre for Educational Research and Development agreed to take this on board and look to edit the guidelines to include this student interpretation. The result of this means that guidelines for Turnitin currently state that students can actually do this check as many times as they like.

Personal Tutors

Personal Tutors is an area which is mentioned several times within each academic year in a general sense. On one side of the spectrum, some students have not felt the need to use their personal tutor because they can talk to and are supported by other members of staff. However, on the other side there are many students who don't know their personal tutor and so don't feel supported at all. We've seen evidence of this from NSS 2013, UG level one and two survey comments and it was also raised by the Students Expert's Network training in this Academic Year.

Within the NSS Action Plans for 13/14, we can see personal tutoring is mentioned in at least 30 out of 41 NSS plans which indicates it's not only students that acknowledge there is an issue with this particular support mechanism. Several different schools are trying to tackle it within their department such as the School of Psychology who planned to assign a member of staff as a Senior Tutor to oversee the Personal Tutor support system as well as create formal guidelines to create consistency when staff are acting as personal tutors – a similar example of work is happening within the Law School. Within NSS plans there was a mention of a School wide review and guidance creation for courses within the Business School and it would be interesting to see the conclusions that the review produced in a school with such diverse students that it is highly likely they will want different methods of support. Within the School of Performing Arts action plan there was a statement admitting that the personal tutoring system within their school needs attention, something they would focus on in discussions on their away day and subject committee meetings. We know through meets with students of the school that there were some discussions at the away day but these haven't been included in documentation that they know of, nor have they seen implementation. Many more plans such as Contemporary Lens Media state that they will “Maintain” or continue with the personal tutoring system or as with Audio Production, further encourage and emphasise to students how the system is important. The reason to look at these “actions” within the NSS plans is to show that a year ago at the start of the academic year of 13/14, there was a concern across the board about personal tutoring, or academic tutoring or any other names that schools call it within them.

Now at the end of the academic year of 13/14 there has been an updated academic tutoring policy created to be implemented from September 2014. This includes areas for the tutors to provide support and guidance regarding academia, careers and pastoral care. After the NSS results 2014 showed that only three out of fourteen schools are above the University average for Academic Support of 4.2, this prioritisation by the University on Personal Tutoring is appropriately timed and we are keen to support the implementation of the updated policy.

UNIVERSITY FACILITIES

The Library

A further recommendation made by the Executive Committee of the Students' Union to the University was to encourage further investment into the library now that phase 1.5 is complete. Originally phase 2.0 of the Library development was to be started in 2015/16 but due to a decrease of 0.1 in NSS 2013 results and Undergraduate level one and two survey feedback there was a demand for this to be completed sooner and therefore the recommendation was made. After discussions between the University Librarian, VP AA and the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, a decision was made to postpone this recommendation until academic year 2014/15 due to the University's other priorities to facilities. Although we were happy to postpone this recommendation, the library tends to be full to capacity and there's still an issue with resource. This should be helped with the increase in resource for the Library to not have two 24/7 periods in the next academic year but to just have one running from Christmas to Easter due to demand. This recommendation we are keen to emphasise this year again, as although the Library gained 0.1 in the NSS 2014 to bring their facilities score to 4.2, we feel there will still be limits to the library's use and capacity this year which will affect students' and possibly their studies.

As the University grows with departments, schools and students the Library and general resources also needs to grow which makes the action on expanding Library physical space a more pressing issue year on year.

ORGANISATION OF THE COURSE

In NSS 2013 results Organisation and Management, there was an average across the University of between 3.9 and 4.1. Although these scores matched that of the sector, they weren't particularly high and they were the same as 2012 showing no recognised development. Again in the NSS 2014 results this has happened, with average scores for Organisation and Management as 3.9-4.1. Over the past academic year we've learnt of issues that have been linked to organisation and, as the NSS 2014 scores show no movement for a third year, we're keen to monitor these issues over the next academic year.

Timetabling

Timetabling was seen as an issue for students in 2013, so for the academic year of 13/14 the Students' Union Executive Committee made a prioritised action to address this issue. One of the areas that were particularly seen as an issue was when student timetables are released. Usually it's the week before or the first week of timetabled activity when students receive their timetables. This naturally causes problems if modules aren't on the timetables or classes have been overfilled, as it can take over a week to address the issue and students therefore miss out on teaching they are paying for. With contact time more prominent in students minds this heightens the issue.

