

## GENERAL SYNOD

### Feedback from the July 2019 Group of Sessions

- The Business Committee agreed in their May meeting that General Synod members should be actively encouraged to provide feedback by providing an electronic feedback form. The form was circulated to members, staff and other attendees to General Synod on 15 July 2019 and it closed on 30 August 2019. This is an analysis of its main findings.

#### Overview of participants (Q1-Q3)

##### House

House of Bishops	9
House of Laity	83
House of Clergy	96

##### Age Group

18-25	3
26-35	4
36-50	39
51-65	99
66 or above	45

##### Province

Canterbury	125
York	63

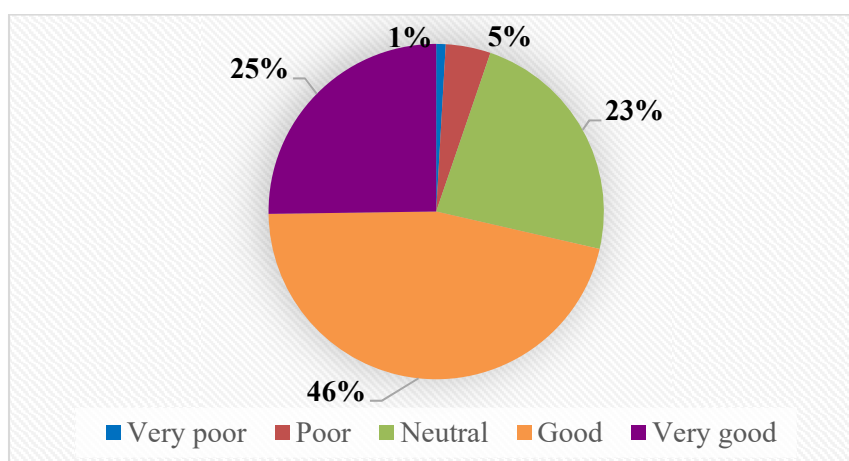
#### Rating of agenda items

##### Q4. How would you rate the following items on the Agenda?

	Very Poor (1)	Poor (2)	Neutral (3)	Good (4)	Very Good (5)	N/A	Total
Legislative Business	0	2	23	91	24	3	143
1. Formal Business: Opening Worship, Introduction and Welcomes; Appointments; Farewells	0	2	44	80	22	7	155
2. Report from the Business Committee	0	0	33	78	36	7	154
3. Presentation from the Mothers' Union Worldwide President	0	2	9	31	89	24	155

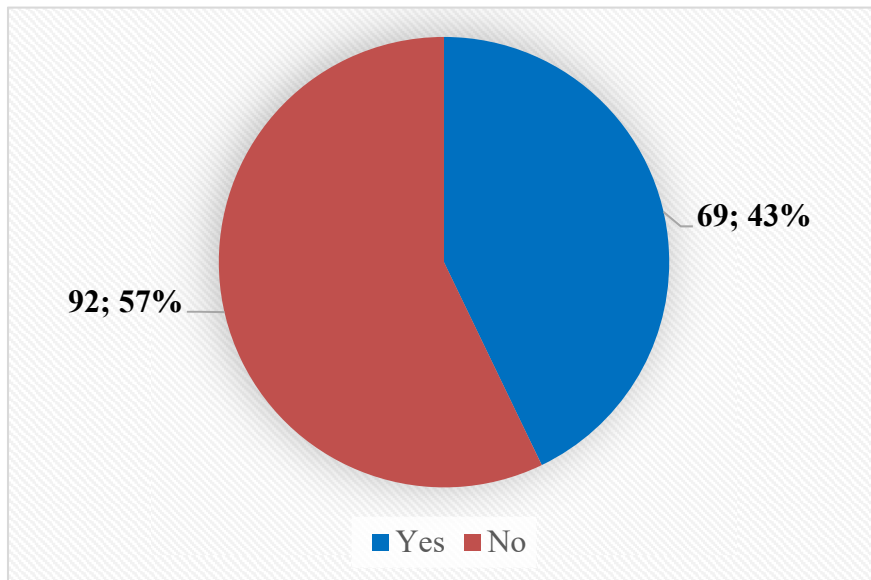
(items continued)	Very Poor (1)	Poor (2)	Neutral (3)	Good (4)	Very Good (5)	N/A	Total
4. Living in Love and Faith and Pastoral Advisory Group	3	19	43	51	24	12	152
5. Question Time (non Safeguarding)	2	8	39	69	26	10	154
6. Presidential Address	3	15	36	66	29	8	157
7. Responding to Serious Youth Violence	1	11	22	56	50	14	154
8. Clergy Wellbeing	1	3	37	75	26	12	154
9. Question Time (Safeguarding)	1	3	33	69	38	11	155
10. Safeguarding Presentation	2	2	15	70	56	11	156
11. Mission and Ministry in Covenant	3	15	25	71	35	7	156
12. Refugee Professionals	1	4	36	54	25	32	152
13. Archbishops' Council Annual Report	2	4	35	62	31	21	155
14. Triennium Funding Working Group	0	4	32	63	34	19	152
15. AC Budget	1	2	34	64	31	17	149
16. Mission-Shaped Church 15 Years On	2	7	29	72	25	18	153
17. 55th Standing Orders Report	2	5	62	42	6	33	150
18. Presentation on Setting God's People Free	1	10	38	57	31	16	153
19. Anna Chaplaincy	0	1	15	47	54	34	151
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>1268</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>3060</b>

