



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

'The menu is not the meal': Unpacking qualitative data from the NSS

Mark O'Hara

Lynn Fulford

Robert Pascall

Téhjuana Dawkins

Programme

Overview of the UK and institutional contexts (5 minutes)

Commentary upon the comments and the survey (10 minutes)

Plenary discussion / questions (10 minutes)

The national & institutional contexts

The quasi-marketisation of UK Higher Education, the rise of league tables and the impact of 'metrics'

'Cost sharing' (Scott, 2014)

Birmingham City University

The annual NSS autopsy

Course level / not 'big data' / on-going project

The NSS – A quick reminder

The teaching on my course

Staff are good at explaining things Staff have made the subject interesting
Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching
The course is intellectually stimulating
** Factored into Guardian and SundayTimes league tables*

Assessment and Feedback

The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance
Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair Feedback on my work has been prompt
I have received detailed comments on my work
Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand
** Factored into Guardian and SundayTimes league tables*

Organisation & Management

The timetable works effectively as far as my activities are concerned
Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively
The course is well organised and is running smoothly

Academic support

I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies
I have been able to contact staff when I needed to
Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices

Personal development

The course has helped me to present myself with confidence
My communication skills have improved
As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems

Learning Resources

The library resources and services are good enough for my needs
I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to
I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities, or rooms when I needed

Students' Union

I am satisfied with the Students' Union at my institution

Overall satisfaction

Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course
** Factored into NSS league table*

The NSS – A quick reminder

Who takes part?

How do students complete it?

Participation rates (at BCU)

Scoring system

The free text comments

NSS free text analysis: Process

Collation

Coding - Creation of categories into which all comments will fit. Counting the number of occurrences of each comment in each category.

Processing

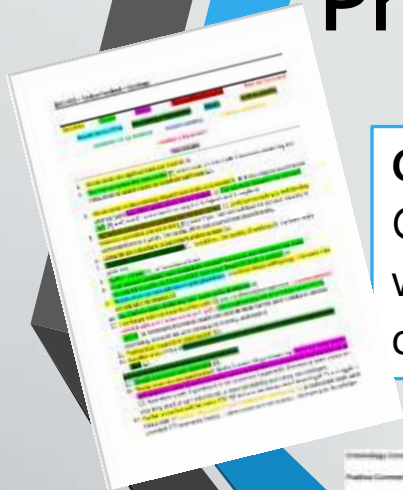
Inputting totals into MS Excel for the production of charts.

Analysis

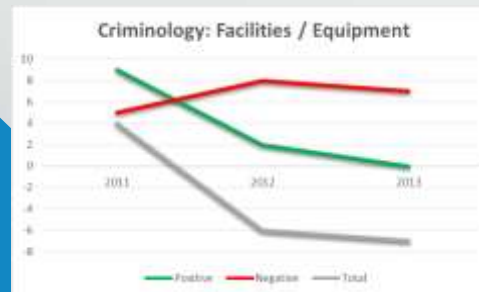
Interpretation of data and charts to identify patterns and trends.

Assessment

Provide possible causes for identified patterns and trends to inform decision makers.



Comments	2011	2012	2013
Positive Comments			
Facilities / Equipment	8.5	2.0	0.0
Staff / Support	5.0	8.0	7.0
Other	0.5	0.0	0.0
Negative Comments			
Facilities / Equipment	0.0	0.0	0.0
Staff / Support	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0





NSS free text analysis: Coding categories

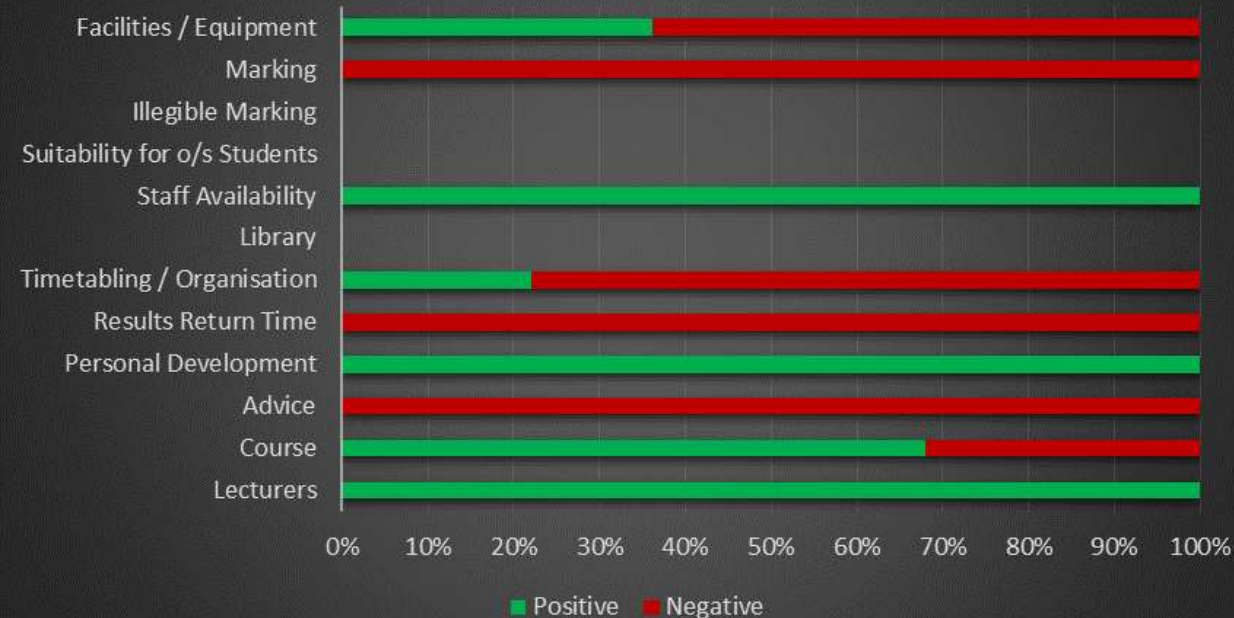
1. Lecturers
2. Course
3. Advice
4. Personal development
5. Results return time
6. Timetabling / organisation
7. Library
8. Staff availability
9. Suitability for overseas students
10. Legibility of marking
11. Marking fairness
12. Facilities / equipment