The idea of 'Plan On' software was presented, software for timetabling that would be in place by 14/15 and so a recommendation for our President and Vice President Academic Affairs 2013/14 to regularly check this progress with those within timetabling was made by Student Council, and it was reported that timetables will be released by 25th August for returning students and 19th September, the end of welcome week, for first year students.

Another issue linked to Timetabling is Wednesday afternoons. Wednesday afternoons are the time of the week when it was agreed by the University to not timetable compulsory teaching. This was so that students could take part in extracurricular activities such as Career Wednesdays, Lincoln Award, Representation activities and to align with BUCS Wednesday fixtures. This is an issue which has been raised by students year after year due to timetabling taking place on a Wednesday afternoon which impairs the students from taking part in these extra opportunities that the University is encouraging them to get involved with. When the VPAA and VPA approached this topic in Student Experience committee, it was taken higher and discussions with the University Registrar identified that activity is timetabled in Wednesdays due to a lack of teaching space and a university of our size.

This led to the Vice President Activities and Vice President Academic Affairs changing the focus of their work on Wednesday afternoons to look at long-term resolutions as the university continues to deviate the space issue. One recommendation they identified is for future officers to work to have this policy within the Strategic Plan for 2016. As this is a solution which will have no effect on students for at least two years, short term plans have also been proposed. The idea that the Vice Presidents have for the short term is to not extend teaching but to change teaching around so that it's only seminars on a Wednesday. This is to only happen when necessary and if so then it needs to be signed off by the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning. Currently the teaching is signed off at school level to be allowed on a Wednesday, so the complete scope of how much teaching is happening on a Wednesday afternoon isn't apparent on a University scale. Further to this they raised the possibility of Sabbatical officer involvement on any new space planning software and the communication and implementation of it to avoid the known issue of lack of space for certain areas of the University.

In NSS 2014 the achieved score for timetabling was 4.1. With officer inclusion into further timetabling policies either long or short term and the implementation of the ‘Plan On’ software in the future, there is scope for this score to improve significantly when students see the change over the next few years.

Space Usage e.g. Art and Design, Architecture, Labs.

Additionally Space Usage has been an issue over the past year, first appearing within NSS Comments of the survey of 2013. Many of the comments were to be expected, particularly with students within the School of Art and Design as part of them were moved mid academic year and found they didn’t have enough space. This is something we can see happening within this year’s NSS comments for this school and something which we predicted as it’s been mentioned by student representatives at different points of the year that there is not enough room within the new build for their school. However, past the predicted comments, there are other areas of concern. This year the library has been particularly strained with students commenting that they have struggled to find space to work throughout the year but particularly during assessment periods or exam periods.

There are also issues within various schools with regards to completing their work on campus. Students within the School of Architecture found that some workshop times weren’t compatible with lectures and other timetabled teaching last year, for example the workshop would be shut on a Wednesday afternoon, and these are shown within NSS and UG level one and two comments. Additionally this year there have been issues with regards to studio space within the school with some years spreading into other year’s spaces, or sometimes courses spreading into other courses studio space. An issue was also raised at the start of the year within a staff/student meeting within the School of the lack of Exhibition space now that courses from the School of Art and Design had been moved into the building – something which is further demonstrated by the separation of Undergraduate and Postgraduate exhibition space for the End of Year Degree Shows. As a resolution, there was a studio space discussion group created at the start of the year, but feedback from the students show that even with this group, it’s difficult to find a resolution that suits every year and course.

Within the School of Computer Science, they’re having an issue with regards to the time that they have access to the labs. Courses within this school understandably have certain needs when it comes to software. These needs can’t be fulfilled by using the library when the labs shut due to the library systems either not being fully up to date, or not having the software on them at all. Some of the software can be used through the cloud – but again we return to the issue that there is not enough room within the Library to provide these students with the access they need, or generally students need information as to how the cloud software can be accessed by anywhere.

Within some schools there have been some space usage ‘ideas’ mentioned within the NSS Action Plans for 13/14. Within Contemporary Lens Media, there has been an acknowledgement that they may be an issue with the space of the new build and they would “investigate ways to maximise the access to facilities in light of the new building”, including possibly 24 hour access. Again within Fashion Design, “Students were advised prior to relocating the course to the AAD building that 24hour access would be available. On several occasions staff made arrangements for students to access certain studios but students were asked to leave by security staff each time.” Now within this action plan it showed that there had been a pre-emptive action to avoid this kind of issue within the School of Art and Design and the new building, but it seems that this hadn’t been communicated by the University leading to students not able to access their work space.