Overall rating of the agenda



## Chairing and Speaking in Debates

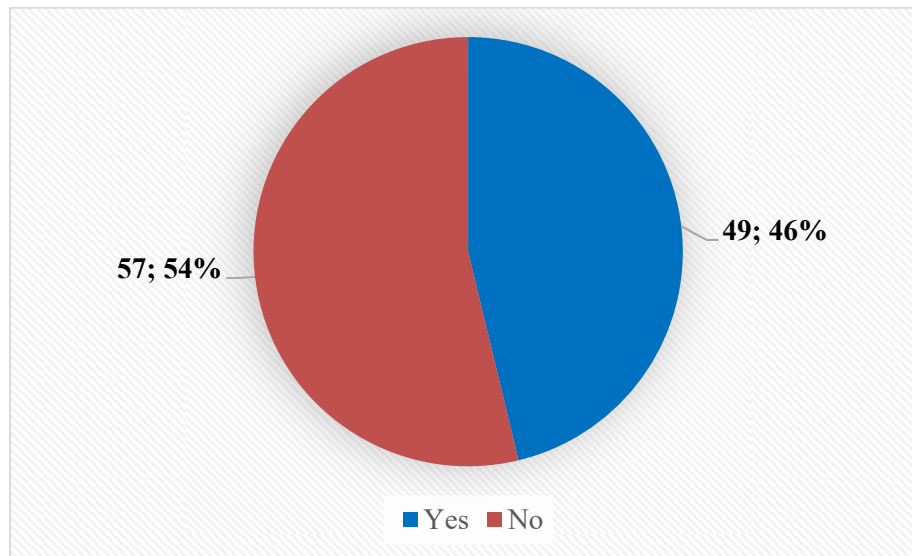
**Q5. Did you put in any Requests to Speak at this Group of sessions?**



**Q6. If so, please specify which item(s)**

There are 73 responses and they are evenly split across the agenda items.

**Q7. Were you called in any of these items?**



**Q8. If so, please specify which item(s) you were called in?**

There are 53 responses and they are evenly split across the agenda items.

