

## Conference Report

The Hercules Project conference Celebrating Hercules in the Modern World took place 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> July in Leeds, with 32 delegates in attendance. A further 5 delegates took part through the virtual conference package, with audio recordings of papers, handouts and PowerPoint slides being made available online.



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## Delegate Breakdown

Nearly two thirds of delegates were speakers (including two virtual delegates), accounting for 25/39 delegate places (64%). A number of speakers came from the same institutions, but the interdisciplinary nature of the conference meant that many of those individuals had not previously met and several delegates commented to the organisers that doing so was a good thing (e.g. "I can't believe I had to come half-way across the world to meet someone I can collaborate with at home!").

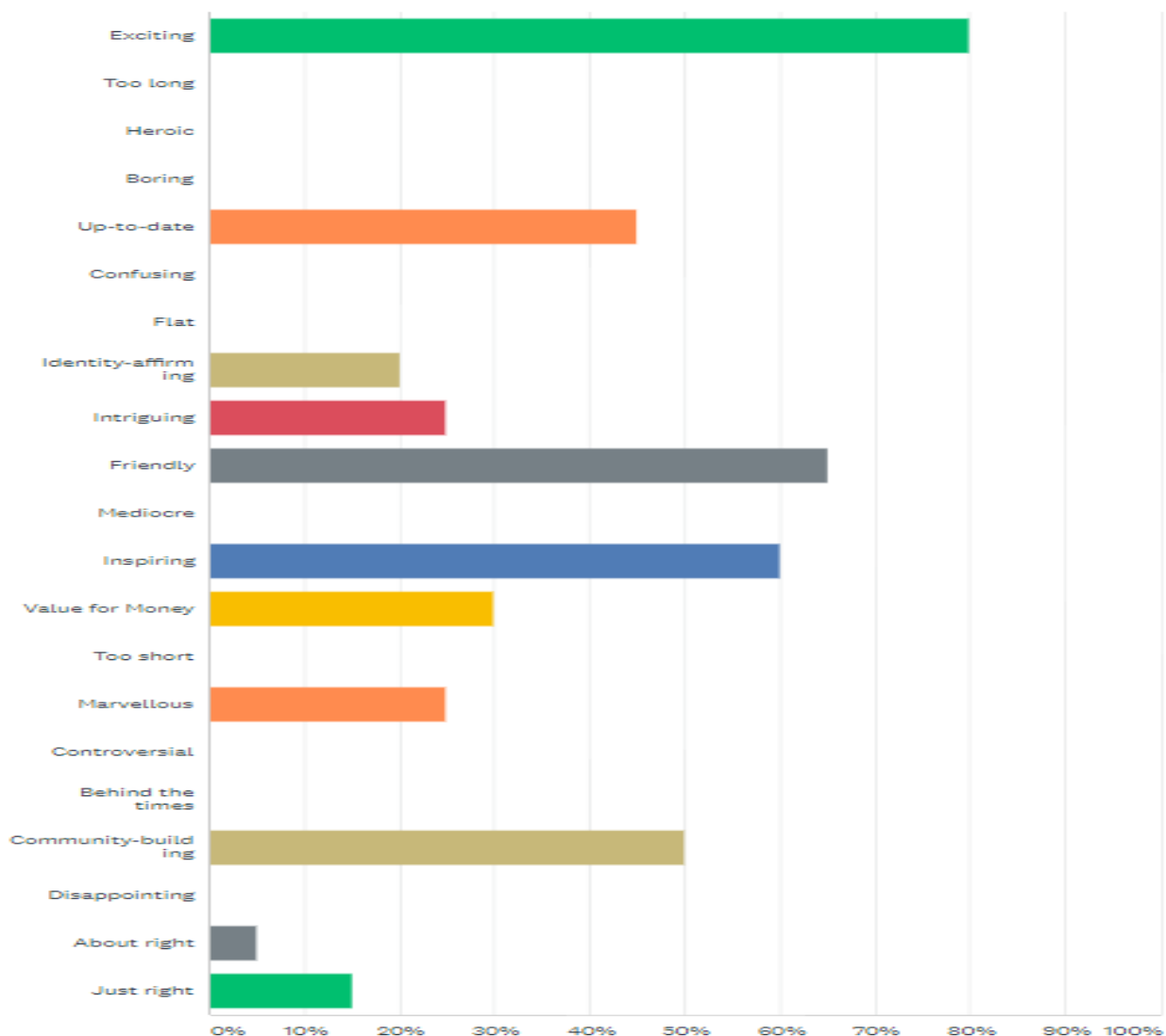
University	Non-speaker Full	Non-speaker Day	Virtual Delegates	Speakers Full	Speakers Day
Leeds, UK	3	2	0	4	0
Almeria, Spain	0	0	0	1	0
Bar Ilan, Israel	0	0	0	1	0
Bergamo, Italy	0	0	0	1	0
Brooklyn College, USA	0	0	0	1	0
Cambridge, UK	0	0	0	1	0
Columbia, USA	1	0	0	0	0
Illinois, USA	0	0	0	1	0
KCL, UK	0	1	0	0	0
Leuven, Belgium	0	0	0	1	0
Liege, Belgium	0	0	0	1	0
Maynooth, Ireland	0	0	0	1	0
Monash, Australia	0	0	0	1	0
Montclair State, USA	0	0	0	3	0
Oxford, UK	0	0	0	0	1
Pompeu Fabra, Spain	0	0	0	1	0
Queensland, Australia	1	0	0	0	0
Roehampton, UK	2	0	0	0	0
Split, Croatia	0	0	0	0	1
Sunderland, UK	0	0	0	0	1
Thessaloniki, Greece	1	0	0	0	0
Wake Forest, USA	0	0	0	1	0
York, UK	0	0	0	1	0
Ohio State, USA	0	0	1	0	0
Otago, New Zealand	0	0	2	0	0
San Marino, San Marino	0	0	1	0	0
Moscow	0	0	1	0	0
Total	8	3	5	20	3

