**Using Annual Review for Enhancement of the Student Experience**

**Case studies by Professor Sally Brown**

**Case study A**

**The Marine Forensic Science undergraduate course has been running for 10 years.**

**It has healthy recruitment of home students and other EEC nations, and a good proportion of international students including from Turkey, Russia, India and People’s Republic of China.**

**Retention and completion rates for first year students are about average for the university in question, but there is a sharp drop in second year to third year progression rates to well below the institutional average.**

**Of those who complete, a high proportion of European students go straight into employment, but only a small proportion of international students gain graduate level employment within six months of graduation.**

**Satisfaction rates as measured by evaluations suggest around 50% are very highly satisfied with the course, but around 25% make some very negative comments in the free response sections including:**

**“I didn’t feel any of my tutors really cared about my progress: they really couldn’t be bothered with me”.**

**“I didn’t get any really helpful feedback on my major project while it was in progress, but it was a real shock all the same to find I had failed badly”**

**“It was tough for me on this course: I felt different from everyone else and the other students more or less left me to myself. I am glad I passed but I wouldn’t recommend the course to any of my colleagues in my home country”.**

**“I was disappointed that little use was made of international reference material, with all of the examples coming from Europe”.**

**“All the assignments in the final year seemed to be bunched together, so I was trying to prepare for an exam at the same time when I was finishing my project”.**

**Case study B**

**The undergraduate course in Nanorobotics is a relatively new programme, with the first cohort completing last year and the numbers of student taking it are currently very small.**

**There is only one international student currently on the course in the final year, from Brazil. None of the students are female.**

**In the first three years of the course, all but one of the students completed the programme and around half have gained employment in the Nanorobotics field while the rest have gone on to further study or other graduate job roles.**

**Student satisfaction on the whole is high, but third year feedback isn’t as good as it was for the first two years.**

**Most of the academics teaching on the course are very experienced, but you have two PhD students who have only just started teaching on the course.**

**Free response comments included:**

**“For me the best thing on this course was the way the academic staff made it very clear that our success was very important to them and they were prepared to help us when we couldn’t understand what we were supposed to do”.**

**“It’s fantastic to be studying a new subject right at the beginning of the discipline and mostly my lecturers were teaching cutting edge material. Unfortunately some however were relying on lecture notes more appropriate for general engineering courses”.**

**The specialist labs we used at the start of the course were unfinished, but over the years I’ve studied here they have significantly improved.”**

**“The course was very hard and challenging in the first year, with too much complex material presented very early on and few opportunities to connect what we learned in the lectures to what we were doing in the labs”.**

**“I liked having the opportunity to test myself regularly using on-line multiple choice tests in the first year, but I wished we could have had them throughout the course”.**

**Case study C**

**The Masters level programme in Sustainable Automotive Design is a well-established programme that recruits around 15 students a year, with many students sponsored by well-known car manufacturers, including companies based in Japan, Germany and France. There is probably sufficient demand to double or triple the cohort size but there are practical issues associated with this that have prevented this from happening so far.**

**The gender mix is about 50/50 male and female students, and the average age of students is 32.**

**Almost all students have successfully completed the programme over the last seven years. Most who graduate from the programme return to their sponsoring employers.**

**Student satisfaction is divided: the majority who love the course give it very high ratings but year-on-year there are about 20% of students who are very critical indeed of the programme.**

**The academics teaching on the course are highly-qualified and much in demand, to the extent that staff regularly get poached by other universities, so there is quite a high rate of turnover.**

**Feedback from students includes:**

**“This course is so much better than my undergraduate studies back home and I have been delighted to study on the programme. However, I found living in this city expensive and there was a big culture shock for me when I arrived. It took me around two months before I felt comfortable here”.**

**“I like the lectures very much, but I find some of the workshop content rather old fashioned: it doesn’t reflect what we are actually doing in industry back home”.**

**“The assessment here is very different from back home, where there was much less writing and more oral examination. This is particularly difficult for me because I had difficultly adapting to studying in a European language (and sometimes more than one)”.**

**“I really value the amount of one-to-one support I get here: it really helps me to do my best but it was hard for me when the person who was supervising my project left the university and I struggled to communicate effectively with her replacement”.**

**Task one**

**What are the key emergent issues here?**

**What advice would you give to the Course Director for each programme?**

**What should the course director and his/her team be happy about?**

**What would you see as the priorities for improvement?**

**Which are the areas over which the Course Director and Course Team have control, and which lie at institutional level or beyond?**

**What would you include in an action plan for the programme for the next 2 and 5 years?**

**Task two**

**Thinking about your own programme, what learning points would you take from this exercise?**

**What do you feel confident you know about your course, and what further data do you think you need?**

**What would you put into an action plan for your programme to enhance the student experience?**

**Are there any issues you feel should be taken up at an institutional level?**