**Q9. Do you have any comments on the chairing of the items on the Synod Agenda?**

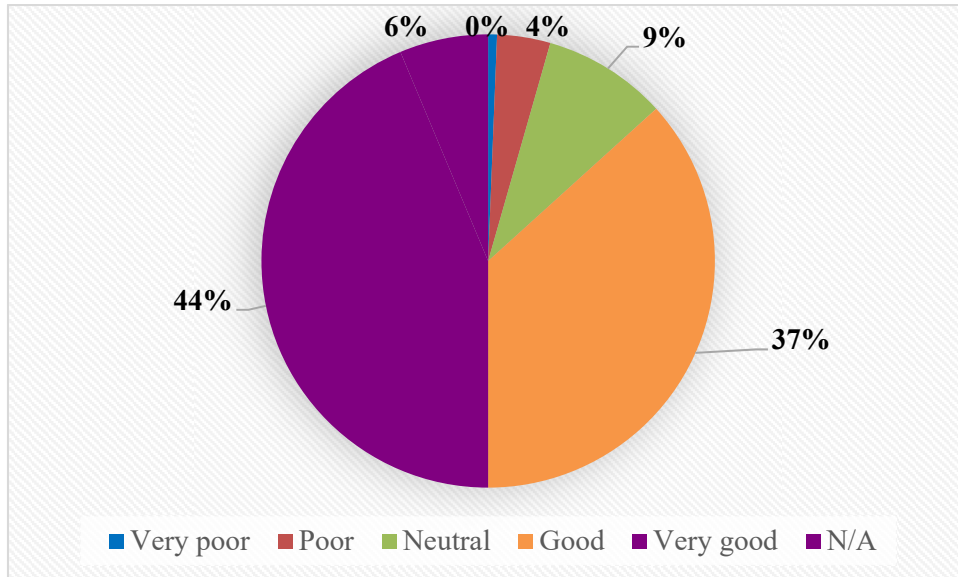
- The vast majority of the respondents reviewed chairs as 'very well done' and 'excellent,' using words such as 'confident,' professional,' 'punctual,' and 'efficient.' Some respondents acknowledged and appreciated the difficulty of the job.
- Some reported mixed views on chairs and questioned the grounds for selecting chairs. Some chairs were commented to be better at calling people from different theological traditions, while others were singled out for criticism, described as 'inexperienced' or 'very biased and unfair,' or 'hesitant and uncertain.' Sometimes the speaker's lack of questions was challenged, but at other times not.
- Most respondents observed a good variety of speakers, though some still find that certain people could 'book spots to speak.'
- Some speakers were called by the colour of their clothing. One respondent felt that this emphasised the difference between people in the core and in the margin, while another felt that this indicated a 'fairer playing field' for lesser-known people.
- Multiple respondents felt that CEYC representatives standing should be called because they do not have votes. In this light, making their voices heard is especially important.
- Multiple respondents thought that the debates focused too much on amendments that were not accepted, leaving too little time for debating the main motion. An example was the item on Serious Youth Crime item.
- Multiple respondents felt that the chairs mentioning the lack of time was a waste of time.
- Multiple respondents felt that the Houses of Bishops and Clergy, particularly the former, spoke more than the Laity. This created the perception that the Laity was not listened to.
- Two respondents felt that the chair moved the closure of the debate on several items prematurely, with one suggesting the need for a November session.

- One respondent thought that getting the reports back on the speakers' names and their frequency of speaking would help understand 'reality against perceived thoughts.'
- One respondent's maiden speech was not called, and this caused disappointment.
- One respondent suggested choosing speakers from each 'block' of seats for fairness.
- One respondent favoured shorter time limit from the start.
- Two specific instances that people reported dissatisfaction with the chair are: (a) a speaker asking Supplementary Question but being rebuked by the chair, and (b) a chair stopping a speaker when the word 'finally' was said.

**IT, Communications and Synod App**

**Q10. How would you rate the following?**

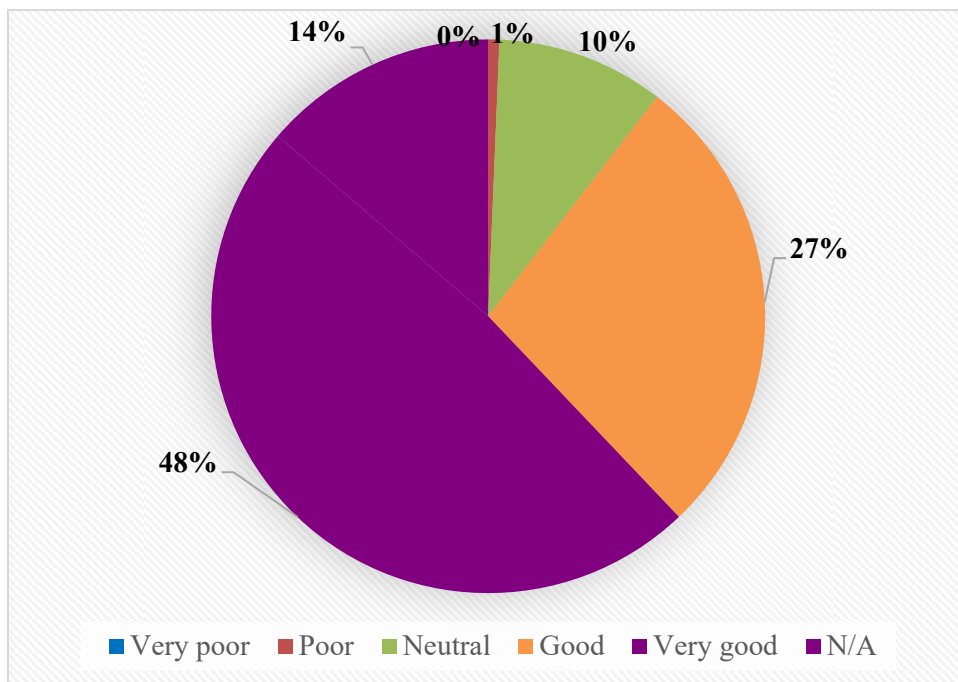
**Synod WiFi availability**



Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Neutral (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	N/A
1	6	14	58	69	10

