

University of Bolton UBIR: University of Bolton Institutional Repository

Education: Reports

Education

2008

An appraisal of the 2008 University of Bolton summer schools.

David A. Kitchener

University of Bolton, D.A.Kitchener@bolton.ac.uk

Digital Commons Citation

Kitchener, David A.. "An appraisal of the 2008 University of Bolton summer schools.." (2008). *Education: Reports*. Paper 3.
http://digitalcommons.bolton.ac.uk/ed_reports/3

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Education at UBIR: University of Bolton Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education: Reports by an authorized administrator of UBIR: University of Bolton Institutional Repository. For more information, please contact ubir@bolton.ac.uk.



An Appraisal of the 2008 University of Bolton Summer Schools

Dr. David Kitchener

October 2008

Contents

	Page
Introduction	4
Methodology	6
Results.	
1. The Bolton Business School	6
2. The School of Arts, Media and Education	6
Findings.	14
Conclusions	14
Recommendations	15
Addendum	15
References	16

Tables and figures

	Page
Table 1. Retention data comparison of end of academic years 2007 to 2008	4
Table 2. Business School Summer School feedback	7
Figure 1. BBS Summer School Workshops Feedback	9
Table 3. Arts, Media and Education Summer School feedback form	12

Appendices

Appendix A - Summer School feedback form	17
Appendix B - Bolton Business School. Key Dates for Your Diary	19
Appendix C - Revision Schedule._School of Health & Social Sciences	21

Introduction.

This report provides an appraisal of the 2008 University summer schools to determine their efficacy as an instrument to meet students' developmental needs. Their introduction is not a new approach but one that has been encouraged to be developed to further increase retention rates.

The University has an enviable reputation within the HE sector as a supporter of widening participation. The University's *Strategic Plan 2006 – 2012* notes the high percentage of young full time first degree entrants from NS-SEC classes 4-7 but retaining categories of students traditionally unlikely to undertake degree level study and who may be under-prepared for academic rigour remains a challenge. Table 1 below numerates the situation and informs the challenge for the University. Though it will quickly be seen there has been improvements in student retention, the overall pattern over the two academic years indicates similar trends at a level which needs to be addressed further.

Table 1. Retention data comparison of end of academic years 2007 to 2008

UG = First Degree only

Full-time 1st. Year U/G Students							
School	Full-time 1st year U/G loss 2006-07	1st yr. F/T U/G Actual Students @ end of 07	Loss as % of total students 2007	1st yr. F/T U/G Actual Students @ 31 Jul 08	Target loss (max.) 2008 (Benchmark = 14%)	W & DS @ 31 Jul 08	Loss as % of total students 2008
AME	52.8	307.4	14.7	261.3	37	37.9	12.7
BBS	24.5	181.5	11.9	191	27	39.5	17.1
BEE	21.16	154	12.1	172.7	24	19.1	10.0
BLI	4	23	14.8	19	3	5	20.8
CMR	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
GCC	38.5	228.5	14.4	262.5	37	27.5	9.5
HSS	67	399.5	14.4	383.5	54	68	15.1
TOTAL	<u>207.96</u>	<u>1293.9</u>		<u>1290</u>	<u>181</u>	<u>197</u>	

Full-time: all others

School	Other F/T loss 2006-07	Other F/T Actual Students @ end of 07	Loss as % of total students 2007	Other F/T Actual Students @ 31 Jul 08	Target loss (max.) 2008 (Benchmark = 14%)	W & DS @ 31 Jul 08	Loss as % of total students 2008
AME	86.6	579.46	13.0	947	133	134.5	12.4
BBS	76	395	16.1	524	73	71	11.9
BEE	52.4	409	11.4	692	97	87.5	11.2
BLI	21.5	134.67	13.8	186.5	26	37	16.6
CMR	2	26	7.1	48	7	2	4.0
GCC	61	330.33	15.6	489	68	91.5	15.8
HSS	140.5	857.5	14.1	1049	147	157.5	13.1
TOTAL	440	2731.96		3935.5	551	581	

