As part of the MSOR April 2011 student engagement day a focus group was held in which the participants were invited to discuss aspects of their experience of statistics as part of their HE courses.

Active and enthusiastic discussions took place under the four general headings: the students' perceptions of statistics; the students' experience of statistics within their HE courses; what constitutes 'good teaching' of statistics and feedback in statistics.

At the end of the discussions arising from the first two of these headings the participants were asked to record their views. This was repeated after the second pair of headings and the session ended with the participants completing a short questionnaire.

The majority of the students taking part were on the second or third year of mathematics degrees that involved some statistics modules (more than 70% in both cases) and the overwhelming majority of them (87%) consider statistics to be part of mathematics.

The students' exposure to statistics, both before and during their degree courses, left something to be desired with half of them indicating that much of their experience consisted of putting numbers into formulae, with context and relevance unclear. This was particularly tedious and off-putting for them.

Their views on what good statistics teaching might comprise and how feedback might be obtained were interesting and will form the basis of a lunchtime discussion at the MSOR/CETL conference in September 2011.