2011 Results – Criminology & Sociology



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

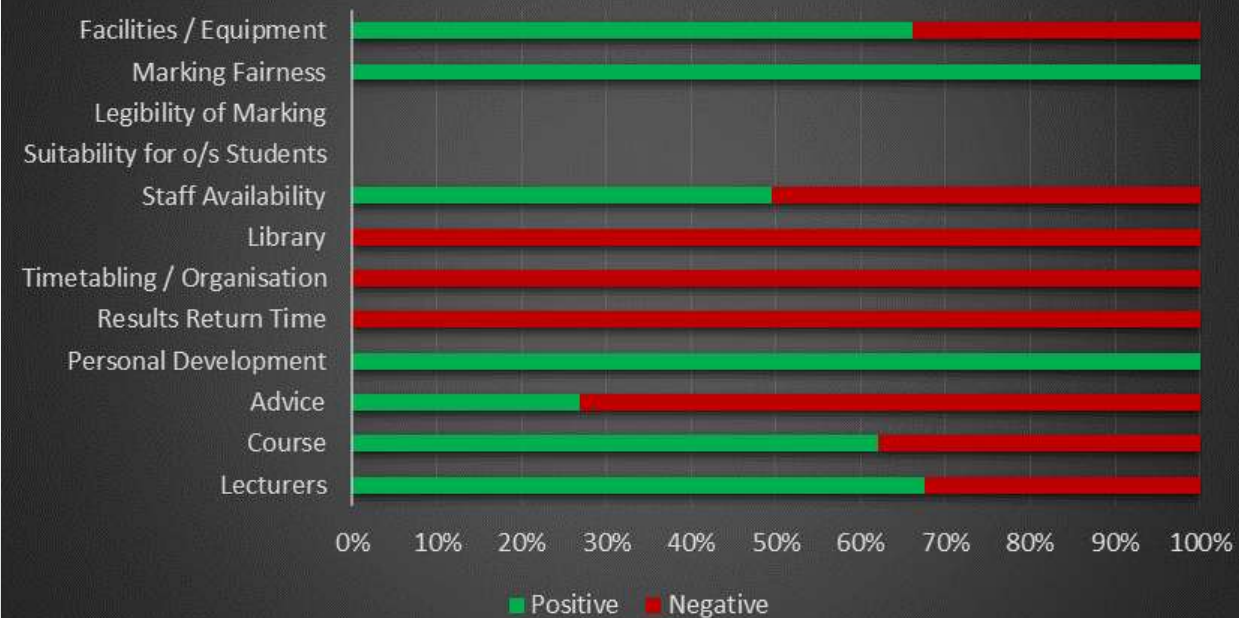
Sociology 2011



The main **positives** for Sociology in 2011 were 'Staff Availability', 'Personal Development' and 'Lecturers'.

Students were most **critical** about 'Marking', 'Results Return Time' and 'Advice'.

Criminology 2011



Criminology students gave **positive** feedback regarding 'Marking' and 'Personal Development'.