Part-time Students

School	Part-time loss 2006/07	P/T Actual Students @ end of 07	Loss as % of total students 2007	P/T Actual Students @ 31 Jul 08	Target loss (max.) 2008 (Benchmark = 14%)	W & DS @ 31 Jul 08	Loss as % of total students 2008
AME	165.6	1059.3	13.5	998.9	140	142.6	12.49
BBS	178.5	1639.8	9.8	1227	172	235.5	16.10
BEE	231.8	1269.86	15.4	1285.6	180	268.9	17.30
BLI	8	67.5	10.6	110	15	13	10.57
CMR	1	7	12.5	5	1	2	28.57
GCC	57	374	13.2	156.5	22	43	21.55
HSS	219	1151.5	16.0	1180	165	242	17.02
TOTAL	860.9	5568.96		4963	695	947	

- last year students in the last semester of their course on a non standard academic year (Feb. enrollers) were categorised as part time
- ** The BEE student numbers are up because there are a number of Engineering withdrawals which were categorised as GCC last year
- *** The 2006/7 numbers now include the written off from students who did not return after the 2005/6 summer break.

Summer schools are one small part in the jigsaw of enhancing student retention and as will be seen a mostly positive strategy. However, it is important to note that the scope and depth of the investigation is somewhat limited because of a lack of data forthcoming from Schools. After numerous requests for information it would appear only the Business School and the School of Arts, Media and Education had records of attendance.

Methodology

A simple questionnaire (appendix A) of 25 questions inviting via a Likert scale of 1 to 5 levels of statement agreement was used via telephone contact followed by an opportunity for interviewees to contribute an opinion on any aspect of the summer schools. Complete confidentiality was assured at the start of the interview and it was made clear they could refuse to partake or withdraw at any stage. Responses to statements were recorded simply as ticks so there is no record of individuals against statements. The research design and implementation was approved by the School of Arts, Media and Education's Ethics Committee.

It is accepted that the Likert approach invites apparent quantitative tabulation via a more subjective and therefore qualitative judgment from respondents and therefore reliability and validity can be compromised (Bañuelas, and Antony, 2007). Allen et al (2007) also note issues of addressing neutrality (scored as 3 on my version) which alludes to a level of agreement which the interviewee may not have felt. Heine et al (2002) suggest there are difficulties in a formal pro forma of recognising cultural differences, an area not considered in this study.

Whilst recognising such limitations the data collated and presented here from a small sample base is offered as an indicative appraisal that manages to tease out trends and issues. The next section tabulates by School the responses juxtaposed with a short commentary.

Results.

1. The Bolton Business School

Academic staff provide results tutorials on the 16th and 17th of June and two study skill/improvement sessions, a traditional approach of taught sessions over a prescribed time which attracted 17 students some of whom attended more than one session. Sessions were delivered by Ruth Coward, the Arts, Media and Education Student Experience Officer and divided into *Preparing for Exams* and *Preparing for Assignments*, both choices available on the same day and split between morning and afternoon. Appendix B is the flyer given to students who were also reminded of the sessions via email.

To appraise the efficacy of the taught sessions, 13 replies via telephone interviews were recorded. Two students declined to be interviewed and one student could not be contacted.

Table 2 below provides a summation of responses against each question.

Table 2. Business School Summer School feedback

Rate the items below using the following scale:

1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Unsure, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly agree

I. OUTCOMES	Scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
Number of scores against each question:					
1. The Summer School broadened my understanding of concepts and principles in my field of study.	0	2	3	5	3
2. The Summer School improved my ability to successfully complete assignments.	0	1	3	4	5
3. The Summer School significantly improved my study skills	0	1	3	4	5
4. I am clear as to why my studies were not meeting the course requirements	0	0	3	0	10
5. The material presented in the Summer School was relevant to my studies	0	0	2	6	5
6. I feel confident my level of academic performance has been improved	0	0	3	6	4
7. With the new skills I have learnt I would expect my grades to improve.	0	0	2	9	2
8. I have practiced at home some of the skills taught	0	0	3	5	5

II. LECTURES	Scale				
9. Staff provided examples of good practice	0	0	3	6	4
10. Staff were aware of my specific needs	0	0	3	10	0
11. There were opportunities to discuss my specific needs.	0	0	8	5	0
12. The sessions reflected the things I need to improve upon.	0	0	4	4	5
13. The level of the sessions was appropriate to my needs.	0	0	3	6	4
14. My intellectual curiosity was stimulated	0	0	3	5	5
15. The sessions were long enough.	0	0	2	2	9