An example of how to resolve this is found within the Product Design NSS Action Plan. It is stated here that “Controlled entry into specialised Product Design studio spaces was delayed during transitional phases of the accommodation move from Think Tank. Individual Swipe Card entry has now been installed and agreements with Estates and Security for safe evening and late working when required at specific points within the academic calendar.” This solution is a simple but effective way that could ensure security as well as access, something that these students need in order to access facilities which enable them to fulfil their potential. It’s also an example of how cross department communication can lead to a practical action that suits staff, students and security purposes.
A similar approach was taken within Film and TV, who hoped to put in place an online booking system in order for students to access the extra time they may need within certain studios, which is currently being implemented. Both of these examples are positive ways to prevent staff denying access to space that students’ may need for their work. However, these ideas may not be widely known and so some communication to students and possibly staff needs to be carried out in order to assist to ease the squeeze on facility usage.

Over the past year the University has commissioned positive work to adapt different spaces such as retail hubs to use as educational space, such as the space below the Junxion student accommodation. These actions are to be commended, for creating innovative learning space and enabling students to have access to a higher quality of equipment and facilities such as the Joseph Banks Laboratory.

Across the University, as it gets larger, it may become necessary to create a building specific access policy or space usage within each school or course if it’s needed. Within NSS 2014 the University did achieve a higher score of 4.3 with regards to learning space but in order to achieve a consistency within this question set the issue needs to be addressed. The issue of space usage is something that affects the facilities the students have access to; the availability of the Library, issues with timetabling but most importantly it affects the Student Experience. It’s an issue which some schools are identifying and trying to resolve but it needs to have assistance from higher committees in order to create a secure and effective solution, which suits all. An example which could be adopted as a pilot, is the pre-emptive action that was taken by the School of Art and Design (according to their NSS action plan) mentioned above and use it for the new School of Architecture and Design.

Trips
Another area that was raised in the first term of 13/14 by some students within the School of Architecture was issues around Trips. In their course rep training in October, students from the courses; Design for Exhibition and Museums and Interior Architecture and Design, discussed with other representatives from the school the issue of arrangement of trips. The course had provided the opportunity to visit different places once each year, for the past three years those students had been here. However, they were left until last minute to be planned meaning that the costs were communicated to the students later than ideal and therefore it was more difficult for the students to

get the money together. These issues meant that many students couldn’t attend these visits off campus because they hadn’t had enough time to get the money together. As a result of this the reps told us that the students on their course felt that this was unfair and some students even felt disadvantaged when compared to other students experience of the opportunity.

This area was discussed at a meeting which was set up between the Head of School and the student representatives. The feedback was taken back to the staff of the course, and as a result the trip to Berlin was arranged by a senior lecturer within the school. This trip was attended by 40-50 students from both Design for Exhibition and Museums and Interior Architecture and Design, who were all positive about the trip.

Attendance Monitoring

Attendance Monitoring is another issue which was raised in the first term at the first rep forum of the year. Since the previous academic year, attendance monitoring seems to have become a priority for the University, not only for International students and their UKBA requirements, but for all students. The concerns that students were having with this, is not that they have to sign in to their lectures, seminars, workshops or other teaching sessions but that the way in which they were to do this. Many students stated that a blank piece of paper went around the room and they were to sign their name on, if the paper got to them whereas other courses had the course list as a register and a signature was put next to it while this was being passed round the room. The main problem with this technique is that, that piece of paper will not get round to everybody in a full lecture theatre by the time that the lecture has finished. This leads to students being noted down as absent when they were sitting in the room, and if the student is approached about this they have no defence as there is very little belief that the paper in fact didn’t reach them. The current method for Attendance Monitoring is not practical for large lecture theatres and is not capturing true attendance figures due to students being missed completely and where possible students are able to sign in for others. Such activity could make some students disengage with their classes and feel they’re not important to go to because others are so easily missing them. It can also lead to issues with International students who aren’t attending. If not monitored correctly then these students may fall off the map which would lead to visa issues, even if they didn’t understand that they had to attend these classes.

In order for the University to accurately monitor attendance there is an argument for the need to invest in an electronic system. When different methods were being considered in a recent steering group, the Executive Committee of the SU stated that they were against biometrics and that a preferred method would be to combine this with student cards or something with similar technology.

It also may be easier to pilot by implementing within the largest lecture theatres on campus and measuring the effect of this system in those areas and then consider whether it should be used across the University. Whether this would link up to recognise their student cards or be further enhanced electronics than this, the bottom line is the University needs to rethink the current practise and create a long term solution.