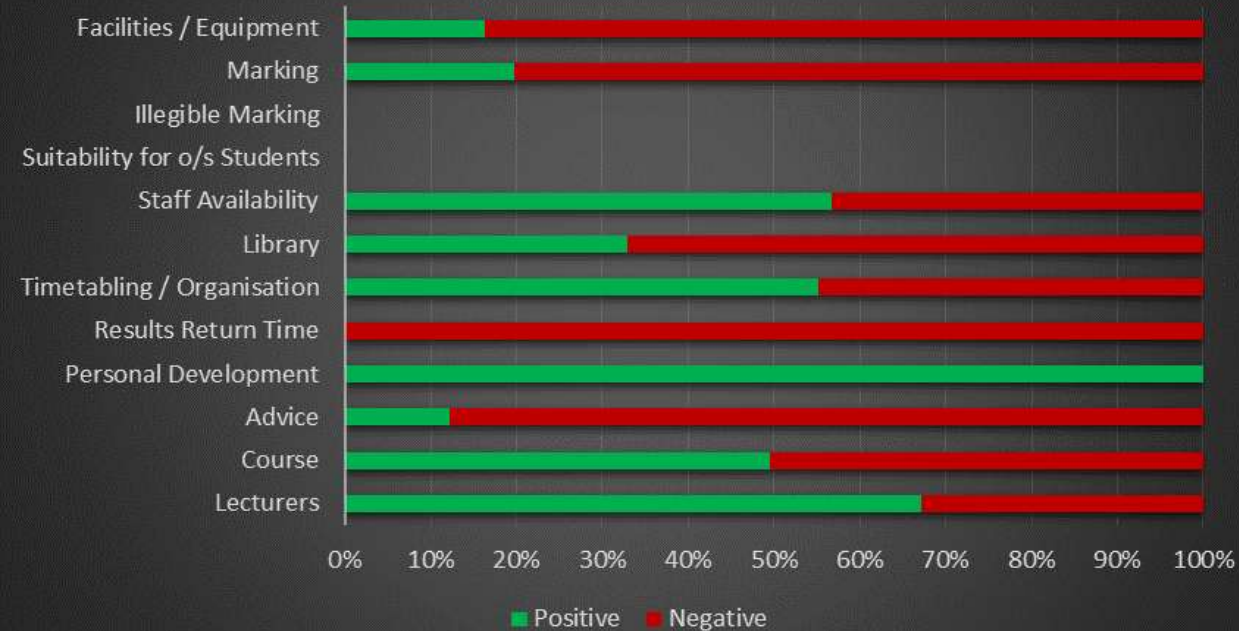
The main **negatives** were the 'Library', 'Timetabling / Organisation' and 'Results Return Time'.

2012 Results – Criminology & Sociology



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

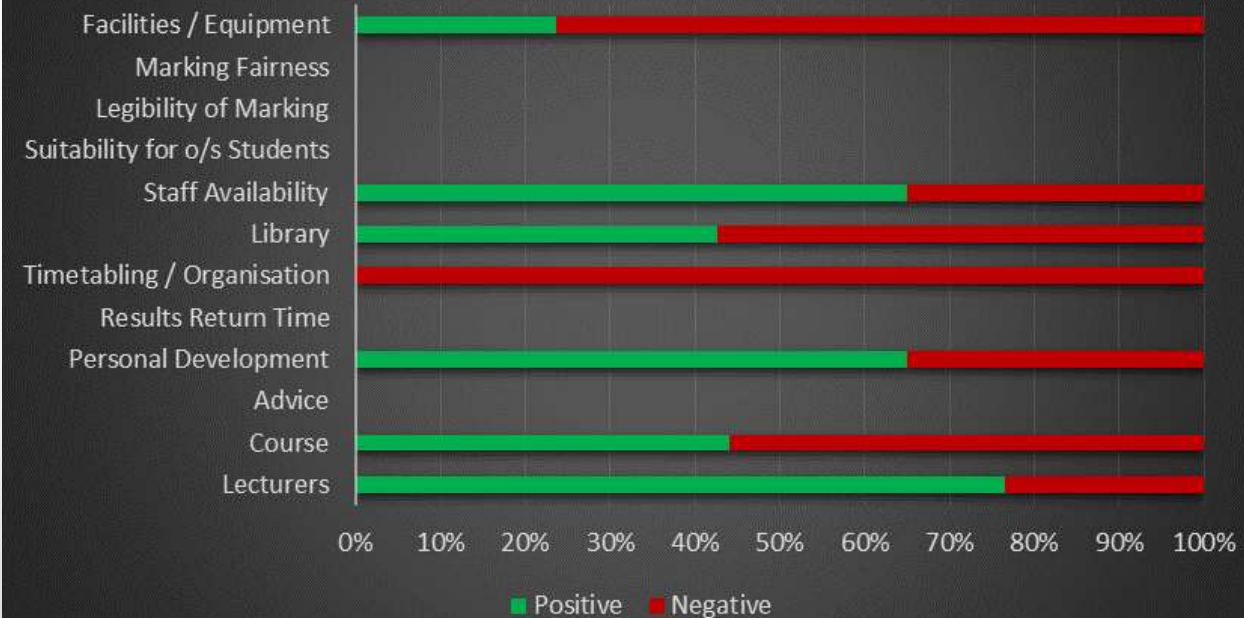
Sociology 2012



The main **positive** for Sociology in 2012 was 'Personal Development'.

Students were most **critical** about 'Results Return Time'..