16. The learning materials were well organised.	0	0	3	4	6
17. I was able to broach any subject relevant to my needs	0	0	5	5	3
18. Staff were readily available for Q&A outside the taught periods	0	0	11	1	1

COMMUNICATION	Scale				
19. I was given sufficient notification to make plans to attend	0	0	0	2	11
20. With the new skills I have learnt I would expect my grades to improve.	0	0	0	4	9
21. I was clear of the times and dates of the sessions	0	0	0	1	12

VIII. OVERALL SATISFACTION	Scale				
22 Overall general support was good.	1	0	0	8	4
23. The Summer School was well organised.	1	0	0	8	4
24. The Summer School addressed my study needs.	0	0	3	6	4
25. Overall, the Summer School met my expectations.	0	0	3	6	4

IX. COMMENTS
26. What suggestions do you have for improving the summer school?

“More on exam techniques”

“Children unattended and bored between sessions”

“Not subject specific enough. Too general”

“More subject specific sessions”

“The sessions really helped me to understand what I was doing wrong”

Commentary

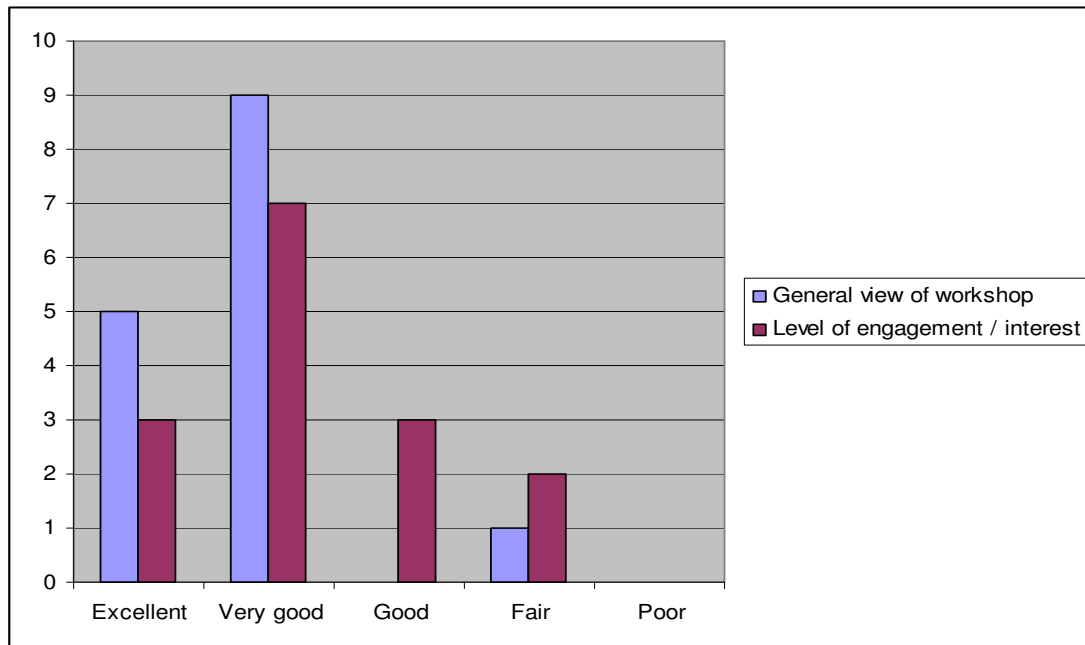
It is a credit to the staff that “4. I am clear as to why my studies were not meeting the course requirements” with a 10 score against the highest level agreement correlates strongly to “7. With the new skills I have learnt I would expect my grades to improve” with a 9 score to a level of 4 assent. Clear evidence here of developmental needs being recognised and responded to. This is further collaborated by “7. With the new skills I have learnt I would expect my grades to improve” with 9 of the 13 scoring at the highest 5. Oddly, “The Summer School