Q10a. Weighted average: 4.27

**Synod App**



Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Neutral (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	N/A
0	1	15	42	74	21

**Q11. What changes/amendments/improvements would you find useful on the App in the future?**

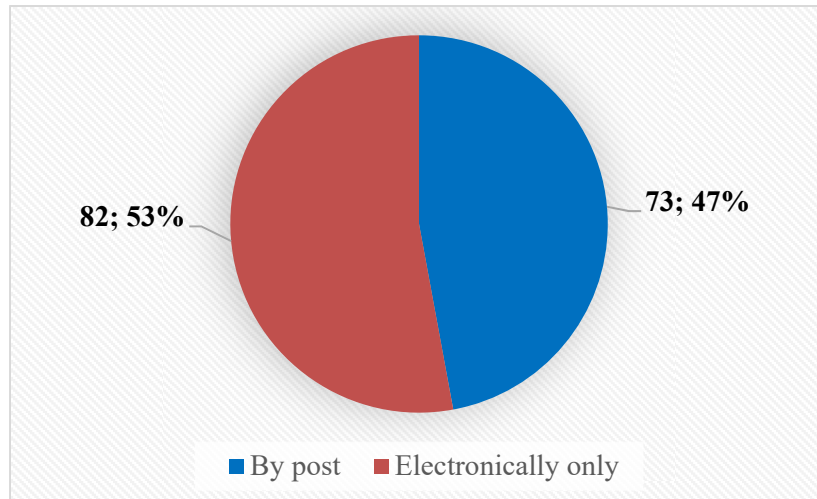
The following suggestions received multiple mentions:

- Include non-diocesan groups in the drop-down list, e.g. Deaf Anglicans Together, Church of England Youth Council, ex-officio member, TEIs, and Armed Forces.
- Develop compatibility with tablets and iPads
- Update business done and order papers in a more timely manner. The order papers were available earlier in paper copy than the App.
- Upload the Synod papers onto the App earlier.
- Include the list of Synod members, number, and dioceses, with the function of private messaging between members
- Send confirmation email/text after submitting a Request to Speak
- Develop real-time Request to speak during debate
- Develop a saving function for Request to Speak
- Enable easier access to Standing Orders
- Provide more information on fringe meetings, including a tab listing fringe events by title, room, and time.
- Put the Synod Survival Guide in the Documents tab

The following suggestions received a singular mention:

- Provide more detailed instructions on how to download the latest version of the App
- Improving clarity between main motion and amendment: one person requested to speak for an amendment but was asked to speak for the motion after the amendment was passed. This person suspected that the App may have confused his request.
- Provide links to access papers from previous groups of sessions
- Show items numbers on the schedule, which would help fill in Request to Speak
- Enable annotation
- Provide swifter link to GS documents
- Link papers to Synod items
- Provide worship information on the App (since projection was not reliable)
- Include other forms on the App, e.g. amendments
- Provide a way of asking to swap your lanyard for one mealtime if you want to meet someone in the other dining room
- Set a word limit in the form
- Require logging in to access information inside the App and send Request to Speak
- Enable users to set reminders [for certain items on the agenda]
- Improve searchability: e.g. searching “chairs of debates” yields no results. It is necessary to know what category of document that would be in.
- Include meal times on the schedule
- Make clear that Requests to speak are not in 'real time' yet
- Improve Request to Speak: the form is clunky and unclear what it is asking for.
- Attend to more details: the wordings of the Request to Speak form seems to ask for the same information twice.

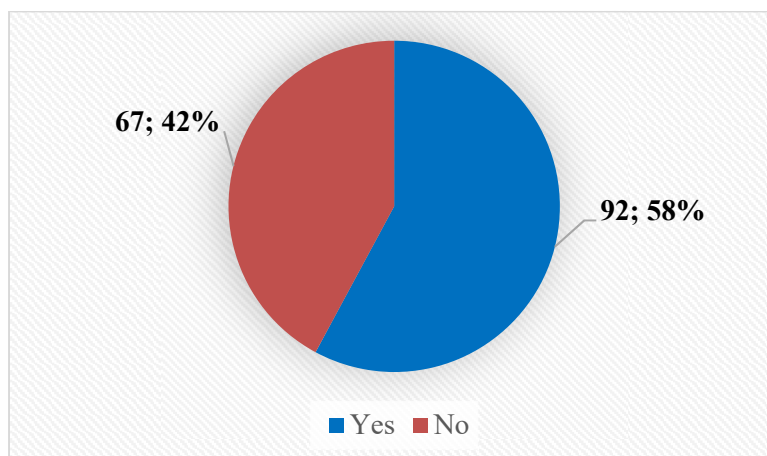
**Q12. At present, by which method do you receive General Synod Papers?**