Criminology 2012



Criminology students were most **positive** regarding 'Lecturers'.

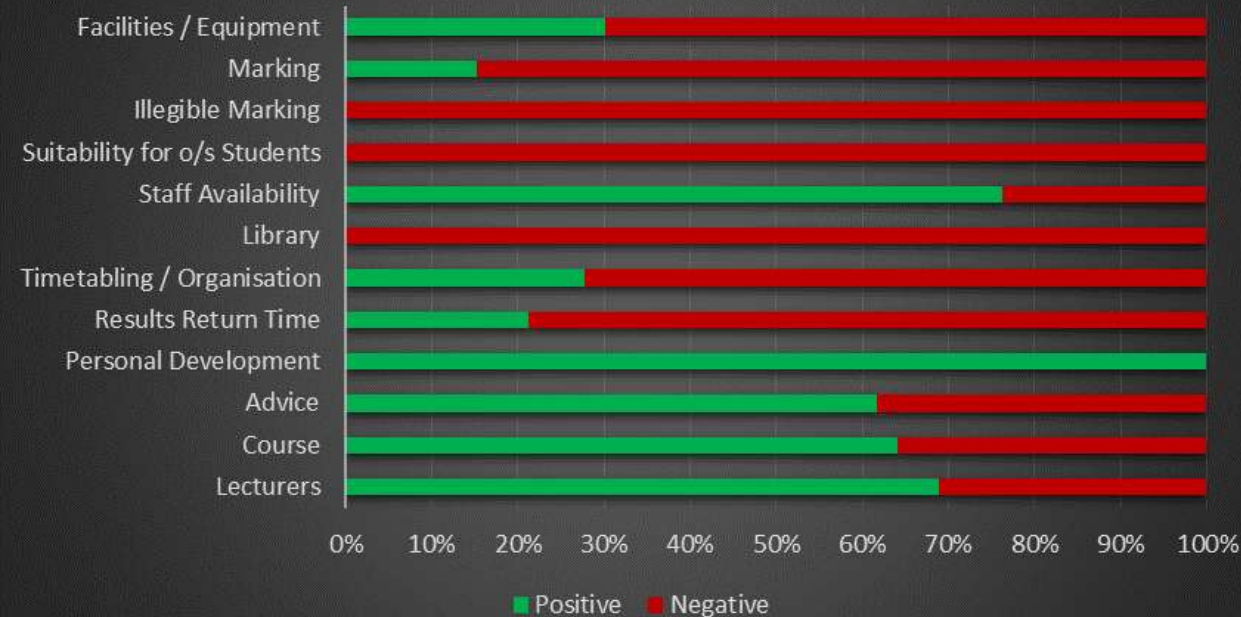
The main **negative** was 'Timetabling / Organisation'.

2013 Results – Criminology & Sociology



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

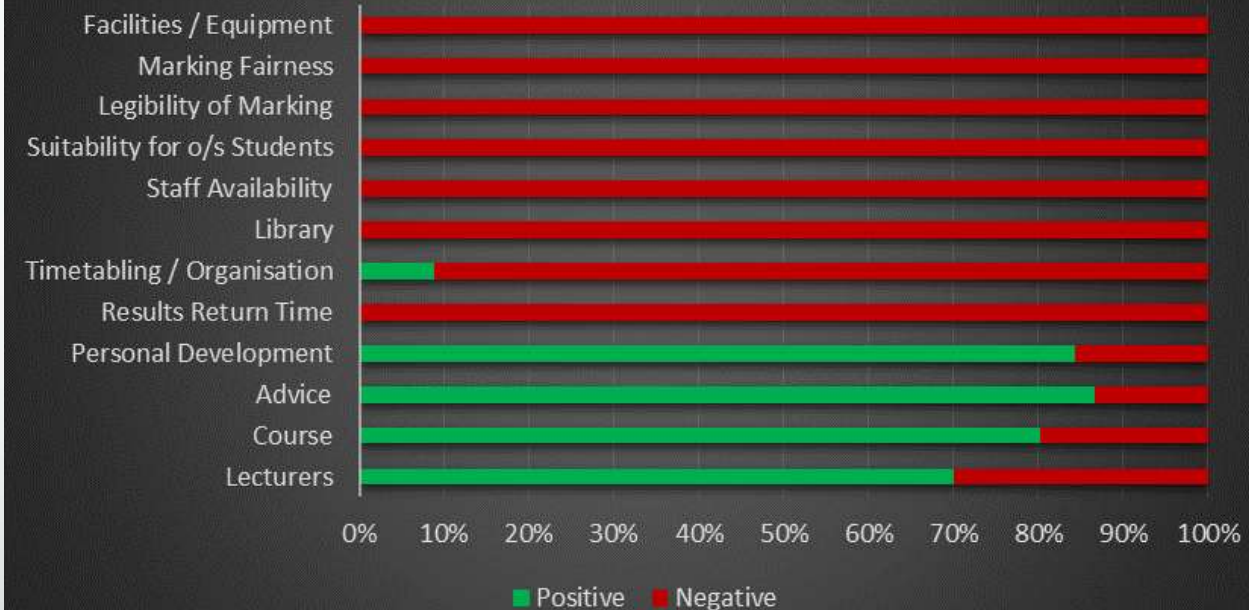
Sociology 2013



The main **positive** for Sociology in 2013 was 'Personal Development'.