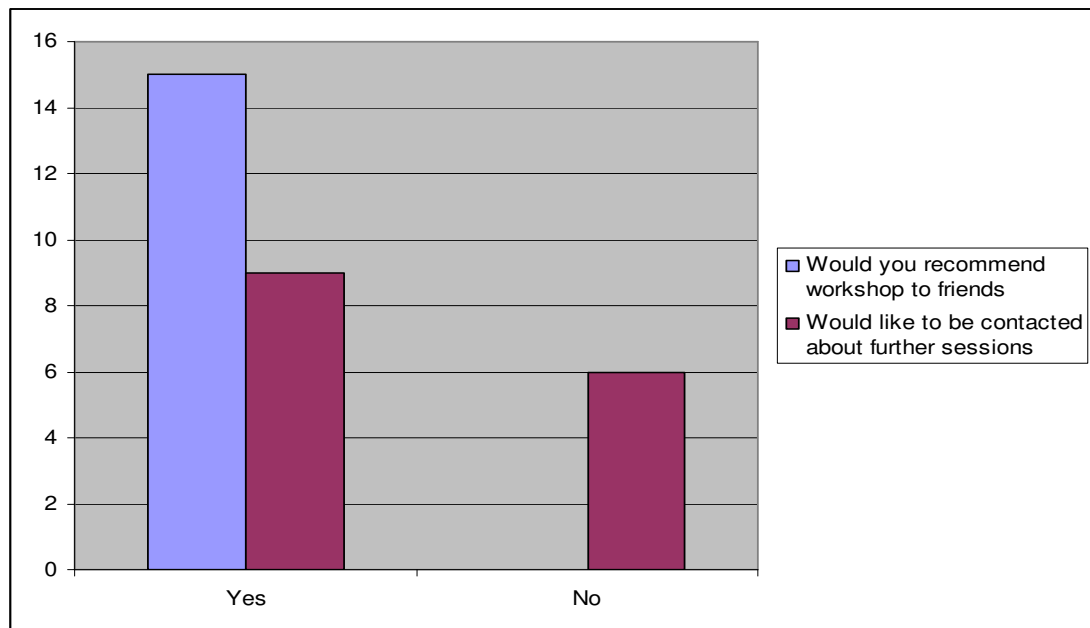
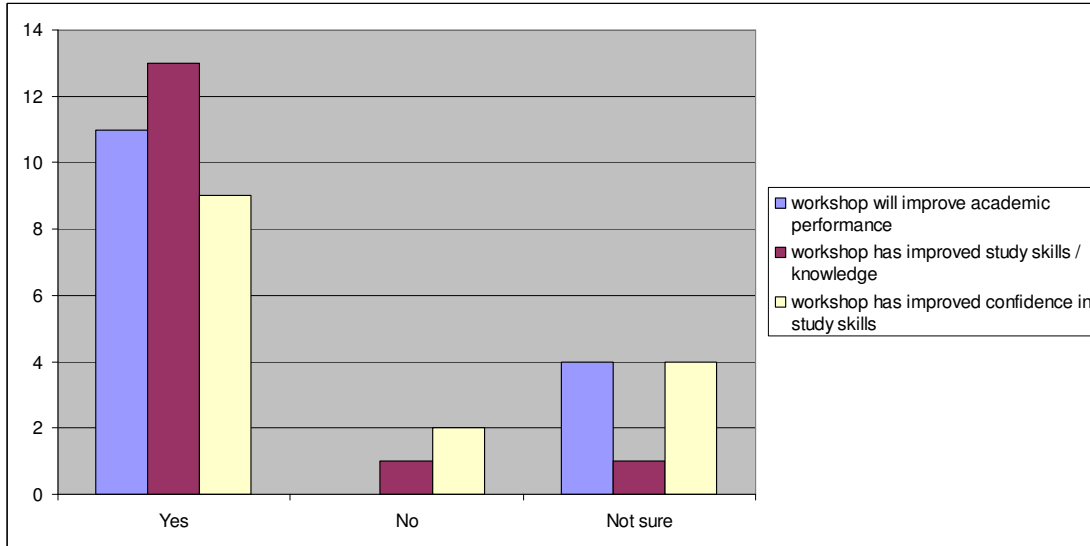
broadened my understanding of concepts and principles in my field of study” did not score as well but when this apparent anomaly was queried, respondents felt that the question appertained to specialist subject knowledge rather than generic study skills. It was good to note many were practicing the new found skills at home. The Communication section indicates strongly that students were well informed of the times and dates of the sessions.