Feedback (review on change in policy timeframe)

During academic year of 2012/13, the turnaround time on giving feedback to students on assessments was 15 working days. The academic year of 13/14, saw the change to feedback turnaround time to 20 working days. The extension to 20 working days was seen as beneficial to staff to enable them to give more effective feedback by having a longer time to work on the assessments. It was also seen as a fair timeframe to students and by student representatives who were involved in committees when discussions took place. The question this year is has this extension enabled staff to not only meet the turnaround time but also to meet the expectations of students in providing effective feedback.

The first part of the question is perhaps easier to answer than the second. Students in a varied range of schools have told us that they haven't received their feedback for assessments within 20 days. At the most recent rep forum, we learnt that within the Business School, several Postgraduate students weren't receiving their feedback for at least two months – and definitely not before their next assessment hand in deadline. In a rep forum previous to that, we heard that there was a general consensus between six schools that the 20 day turnaround time was not always being met by their tutors. There could be several reasons for this; one may be that there is still an overwhelming amount of papers for one member of staff to mark in a 20 day turnaround. This is also more likely to be true, if that member of staff has more than one assignment to mark in that timeframe. Extending the time frame any longer however, may have a detrimental effect on students due to the lack of ability to use their feedback from one assessment to another. The varied student feedback gathered this past academic year almost predicted the NSS 2104 score would drop for question seven, the question about whether the feedback is prompt or not. With a score of 3.6, down from 3.7 last year, the University is now below the sector average of 3.7, indicating that the change of timeframe for marking and feedback hasn't been successful in its first year. It was decided after the NSS results were released that the timeframe would be reversed back to 15 days turnaround time for feedback.

This leads us to the second part of the question – has the feedback for assessments been effective? Again feedback from students tends to be no, and it's linked to the first part of the question. Students who receive their feedback late aren't finding it more effective than the same type of feedback that they received last year or that they're receiving on time. One reason for this is not just that some feedback is very basic but also because they can't use the feedback that they would have received from these assessments on other assessments because of how late they're receiving it. Additionally comments in rep forums suggest that students don't believe that the extra week is enabling them to receive more effective feedback, and that in fact the feedback they're receiving is no different to the feedback they were receiving in previous years when there was a shorter turnaround time for the feedback to be given to students.

Other comments have led to awareness of the issue of anonymous feedback. Not all schools currently assess students anonymously which may lead to issues when marking assessments. This is also an area which could be flagged up as unfair marking, an area which we as a Union have seen an increase of student issues with. Anonymous feedback is a controversial conversation that is started again nearly every year in Universities that don't have it. At Lincoln, this conversation may become more meaningful, as we feel that the wish or need from students to have anonymous marking may escalate in the future.

Assessment and Feedback Forms

This year in the School of Psychology, the Senior Representative wanted to work on the Assessment and Feedback processes within his school. This has been further supported by the Student Engagement Champion for the school and has been included within their Student Engagement Plan, and the NSS School Action Plan. The idea that it has been covered by both plans, as has the work which has been focused on Assessment and Feedback, shows a good example of why Student Engagement Plans and NSS Action Plans may work better as one whole plan which may roll on year by year and be monitored and edited when needed to.

At the start of the year the Senior Representative suggested to the staff that he would like to work on this area, an idea which they were very welcome to. The process he used was to gather feedback from students as to what they thought of their assessment feedback sheets using the method of focus groups. From these, it was noted that students not only wanted to edit the Assessment Feedback sheet, but also wanted to edit the Assessment Cover Sheet which students complete prior to hand in. Using the comments that the students had made during the focus groups, he drafted edited versions of the current sheets and again held focus groups for opinions. Once he'd gathered student opinion on the edited versions, they were taken to the subject committee meetings within the School and the Student Engagement Champion took it to the School meeting. From there feedback was gathered by the senior representative to what staff thought, they liked the idea of both edited sheets, but with a couple of changes to the Assessment Cover Sheet. This resulted in a further draft of each form being created by the Senior Representative, to incorporate changes such as removal of student evaluation of the mark they would give themselves in exchange for the tick boxes for areas such as DART.