Students were most **critical** about 'Marking', 'Legibility of Marking' and 'Library'.

Criminology 2013



Criminology students gave predominantly **positive** feedback regarding 'Personal Development', 'Advice', 'Course' and 'Lecturers'

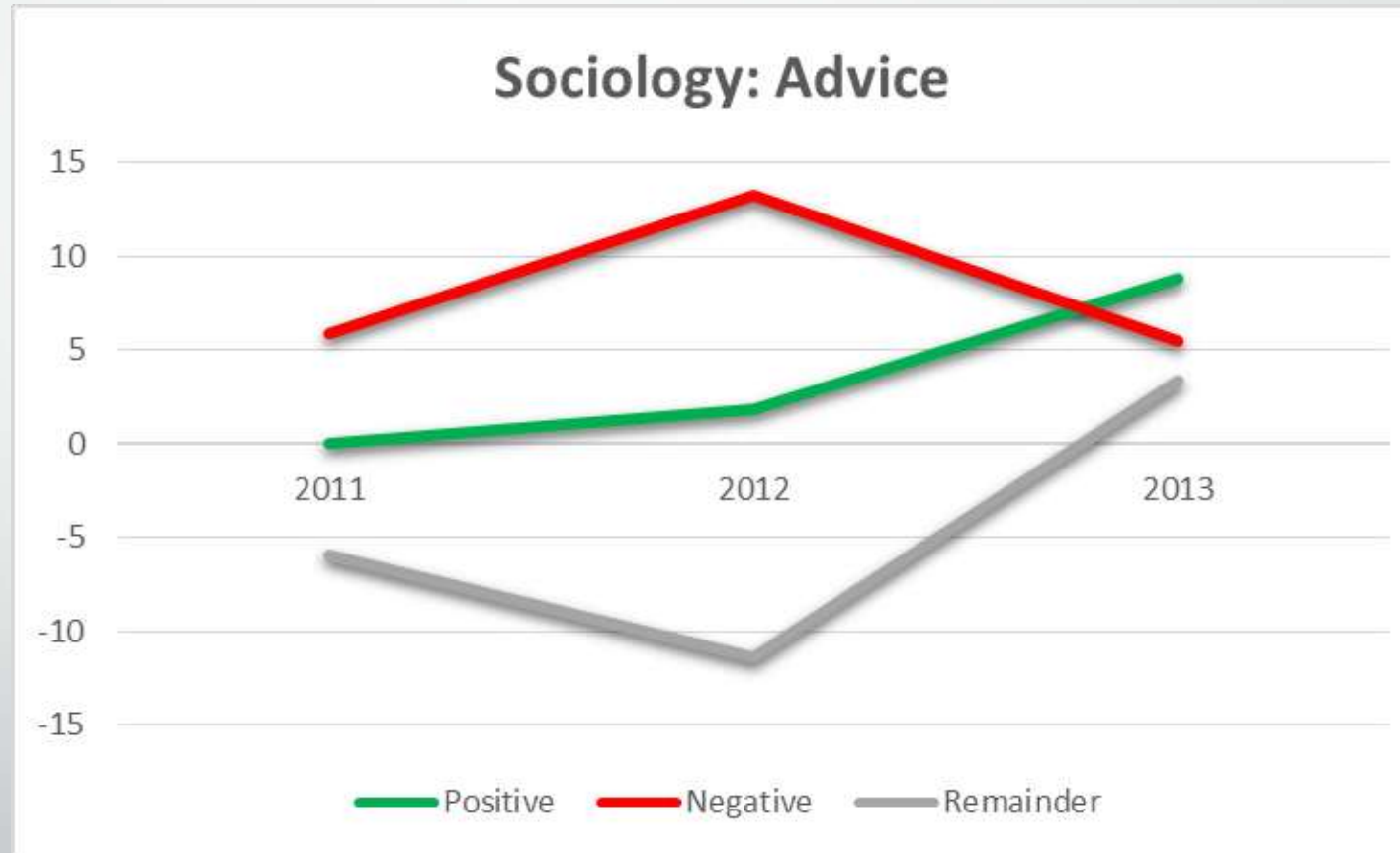
Students gave **negative** feedback for all other categories

Outcomes - Sociology

Positive feedback regarding the provision of advice in Sociology increased year on year.

And the number of **negative** comments fell to its lowest level in 2013.

The result has been a dramatic improvement in this category.