**Q13. If you choose to receive your papers in hard copy, please explain why you prefer this.**

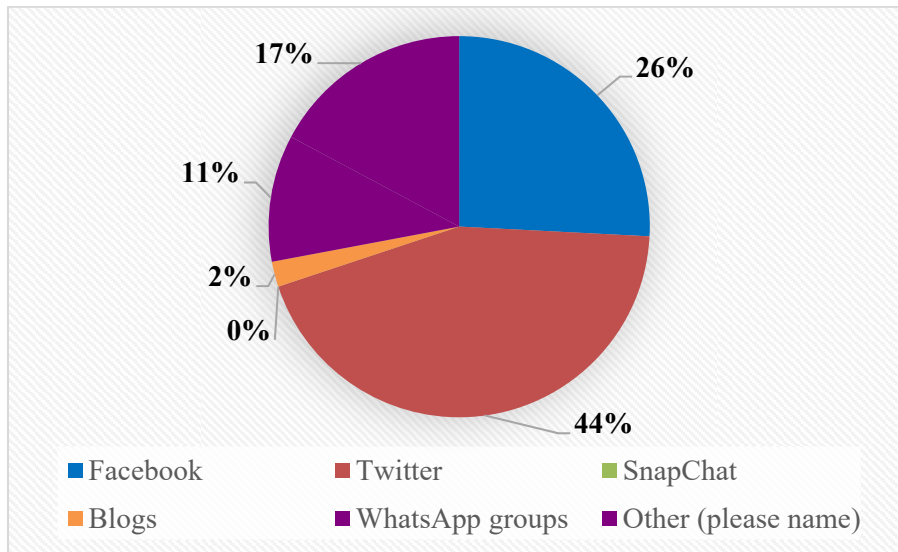
- E-copies were difficult for reading, annotating, handling details, comparing across documents, using in the chamber, and using in places with unstable or no wifi such as trains. The large amount of papers also led to eye problems with some members when reading on the screen.
- Some members reflected that they only skim through any electronic documents.
- Other reasons for using hard copies include incompatibility with Kindle Fire, the lack of resources to print on their own, and 'old age' [sic].
- One member had dyspraxia, making paper copies preferable.
- Some tried switching to paperless but switched back to paper.
- A few respondents found the App difficult and downloaded documents on the Synod website.
- A chair preferred e-copies but added that hard copies were helpful in his/her role.

**Q14. Do you use social media to comment on Synod or to contact Synod members?**





**Q15. If YES, please specify which platforms you use:**



Facebook	Twitter	SnapChat	Blogs	WhatsApp groups	Others
24	41	0	2	10	16

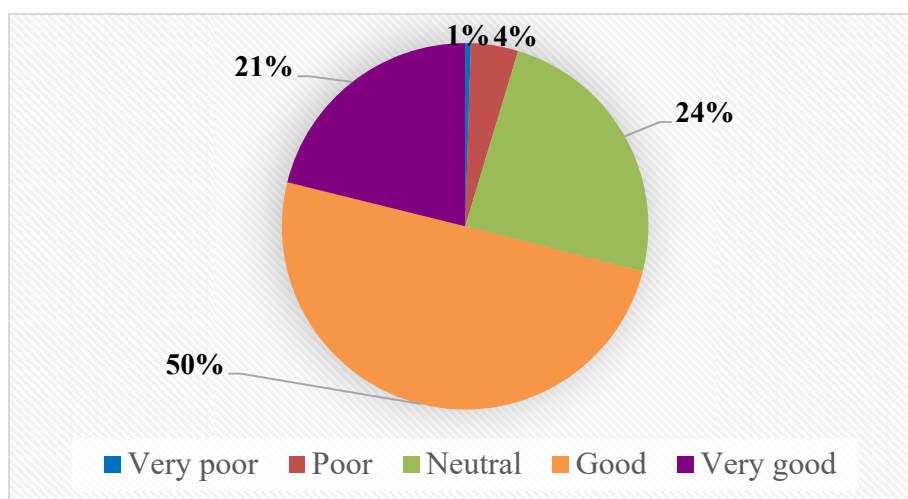
- Some respondents mentioned using more than one platforms, but the questionnaire does not allow multiple selections.
- 7 respondents used both Twitter and Facebook.
- 5 respondents used combinations of WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and/or Instagram.