The final version of the Assessment Feedback sheet includes four feedback areas; positive aspects, areas to improve on, how to achieve the next grade and referencing comments. Both forms will be implemented within the school from September 2014, and can be seen at the end of this document. Unfortunately in the NSS 2014 results the school of Psychology scores for Assessment and Feedback have dropped by 0.2 in nearly all questions within the section. The new mechanism for feedback should be a way of improving this back up to where the school has been previously, and hopefully, build further on that score. This kind of work has been appreciated by both staff and student alike, and is something that we, as a Union, hope to encourage other students and staff to take up within their own schools in the future.

Communication

Within the College of Social Science senior representatives this year, there has been an aim to complete "one thing". Several of the representatives for the schools within this college, have aimed to improve communication within their particular school whether this be between students and staff, or staff within divisions, or students with students.

The Lincoln Business School Rep worked on communication between the staff within divisions and from there how they could connect with students. By helping staff to identify who they should be

talking to and renaming events, the school has been able to get input from different students, not just student reps, on things such as NSS and generally ways to improve their school.
The School representative for Sport and Exercise Science has been also improving communication within her school, between the staff and the student reps. This has been demonstrated by continuing the work started last year to make Subject Committee Meetings more user friendly and by use of the wiki function through Blackboard which allows all staff and students (not just student reps) to see the agenda but also add to it. Further to this, they've also been having informal staff/student teas where they can discuss smaller issues at this forum, rather than adding these onto the Subject Committee Meeting and making that longer than necessary.

Student Involvement with Action Plans for schools.
At the start of 13/14 the Executive Committee of the Students' Union made it a priority for course reps to be involved with NSS Action Plans. This year the Students' Union wanted to encourage student representatives to support issues that they brought to the table with evidence. One main source of evidence was the NSS results 2013. Within senior representative training, each school representative was presented with the NSS information of the University as a whole as well as the courses within the school, where they had been recorded. An activity was devised to make them think of issues within their school before seeing their results, and then once they'd seen results explain how they could frame a development in that particular area within schools on behalf of students. A similar activity was devised for course representatives and delivered within each school's course representative training. Further to this, members of staff were encouraged in their student engagement training to use course reps as partners, and really work with them to gain feedback which could positively affect each course, school and college across the University. After encouragement to students and staff, the Students' Union recommended that staff should work with students to edit their school or course NSS action plan for the coming academic year whether this be in subject committee meetings, meetings with the Student Engagement Champion, or meetings with the Head of School was up to the staff member themselves.

After varied discussions with the Senior Student Representatives we can see that this has, in variance, happened. There was a level of reluctance for staff to involve students in the NSS plans because of the timeframe that academics have to create and show to senior management. Students aren't around when staff are currently creating the plans which is leading to students just being used in consultation period in September, leading to suggestions of changes being made by student representatives but not necessarily being agreed to by staff within the school.
For the consultation period with students, one method was that academics within schools placed the action plan as an agenda item in subject committee meetings for both staff and students to comment on. This method was used by nearly every school to ensure some level of feedback from students who attended these meetings, a method which we see as the baseline for student involvement. Other schools went further, such as Business who organised focus groups where they invited students to feedback about their course, and structured this to ask questions framed by the NSS. The staff took this feedback and worked with the student reps to see what should be incorporated.
Another school who used this sort of method was Psychology, who held 'Student Tea' events to gather feedback from students which would help frame their current NSS Action Plan and future plans. As mentioned previously, the School of Psychology have also adapted the Assessment

Feedback forms through the combined work of their Senior Representative and the Student Engagement Champion. This piece of work was something which the school decided in the NSS plan should be looked at, 'to use pro forma feedback forms', but it wasn't expected for a student to do so nor create a new form, showing the kind of work students can not only be involved in but initiate when involved with something such as the NSS Action Plans.

Unfortunately not all senior representatives were as able to input into Action Plans. In several schools, their only chance to see them was in the subject committee meetings and when they were brought, they either weren't completed or there was only one course plan instead of all those within the school. We can see within some of these schools who weren't able to fully discuss the plans that not a great deal of work linked with the NSS action plans has been completed by the senior representative or the course representatives within the school, again showing the difference of when you fully involve students to when you loosely involve them. From 14/15 we see this issue improving greatly, due to the work that has been completed over summer between the Director of EDEU and the Student Engagement Manager to not only merge student survey action plans but to also include a requirement of student representative sign off on the action plans before it can be submitted for completion. This should ensure that senior representatives have input into the action plans and can help staff within their school to change or continue practise within the school in order to improve and grow.

Engagement between facilities, departments and the Students' Union.