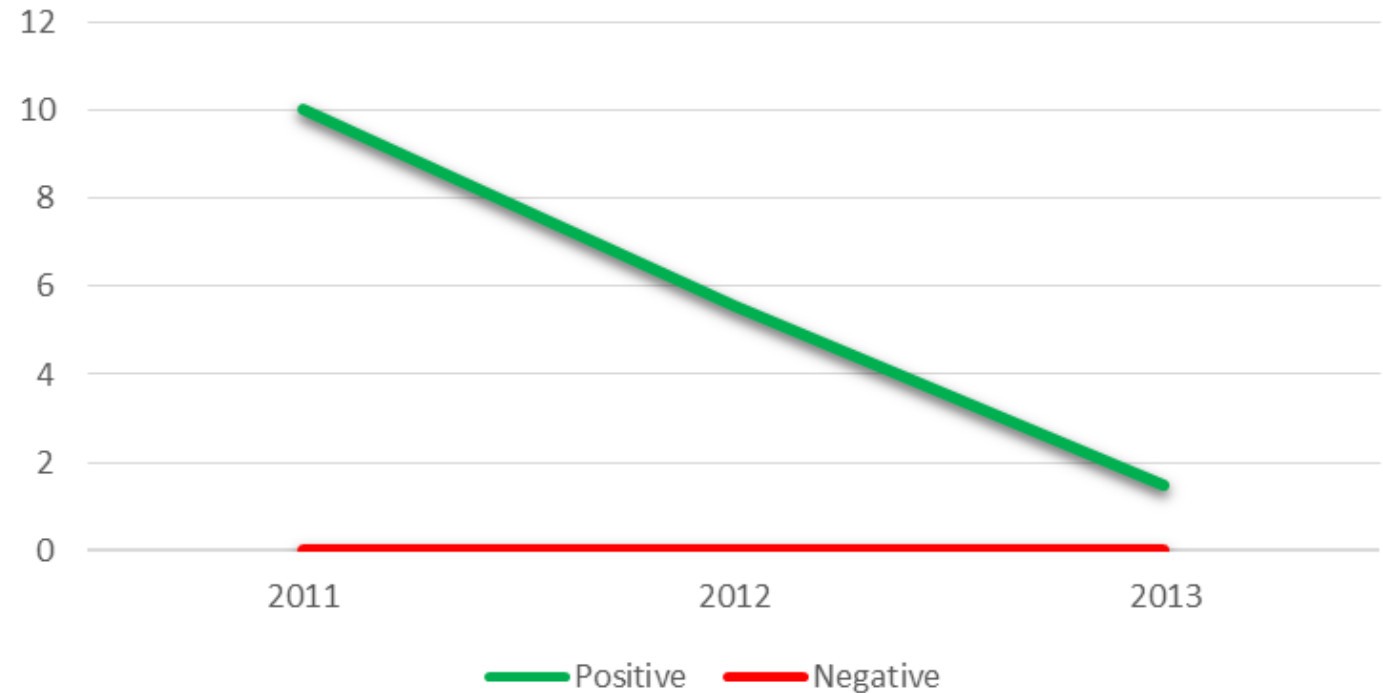
Outcomes – Sociology contd.

Positive feedback regarding Personal Development fell year on year.

And the number of **negative** comments remained at zero.

This resulted in a dramatic net decline in how students viewed their Personal Development on the course.