It was perhaps unfair after so many positive scores that the invitation to comment mostly produced negativity. The “*More subject specific sessions*” was shared by several who wanted what amounted essentially to subject revision sessions.

Ruth Coward produced her own appraisal of the sessions she delivered, figure 1 below, which mostly complements and reinforces the results of this study:

Figure 1. BBS Summer School Workshops Feedback





The School also helpfully forwarded a list of 96 students who attended academic counseling, 10 of whom attended the taught sessions. Interestingly, 8 didn't receive counseling but still attended the workshops. Lastly, in addition to the workshops, tutors were available for two days in the summer to offer advice on the basis of the "make good sheets" sent out to referred and deferred students.

2. The School of Arts, Media and Education

Results

The School adopted a more flexible model than the Business School with sessions mixing email correspondence with individual tutorials and taught classes. When interviewing students, several had to be prompted to appreciate they had taken part perhaps not recognising the summer school as a separate entity but rather the contact was seen a continuum of good practice within their studies. This perception was reinforced by one tutor who maintained email contact throughout the summer and found that the majority of students who had work to complete were in contact.

The School's approach was strongly content-based with elements of study skills taught but the emphasis was upon reinforcing subject knowledge. The closeness to the end of the second semester teaching to the revision sessions provided continuity to the student learning experience emphasised by several interviewed who had no idea they had attended revision sessions, their perception being they were just receiving further guidance as was usual throughout the year. The transcript of results were examined as part of this study and they clearly showed this was a targeted group needing significant additional guidance, the majority having failed at least one module and several were borderline passes for a third classification. Such an approach has considerable merits as a sensitive approach which avoids the stigmatisation of failure but the occasional lack of appreciation that this was an organised revision opportunity questions the extent the sessions were communicated. Lastly, and it might be coincidental, but as a cohort they were much harder to contact than the Business School's because several had part time jobs, the NatWest (2008) study suggesting four in ten students will have to work part-time in order to support their university studies confirming the trend. It's worth noting too Callender's (2006) correlation of the negative effects of part time employment on degree success.

24 students were recorded as attending one or more of the sessions, individual and/or group. Three telephoned had no recollection of the event whatsoever, one declined to be interviewed and three were unavailable which equates to 17 interviews. Because approaches were very much individualised, statement 18 was not considered.

Table 3 below tabulates the responses:

Table 3. Arts, Media and Education Summer School feedback form

Rate the items below using the following scale:

1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Unsure, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly agree

I. OUTCOMES	Scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The Summer School broadened my understanding of concepts and principles in my field of study.	0	2	2	6	7
2. The Summer School improved my ability to successfully complete assignments.	0	0	2	6	9
3. The Summer School significantly improved my study skills	0	2	3	6	6
4. I am clear as to why my studies were not meeting the course requirements	0	0	0	4	13
5. The material presented in the Summer School was relevant to my studies	0	0	3	4	10
6. I feel confident my level of academic performance has been improved	0	2	3	5	7
7. With the new skills I have learnt I would expect my grades to improve.	0	0	4	5	8
8. I have practiced at home some of the skills taught	0	0	5	5	7

II. LECTURES	Scale				
9. Staff provided examples of good practice	0	0	1	6	10
10. Staff were aware of my specific needs	0	0	1	7	9
11. There were opportunities to discuss my specific needs.	0	0	0	7	10
12. The sessions reflected the things I need to improve upon.	0	0	2	7	8
13. The level of the sessions was appropriate to my needs.	1	0	2	7	7
14. My intellectual curiosity was stimulated	0	2	2	8	5
15. The sessions were long enough.	0	0	1	6	10
16. The learning materials were well organised.	0	0	1	6	10
17. I was able to broach any subject relevant to my needs	0	0	1	6	10
18. Staff were readily available for Q&A outside the taught periods					

COMMUNICATION	Scale				
19. I was given sufficient notification to make plans to attend	0	4	5	6	2
20. With the new skills I have learnt I would expect my grades to improve.	0	2	2	4	9
21. I was clear of the times and dates of the sessions	0	4	5	4	4

VIII. OVERALL SATISFACTION	Scale				
22 Overall general support was good.	0	2	1	7	7
23. The Summer School was well organised.	0	2	3	6	6
24. The Summer School addressed my study needs.	0	2	4	6	5
25. .Overall, the Summer School met my expectations.	0	2	4	6	5

IX. COMMENTS
26. What suggestions do you have for improving the summer school?

“Left felt feeling my work was rubbish”.
 Able now to link the practical aspects to the theory”.
 Good. Helped. Better understanding of what I needed to do.”
 “Feel more confident now”

Commentary.