**Worship**

**Q16. What was your experience of the following?**

	Very Poor (1)	Poor (2)	Neutral (3)	Good (4)	Very Good (5)	N/A
Worship in the Central Hall	1	11	40	85	12	4
Worship in the Berrick Saul Building	0	1	15	23	16	93
The Service at York Minster	1	1	13	60	43	31
Continuous Praying Presence at Synod	0	4	31	35	15	60
<b>Overall worship experience</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>188</b>

## Overall worship experience



### Q17. Any further comments?

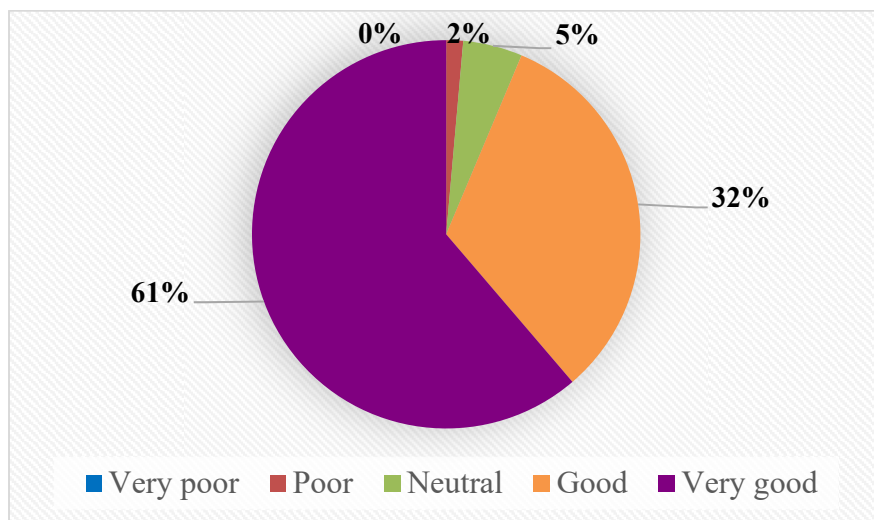
- Many respondents would like a more visible continuous praying presence. They were not highlighted enough.
- Many recalled the AV malfunctioning of prayer, but were pleased to know that many know the book of Common Prayer order by heart.
- The Lord's Prayer should be shown on the screen as not all Synod members use the modern version.
- Two respondents reviewed the Bible Study positively.
- While some members found the Central Hall worship uninspiring, others find the variety of worship styles, including contemporary, enjoyable. One respondent suggests Iona and Taize style; another prefers Common Worship but understand different preferences. Another wanted a short BCP morning prayer. More contemp.
- A respondent suggested holding a contemporary worship fringe event to reflect a younger demographic at Synod.
- On worship leading, one respondent appreciated the opportunity to lead worship, but felt that its scripted nature allowed no freedom. If God was trying to guide you in helping lead Synod in worship, there was no freedom to allow it to happen.
- One respondent would like a way to volunteer to lead worship (akin to 'Request to Speak').
- One respondent would like a later time for the 7.30am Eucharist.
- One respondent reflected being annoyed and disabled not to have the music available on the screen after the first verse, the harmony, or the pointing for psalms.
- One respondent suggested more involvements by the Deaf Anglicans Together (DAT) Representatives.
- While a respondent found the chaplain effective, another would like an easier way to contact the chaplain during Synod.
- One respondent suggested setting up a 24/7 prayer room.
- One respondent was disappointed that people left the chamber before the worship at the end of the day. That should have been a unifying moment.

- One respondent attended a local parish church on the Sunday, and this gesture was appreciated. This person believed that Synod members should worship locally and not in the Minster.
- A respondent felt that much more could be done by the Synod team in the York experience: 'it felt as if we were visitors on a regular Sunday.' This person suggested having all bishops robed, which would say a lot to the media.

## Venue and Catering

### Q18. What would you rate the quality of food and catering service at York University?

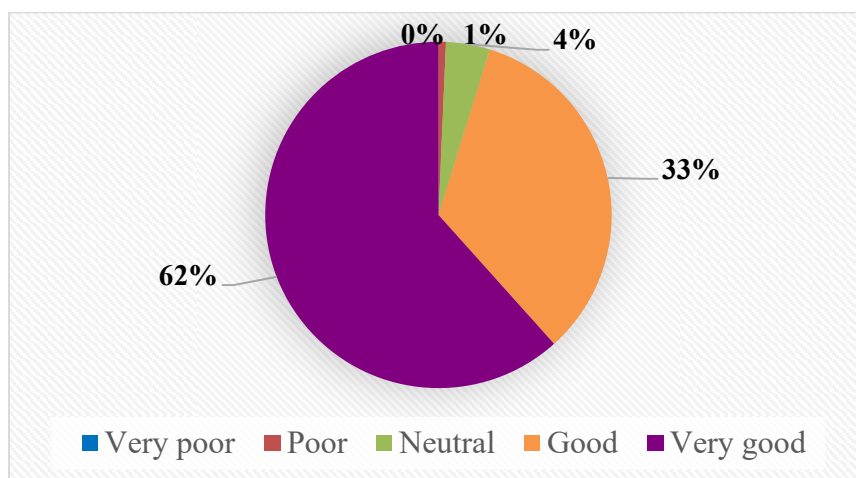
#### Food



Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Neutral (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	N/A
0	2	7	46	87	1

