Back to basics following disappointing year in the NSS

This year's National Student Survey has been disappointing with the overall satisfaction score at 78.1%, which is lower than last year's performance.

There has also been mixed success across the subject areas, though two courses scored 100% overall satisfaction: BA Primary Education and BSc Community Health Pathways both achieved full marks from their students, who had many positive things to say about the quality of teaching and learning, assessment and feedback and resources on these programmes.

Professor Jane Owen-Lynch, PVC for Teaching and Learning, said: "The NSS data is used in a number of ways to rank the University, and our performance in this impacts in many ways on our reputation. While some of our programmes returned excellent results, and staff in these areas should be congratulated, overall figures were disappointing.

"It is important that we all work together to ensure that we deliver an outstanding teaching and learning experience for all our students.

"I am already talking to Deans, Associate Deans and Directors of Teaching and Learning to look at how to improve areas where we have not done as well as we would like."

The NSS asks students about different aspects of their university journey, and gives them the opportunity to comment on the quality of their teaching and learning.

Each year, the University analyses their comments to help identify areas of excellence and also to inform improvement planning.

Prof Owen-Lynch said: "Some of the comments this year indicate that we need to get better at remembering the basics of good teaching and learning, and putting the students at the heart of what we do. We need to make sure that our teaching is always engaging and challenging, assessments are fair, feedback is helpful and returned on time, and we should respond to student requests for help promptly and appropriately. We also need to work more closely in partnership with our students, to listen and to act on what they tell us about their experience.

"More information on our expectations on staff in implementing the basics of teaching and learning will follow as we approach the start of a new academic year. It is important that we get the basics right so that the work we are doing on developing blended learning and adapting to the new environments has secure foundations."

Prof Owen-Lynch added that some of the issues flagged in this year's NSS comments were already the focus of projects across the university, such as tackling the environment so that it provides the resources our commuter students need when they are on campus, and improving student voice mechanisms to enable meaningful dialogue between students and staff about all aspects of our work.

Information about the NSS can be found here.

**Professor Jane Owen-Lynch
PVC Teaching and Learning**

Staff now able to set up their own Team
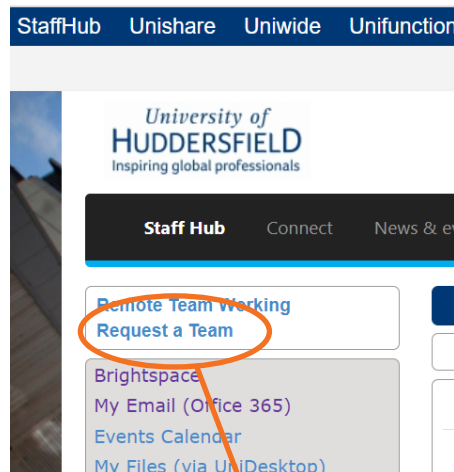
Follow the links here to request your own Teams space

Colleagues across the institution can now create their own Teams space via a link from the Staff Hub (left).

This takes you to a simple form which guides you through a few basic steps, and once the form is submitted, our IT staff set up the Teams area for you.

Our post-graduate researchers are already finding the resource helpful in managing external research meetings over the Summer period.

Teams for teaching are being created automatically, with automatic student enrolment, so staff should not request a module Teams teaching space through this link. As part of the automatic module Teams creation, each module in Brightspace will have a two way link to the relevant module Teams space, which can be used for collaborative learning from September.

Timetabling staff are working with Teams developers, and links to online classes using the Teams meetings platform will be embedded in student timetables, making it easy for students to 'join' a session with a couple of clicks.

Allen Sluggett, Head of Corporate Information Systems, said: "Our IT staff have been working hard all summer to ensure that the online platforms are ready for the new academic year, and as different features become live over the next year, we will let everyone know.

"Help in using the new platforms is available on the Moving Your Module Online module on Brightspace, which we will update as new features emerge."

Making sure our teaching materials are accessible for the new academic year

All digital materials in online spaces such as Brightspace or Teams need to be compliant with current Accessibility Regulations. This is to ensure they are accessible to everyone who uses these spaces, including people with disabilities. We need to remember to check that our teaching materials, including documents in Word, Excel and PowerPoint for example, are fully accessible.

Also all video/audio should have subtitles/transcripts and any digital content which we buy should also be compliant with the regulations. Andy Eachus, the University's Digital Skills Training and Accessibility specialist said that there is a lot to think about in ensuring that digital documents meet the requirements.

"There is a lot of help built in to the software we use as Microsoft and Adobe packages have accessibility checking functionality, we just need to remember to use it," Andy said.

"The software can flag up any accessibility issues, explain why they should be fixed and also go through how these fixes can be made."

We should all look for the "check accessibility" function in any materials used online to ensure that the content is compliant, inclusive to all and accessible for those using assistive technology. The University has invested in a product called Ally which helps staff identify accessibility issues when uploading material to Brightspace and recommends appropriate fixes - there is information on this in the MYMO module.

Further support and guidance on the legislation and how to make digital materials accessible can also be found on the Digital Accessibility section of iPark where you will also find the Digital Accessibility Quick Checklist.

You can also contact Andy Eachus who runs workshops in making learning accessible for all: a.eachus@hud.ac.uk.
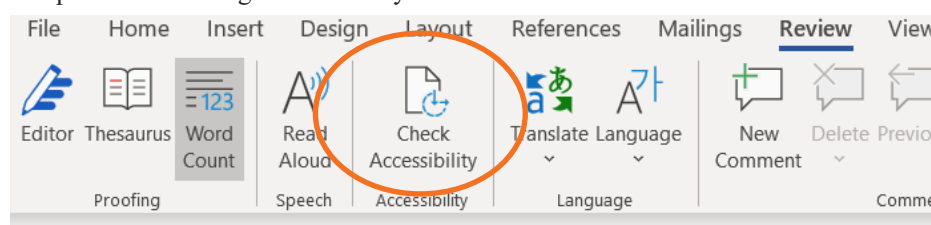
University funds new bursaries to tackle digital disadvantage

First year students from low income households are being offered bursaries to enable them to buy laptops to help with their studies from September 2020.

Funded through the Digital Access to Learning Fund, the University has committed £500K to provide 1000 e-vouchers which students can use to purchase laptops in a deal agreed with one of our approved suppliers.

The scheme is open to all new students whose household income is less than £25K, irrespective of their qualifications on entry. It is in addition to the Huddersfield Scholarship Scheme which provides £1000 bursaries to students from low income families if they satisfy qualifying criteria of 120 points from their level 3 qualification - though Scholarship students will not be able to apply to both funds.

Matt Mills, Director of Student Services, said: "As a result of Covid-19, we recognise that we will be making greater use of our digital estate for teaching and learning. We also know that about half of our students are from low income households and may not be able to afford the technologies they need to fully engage in our digital environments.

"For this reason we have enhanced our Digital Access to Learning Fund so that disadvantaged students can buy their own laptops."

The scheme will operate with an approved supplier which guarantees to have sufficient stock at or under the £500 price point, and eligible students will be asked to exchange their voucher through an on-line procurement system during the

first few weeks of the new academic year.

For continuing students, the University has added to its stock of laptops for loan through the Library, with extended loan periods available. Supporting the purchase of new laptops for first year students will take some of the pressure off the loan system, releasing more equipment for longer term loans.

Matt added: "We continue to work to make sure that there is safe access to PCs on campus through the library, PC laps and study hubs. The provision of laptops through the bursary or loan systems however does give our students the ability to continue with their studies if they are unable to travel to campus.

"Eligible students will be notified by the University about the scheme, and we hope it makes a real difference to those able to access it."