A further recommendation from the Executive Committee of the Students' Union last year was improved engagement between facilities, departments and the Union. This was an outcome of the lack of communication to students about building works, causing disruption and led to a mismatch of student expectations about projects and the reality of the work.

This academic year there has been several improvements in this area. One method that was suggested in the recommendation was to use forums such as Senior Rep Catch Up, Student Rep Forums or Student Council to communicate to students about projects different areas are working on or to gather further feedback. Departments who have used these methods have varied from student facing services to 'closed door' services, such as The Library and Health and Safety.

Further development of this has happened with the introduction of Student Engagement Champions in each department as well as school. These champions are not only able to see the work that happens within each department but they're interested in involving students with the work that's going on and are finding new ways for their departments to communicate with each other and students. As a part of this, departments are engaging with the Students' Union more whether it be for opinions and input, for assistance in getting students to their focus groups or other sessions and to assist with spreading the work that they're doing.

For the future, as a Union we still see work in strengthening the level of engagement. Therefore we encourage this growth and look forward with continuing to be involved in this way in the future.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Over the past academic year as a Union we have faced 52 student cases linked to their academic experience. On each occasion we've been approached by a student to give them advice on their issue, varying from Fitness to Practise support, to academic offences to a misconduct accusation. The timing of which they've contacted us also varies from very informal stages of a complaint to the point where they've attended several formal meetings and even appeals without gaining support up to that point, which can be highly detrimental to their case. Each time we as a Union, have had to tell students we can not advise them and can only provide support and representation should they need it, working in partnership with the Advice service. This is most often met with a disappointed response due to the student worrying about then needing to tell a further person about a particular issue which they may not want to discuss in the first instance. It further distresses some students that they have to visit a member of staff within the University Student Support Centre as there is a lack of understanding of the non-bias approach the advice team may have – even if it is further explained to the student.

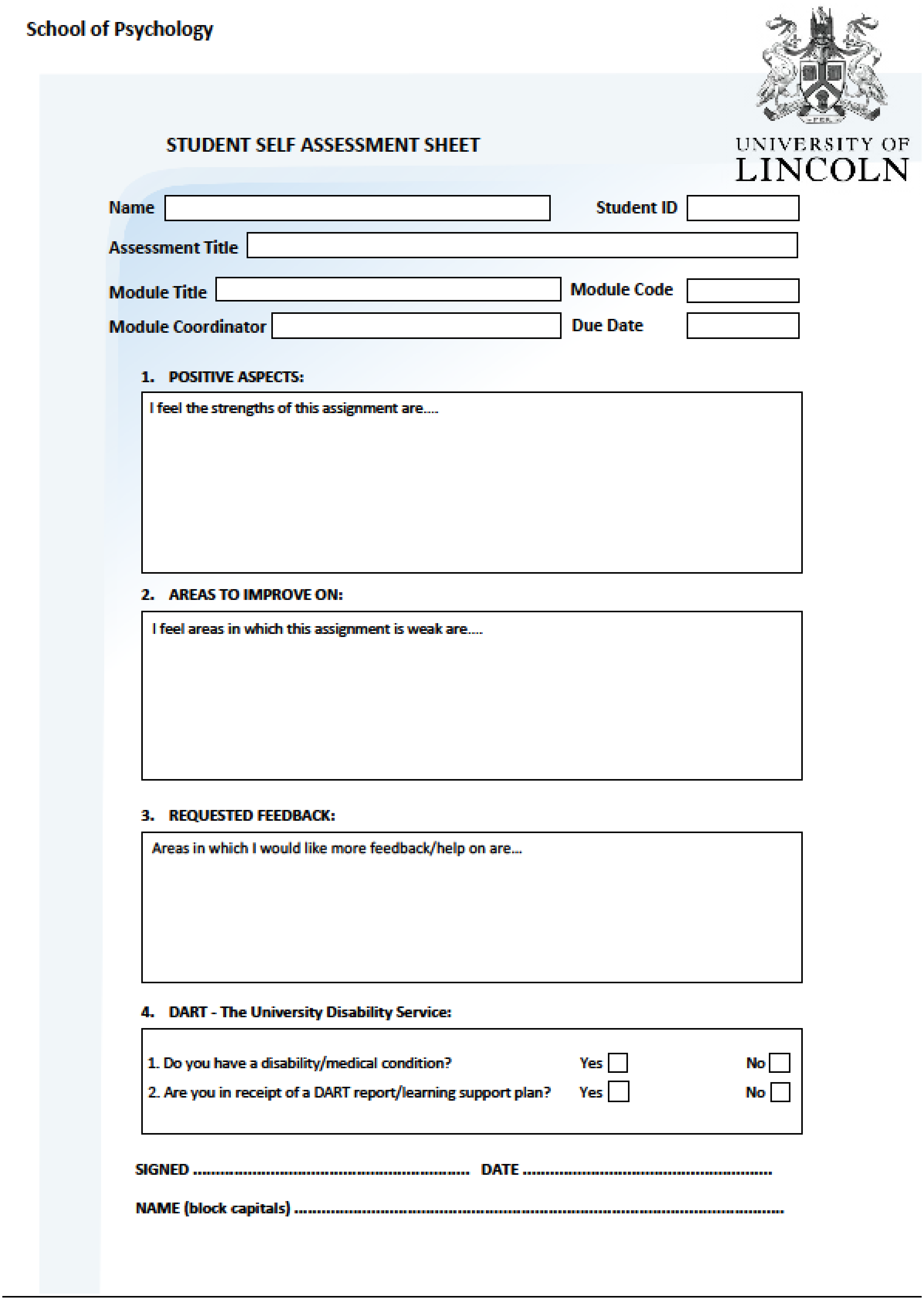
However, sometimes there were group issues with academic issues such as methods of teaching or unfair behaviour from staff when it came to information for revision where we have been able to help. On occasion with group meetings we've been able to facilitate meetings between groups of students and staff of the course in the presence of the Vice President Academic Affairs to try and resolve an issue informally rather than create fifteen or so complaints of the same area. These areas are also usually where staff and students could resolve the issue if there was a conversation rather than a formal route of academic complaints or reviews.