Sociology: Personal Development

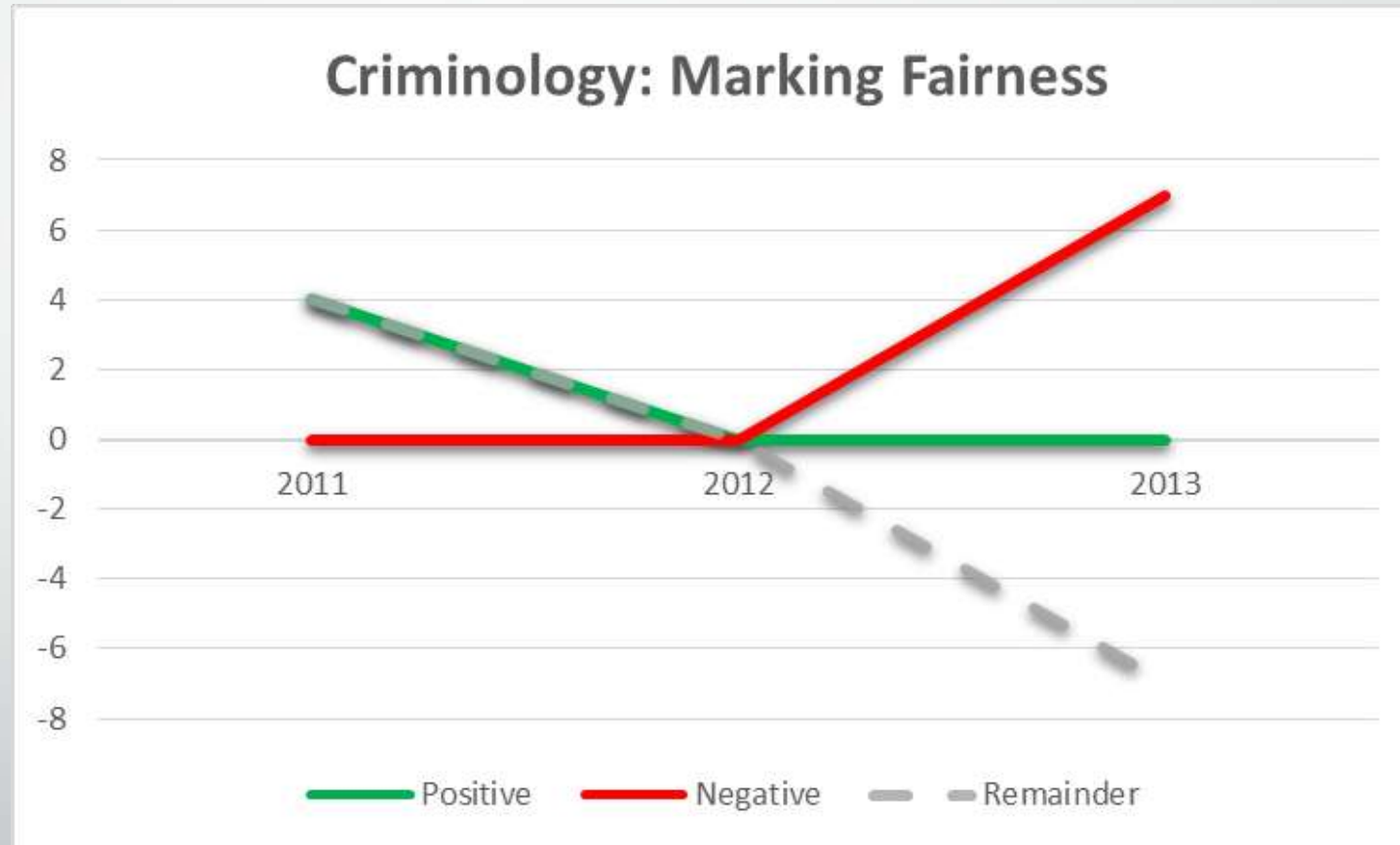


Outcomes - Criminology

Positive feedback fell to zero in 2012 and remained unchanged in 2013..

Negative feedback rose significantly in 2013 from zero in 2012.

The result is a swing from exclusively **positive** comments in 2011 to exclusively **negative** comments in 2013.



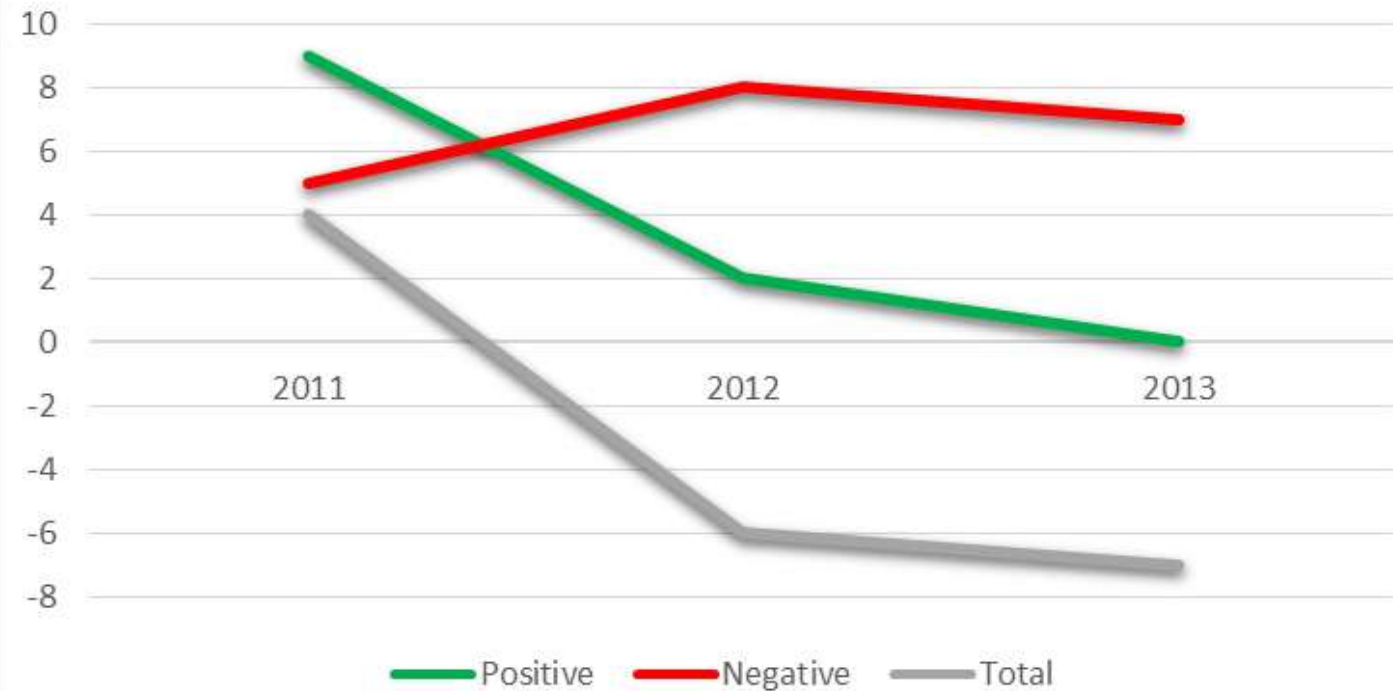
Outcomes – Criminology contd.