Weighted average: 4.54

#### Catering



Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Neutral (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	N/A
0	1	6	49	90	2

**Q19. Do you have any further comments or recommendations on the York University experience?**

**The condition of the rooms**

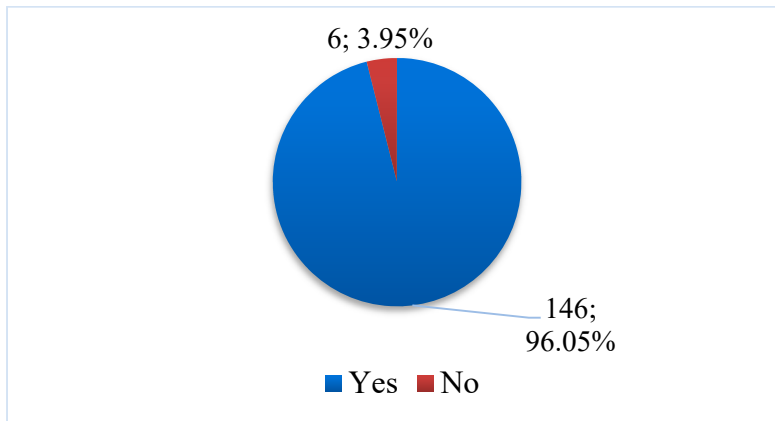
- Several attendees complained about the poor condition of their mattresses. One member reported bad back for several weeks afterwards.
- Several attendees complained about the poor condition of the bathrooms. One member needed to use a colleague's shower facility in the next room. Hot water and heat control were other issues.
- The ventilation system could be loud and interrupt sleep, in Alcuin and possibly elsewhere. A respondent suggested the Synod organisers to warn Synod members about this, and noted that ear plugs could be helpful.
- Dust mites on the chairs of a room caused serious allergy to one member.

**Location of the rooms and the dining halls**

- Multiple members felt that Alcuin was far and undesirable. One reflected being uncomfortable walking back in the night and therefore did not attend some fringe meetings.
- 6 respondents complimented the helpful catering and utility staff
- 4 respondents expressed frustration about the use of plastic, disposable cups. One suggested selling cups with (presumably Church of England) branding.
- 5 respondents reviewed the food positively with one particularly grateful for university staff on advising based on his/her special diet.
- 2 respondents noted negatively with the meals, with too much spicy food and warm (but not hot) meals being the complaints.
- Separating members into two dining halls made socialising difficult, but the mix on each side was better this year.
- Comments on meal logistics include 2 respondents requesting changing dining halls to allow discussions, meal times be clearly indicated in the info booklet, and serving lunch on the first day for those arriving the night before for the Communion service.
- James College was reviewed positively for its accommodation.
- A respondent suggested having more spaces for socialising. For example, the bar areas could be open to sit in and chat even if the bar itself was not open.
- More signposting for drivers and for Derwent meeting rooms were needed.
- While parking hangers were not delivered before arrival, having parking hangers in the Porters Lodges was really helpful.
- One person felt we do not need starters for meals – two instead of three courses.
- One respondent complained that certain dioceses always 'get stuck in Alcuin,' which is obviously less convenient, while other 'Synod big wigs always land in James College.'

## After Synod Finishes

**Q20. Do you feel equipped to report back to your diocese, constituency, organisation or department on what took place at General Synod?**