What we're aiming to do to improve the academic experience:

- This year the Students' Union will work to put the pound back into the pocket of students. One aspect of this is to create a partnership between the University and the Students' Union College of Arts Representative to ease the pressures of printing costs linked to achieving a good grade in different courses across the college.
- Work with the School of Psychology to demonstrate the benefits of the redrafted Assessment and Feedback forms within the School of Psychology, with the view to encourage others to take steps to introduce a similar mechanism.
- Investigate an electronic attendance monitoring system, with the aim of possibly piloting a system using student cards, within the largest lecture theatres where satisfaction with the current system and accuracy is most acute.
- We will continue to monitor progress of University strategic aim for qualified teaching staff in Higher Education. We will work initially with a focus on College of Science, then College of Arts as a second. Success should be the University reaching its target of 100% of qualified teaching staff in Higher Education by 2016.
- As part of the development of the University Strategy, the Executive Team of the Students' Union should influence space planning and timetabling strategy, bringing evidence and feedback from students when needed.
- A member of the Executive Team of the Students' Union on the group implementing 'Plan On' software to improve timetabling.
- Over the next year, work to create a Students' Union Support Service which will offer independent advice and support to students.
- To have Students' Union input to measurement of impact of launch and new features of Blackboard 9.1 SP14, working with EDEU and ICT.
- We will work with the School of Architecture and Design, to help achieve their NSS Plan 2013/14 objective with a pilot of the swipe card system as was used by School of Art and Design within the ThinkTank to allow students access to high demand space for extended times during assessments.
- Work with the University to implement its plan to strengthen the Personal Tutoring system and the support it gives students.
- The Union to include a person of expertise when collecting feedback on a very specific technical issue.
- To consider advancing the priority build of Library 2.0 to meet students' needs.
- Merge NSS and Student Engagement Plans to save on duplication of information and developments. Continue the recommendation from 13/14 to include student representatives in consultations of the NSS Action Plans and Student Engagement Plans.

- As a Union we still see work in strengthening the level of engagement between facilities, Estates and the SU.

Assessment and feedback forms for School of Psychology.



School of Psychology

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

STUDENT SELF ASSESSMENT SHEET

Name ☐ **Student ID** ☐

Assessment Title ☐

Module Title ☐ **Module Code** ☐

Module Coordinator ☐ **Due Date** ☐

1. **POSITIVE ASPECTS:**

I feel the strengths of this assignment are....

2. **AREAS TO IMPROVE ON:**

I feel areas in which this assignment is weak are....