Positive feedback regarding Facilities / Equipment fell year on year.

And the number of **negative** comments rose in 2012 before falling slightly in 2013.

The result is a dramatic deterioration of sentiment towards the university's facilities and equipment.

Criminology: Facilities / Equipment





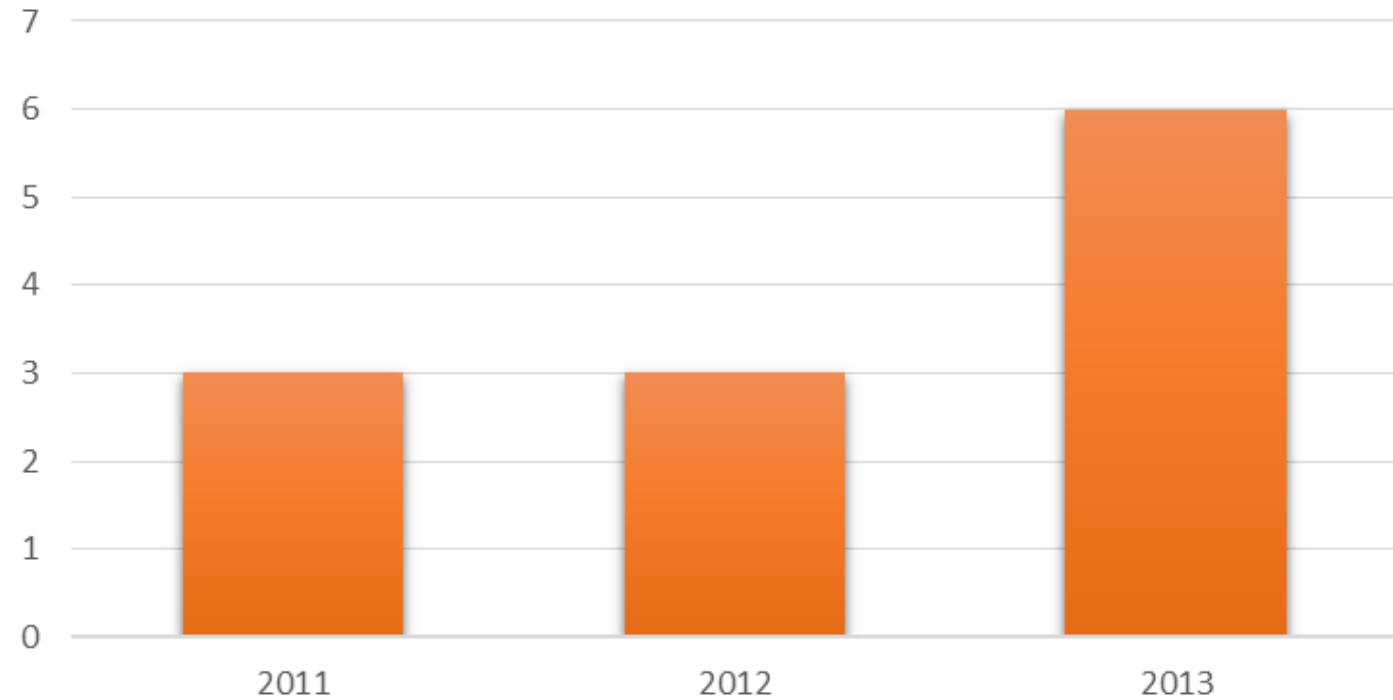
Impact of tuition fees?

2013 saw a sharp increase in the mention of 'fees' or 'value' in the survey.

Students completing the survey in 2013 began their courses in 2010 – the year that students protested the rise in the cap on tuition fees from £3000 to £9000.

Although this rise in fees did not apply to them, the subject of tuition fees and value seemed to cast a shadow.

Reference to 'Value'



Commentary



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

People treated more kindly than processes, generally (Stewart, 2014)

Not customers maybe, but customer-like?

A law of diminishing returns?

Plenary



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

Key points:

- caution (impact external & internal 'events')

Future directions:

- broadening and deepening
- sense checking
- changes to the NSS

Discussion / Q&A