One disaffected student’s negativity stands out and slightly skews what was obviously for the majority a very successful exercise. The high 13 at a level 5 score for “4. *I am clear as to why my studies were not meeting the course requirements*” strongly suggests students are more focused on what is required of them which is supported by the 10 agreeing to “5. *The material presented in the Summer School was relevant to my studies*” at a level 5 of agreement. This also suggests the strength of the sessions were the emphasis upon individualised approaches. The ‘lectures’ category also scores high with a succession of 10s at the highest level agreement reflecting what must have been a planned approach organised around recognised areas of developmental need. It is ironic and almost perverse therefore that ‘Overall Satisfaction’, though very positive, didn’t score higher.

Findings

The evidence is strong that both Schools' revision weeks, though delivered to slightly different formats, have been enormously beneficial to the students. There is a strong theme in both sets of data of students being engaged and staff being supportive. In both cases too, it is clear that students have been identified as needing additional support, the Business School supplementing the generic study skills elements with tutorials and counseling but also offering help to referred and deferred students. Arts, Media and Education adopted a similar approach though their emphasis was upon revisiting areas of need and providing individual guidance, study skills possibly being addressed but not as a separate activity.

In terms of enhancing retention, the high scoring statements "*20. With the new skills I have learnt I would expect my grades to improve*" and *4. I am clear as to why my studies were not meeting the course requirements*" for both cohorts bodes well for the future. Students would now seem to have a fuller understanding of areas of study to be addressed and one would expect them to carry such insights into the future.

What is perhaps disappointing is the low attendance for both Schools. Table 1 at the start of this paper indicates a level of support need beyond these sessions. However, to balance this apparent discrepancy, this study found evidence of staff providing email support in their own time which served the same purpose as the formalised sessions.

It would be a reasonable conclusion to suggest other Schools provided comprehensive and highly effective summer school sessions but sadly none were able to provide names of attendees so their value could not be evaluated. The School of Health and Social Sciences provided a revision schedule (appendix C) which lists a very wide range of specialist sessions but student names apparently were left unrecorded.

Conclusion

The remit of this study was to investigate across the University the effectiveness of the summer schools in supporting students mostly designated as vulnerable in terms of academic attainment. Its findings have been limited to data from two Schools though both indicate the sessions are of significant value to students. It would seem from the 30 telephone interviews that only one student has decided to leave. One cannot be sure whether the other 29 were in danger of departing but the fact that they mostly found the summer school experience positive strongly suggests the sessions were worthwhile and will have raised self esteem. It is reasonable therefore to surmise that they should be considered as a highly effective mechanism to enhance retention.

Recommendations.

- Summer schools should be promoted more extensively and widely
- All deferred and referred students should be invited to attend.
- They should be viewed as a continuum of the student experience, not an 'add-on' at the end of the academic year
- Staff should maintain records of attendance as part of the process of tracking student progress

Addendum

Ruth Coward, the Student experience Officer for Arts, Media and Education, is conducting a three year longitudinal study into the student experience for her M.Phil. The data she is accruing will be an invaluable supplement to this small scale study and will elicit in much greater details issues shaping retention.