3. **REQUESTED FEEDBACK:**

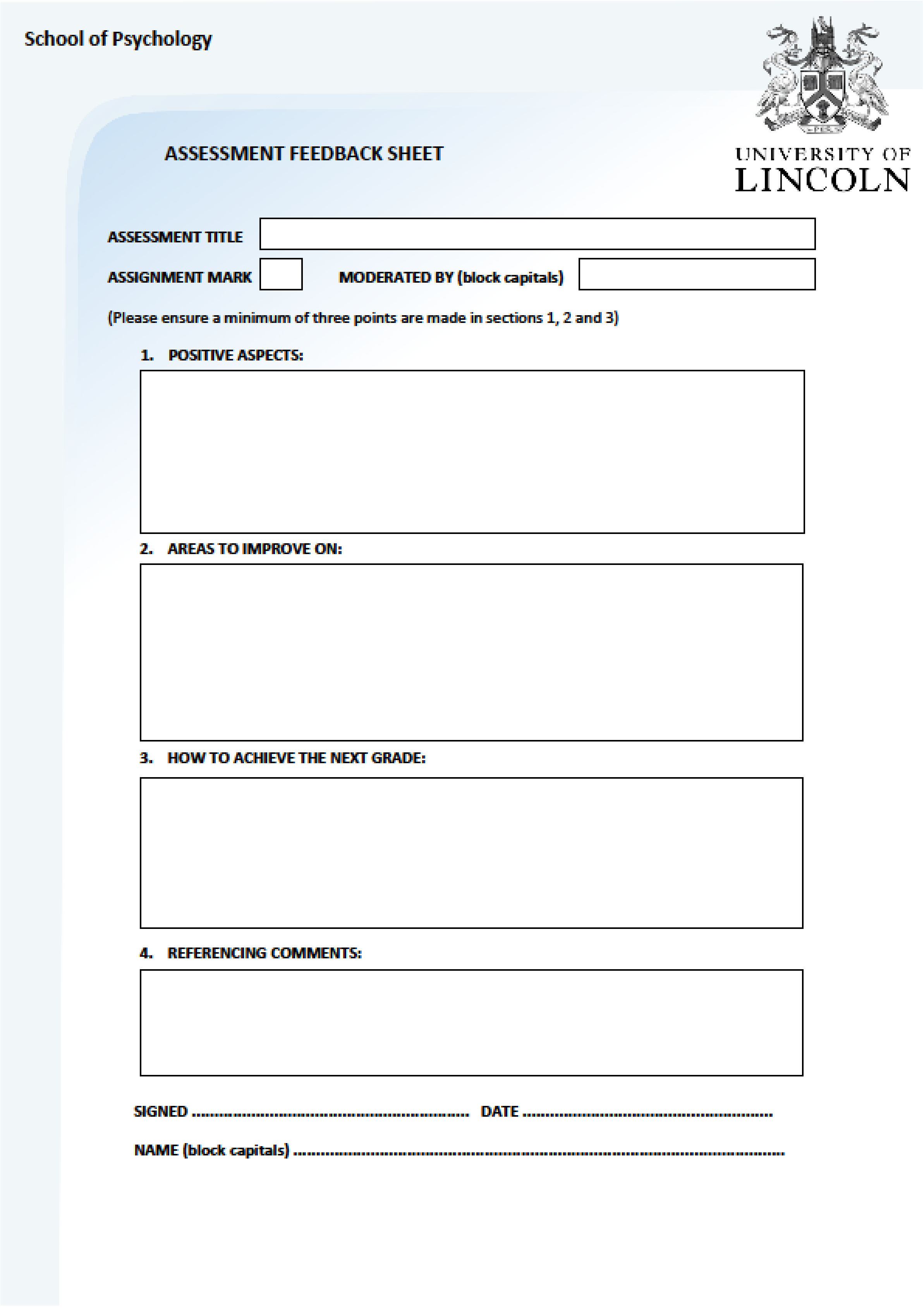
Areas in which I would like more feedback/help on are...

4. **DART - The University Disability Service:**

1. Do you have a disability/medical condition? Yes ☐ No ☐
2. Are you in receipt of a DART report/learning support plan? Yes ☐ No ☐

SIGNED .... **DATE** ....

NAME (block capitals) ....



School of Psychology

UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK SHEET

ASSESSMENT TITLE

ASSIGNMENT MARK **MODERATED BY (block capitals)**

(Please ensure a minimum of three points are made in sections 1, 2 and 3)

1. POSITIVE ASPECTS:

2. AREAS TO IMPROVE ON:

3. HOW TO ACHIEVE THE NEXT GRADE:

4. REFERENCING COMMENTS:

SIGNED .... **DATE** ....

NAME (block capitals) ....