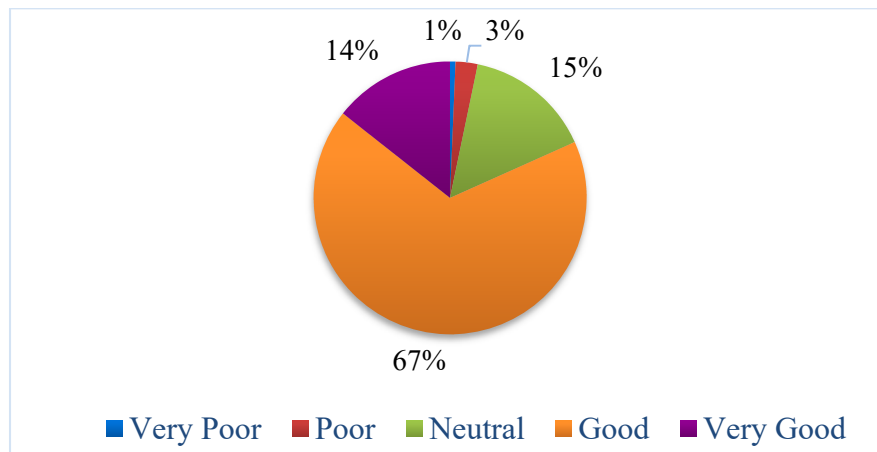


**Q21. If you answered “no”, what would make you feel better equipped?**

- 5 respondents suggested the Synod to provide some form of summary or report of business done, preferably on one A4 sheet that could be sent to the Deaneries or PCCs. Respondents noted that ‘everyone’ is doing their own version of a report.
- A respondent suggested making a short film especially in relation to the forthcoming elections.
- A respondent suggested publishing links to the YouTube clips specific to each session.
- A respondent noted that the pace of the debates was too fast and the volume of material was too great to get hold of the detail.
- A respondent suggested uploading ‘business done’ on the App.

## General Comments

**Q22. How would you rate the Synod meeting overall?**



Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Neutral (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	N/A
1	4	23	103	22	38

Q22. Weighted average: 3.9

**Q23. Are there any other areas you wish to feedback to us on?**

**General comments on the agenda**

- Long and physically demanding agenda: multiple respondents preferred it to be shortened.
- ‘Not the most relevant and engaging’ agenda: a respondent preferred a focus on mission, prayer and evangelism due to the decreasing congregation and revenue.
- PMM: the agenda should include at least one Private Member’s Motion.
- Saturday afternoons: one respondent preferred legislative business preferred over seminars.
- More clarifications and pointers would be appreciated at the start of each legislative debate. Examples include (1) the stage of the legislative process to which the debate belongs; (2) guidance on appropriate and inappropriate questions or comments; (3) whether amendments have been raised with the Revision Committee; (4) and the amendments have not been accepted, the relevant paragraphs that provide explanation.
- Too many 'motherhood and apple pie' debates, just as there was last time.
- One respondent reflected that it was a terrible waste of resource to have no synod business for 24 hours from Saturday to Sunday. Evening work could also have been possible.

**Comments on fringe meetings**

- 4 respondents felt that allowing meals at fringe meetings would lengthen discussion and social contact.
- Some fringe events were difficult to find and located far from the eating places.
- The locations and timings of fringe meetings were thought to be poorly advertised. A respondent attended one at the right time and place on a flyer but it was not there. Changes should be announced on the App and notice boards.
- The fringe meeting flyers should indicate the name of the building in which it is held, rather than just the room reference number. Each day's fringe meeting (with its location) could be given in a notice paper. The respondent also wondered about the

possibility for meetings to be arranged to avoid fewer clashes, for example on Monday lunchtime.

### Other comments

- While a first-time member who joined mid-term appreciated the inclusiveness and the music at the York Synod, another new member found the experience isolating, divisive, and unpleasant due to the impenetrable cliques. The latter experience was enough to put this person off standing again, despite the importance of the work.
  - Disability access and interpreters were concerns but Synod disability provisions were appreciated.
  - One respondent suggested saving money and radically changing synod meetings – ‘be bold.’
  - The Church Times synopsis that came out quickly was useful.
  - A respondent picked up an old cynicism that clergy were concerned about their pension.
  - Central Hall and Great Hall had hot temperatures.
  - Synod should avoid single-use plastic by encouraging people to bring water bottles and fill them up.
  - A respondent suggested legislative business done differently, faster, and away from the debating chamber
  - A respondent was disappointed not to be called to speak after putting in requests.
  - A respondent expected that a GS Misc paper in February 2020 will give a suitably anonymised summary of the results of this survey with pertinent comments. It would be helpful for this to be circulated to Synod members earlier, say by October, so that comments could be made to influence the Business Committee when they meet in November to set the agenda for the February 2020 group of sessions.
  - 3 respondents applauded the work of the synod team.
2. In addition to the online questionnaires, the Business Committee received emails regarding the Living in Love and Faith sessions, the Bible Study, Mission and Ministry in Covenant, the chairing of debates, the duration of time allocated to legislative items, and photography during Synod.

The General Synod Business Committee  
December 2019