References

- Allen, I. Elene., and Seaman, C. A., (2007). Likert Scales and Data Analyses. *Quality Progress*, 40, 64-65
- Bañuelas, R. and Antony, J. (2007). Application of Stochastic Analytic Hierarchy Process within a Domestic Appliance Manufacturer. *The Journal of the Operational Research Society*, 58, 29-39.
- Callender, C for Universities UK (2006), *Part time students and part time study in higher education in the UK. Strand 3: a survey of students' attitudes and experiences of part time study and its costs 2005/06*. London: Universities UK.
- Heine, S., Lehman, D.R., Kaiping, P. and Greenholz, J. (2002), What's wrong with cross-cultural comparisons of subjective Likert scales?: The reference-group effect. *Journal of personality and social psychology*. vol. 82, n°6, pp. 903-918
- NatWest (2008), *Student Living Index*. London: NatWest Bank

Appendix A

Summer School feedback form

Rate the items below using the following scale:

1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Unsure, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly agree

I. OUTCOMES	Scale				
1. The Summer School broadened my understanding of concepts and principles in my field of study.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The Summer School improved my ability to successfully complete assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The Summer School significantly improved my study skills	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am clear as to why my studies were not meeting the course requirements	1	2	3	4	5
5. The material presented in the Summer School was relevant to my studies	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel confident my level of academic performance has been improved	1	2	3	4	5
7. With the new skills I have learnt I would expect my grades to improve.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have practiced at home some of the skills taught	1	2	3	4	5

II. LECTURES	Scale				
9. Staff provided examples of good practice	1	2	3	4	5
10. Staff were aware of my specific needs	1	2	3	4	5
11. There were opportunities to discuss my specific needs.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The sessions reflected the things I need to improve upon.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The level of the sessions was appropriate to my needs.	1	2	3	4	5
14. My intellectual curiosity was stimulated	1	2	3	4	5
15. The sessions were long enough.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The learning materials were well organised.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I was able to broach any subject relevant to my needs	1	2	3	4	5
18. Staff were readily available for Q&A outside the taught periods	1	2	3	4	5

COMMUNICATION	Scale				
19. I was given sufficient notification to make plans to attend	1	2	3	4	5
20. The information about the scope of the sessions was clear	1	2	3	4	5
21. I was clear of the times and dates of the sessions	1	2	3	4	5

VIII. OVERALL SATISFACTION	Scale				
2.2 Overall general support was good.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The Summer School was well organised.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The Summer School addressed my study needs.	1	2	3	4	5
25. .Overall, the Summer School met my expectations.	1	2	3	4	5

IX. COMMENTS
26. What suggestions do you have for improving the summer school?

Bolton Business School

Key Dates for Your Diary

11th June 2008: Undergraduate Awards and Progression Board

Module marks ratified and progression decisions made.

16th and 17th June 2008: Tutorials for all students

10.00-12.00 and **1.00-3.00** Drop-in tutorials for all students to discuss marks and any “make-good” work.

Programme	Location
International Tourism Management Tourism Management	M1-19
Human Resource Management	M2-26
LLB and Law	M1-20
Accountancy	M2-27
HND/C Business Studies	M2-28
BA Business Studies – first years	M1-18
BA Business Studies – others	M2-25
Marketing – first years	M1-18
Marketing – others	M2-25
English Foundation Programme	M2-26
Access to HE (Business)	M2-24

26th August 2008: Improvement sessions for continuing students

10.00-12.00: Preparing for Examinations

1.00 - 3.00: Preparing for Assignments

Both sessions will be held in D2-28.

W/c 1st September 2008: Resubmissions

Exam resit week. Timetable will be available on the web.

Refer/defer assignment deadline 2nd September 2008.

W/c 6th October 2008: Teaching starts for continuing students

Teaching week 1.

If you have selected your modules, you will receive a timetable over the summer. Please check your university email inbox for details.

Appendix C

Revision Schedule
School of Health & Social Sciences

Day	Discipline	Time	Activity	Staff / room number
Tuesday 26 th August	All Psychology Programmes	11am-1pm	Specific advice for revision from module tutors	Module tutors for core year 1 modules
Tuesday 26 th August	All Psychology Programmes	11am-1pm	Specific advice for revision from module tutors	Module tutors for core year 2 modules
Tuesday 26 th , 27 th , and 29 th August	All Sport Programmes		Revision guidance and advice	Mark Moran and Andy Fallone
Thursday 28 th August	All Sport Programmes		Revision guidance and advice	Mark Moran, Andy Fallone and Paul Jones
Tuesday 26 th – 29 th August	All Biology Programmes		Revision guidance and advice	Ann Kolodziejski and Ruth Hall