## Feedback from Delegates

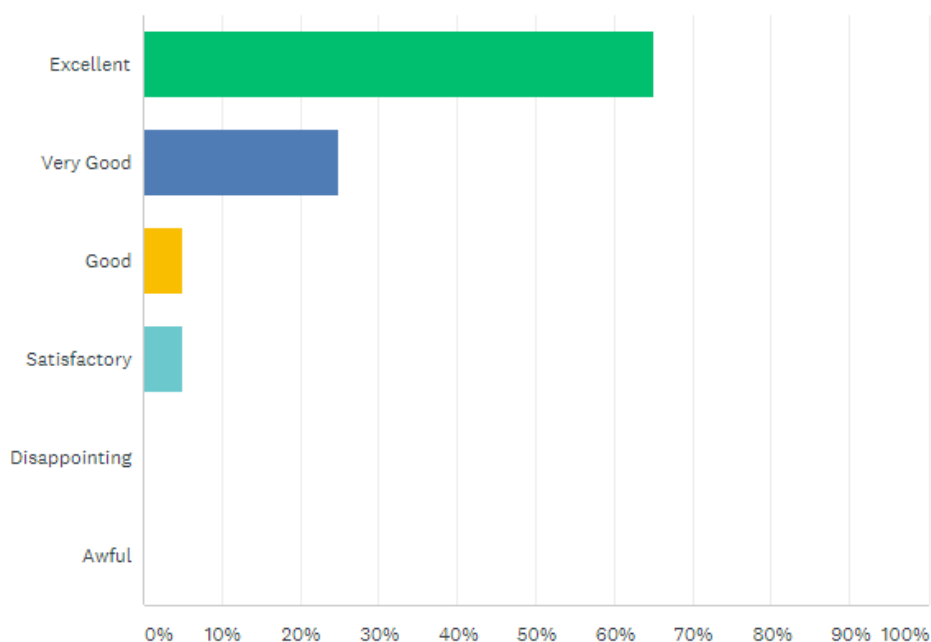
20/32 physical delegates returned feedback forms (2 Project Team members who were engaged in administration during the conference rather than present for the papers did not return feedback forms), a return rate of 62.5%.

The questionnaire covered a number of areas, ranging from general experience to quality of papers, and effects on behaviour, from organisation to catering and accommodation.

- 1) Gathering opinions of the conference experience as a whole by delegates selecting, or adding, words/phrases. Delegates thought the conference was:



2) Delegates were asked to assess the quality of the papers and were very positive about this.



Excellent (6)	Very Good (5)	Good (4)	Satisfactory (3)	Disappointing (2)	Awful (1)
65%	25%	5%	5%	0%	0%

**Overall rating:  $((13 \times 6) + (5 \times 5) + (1 \times 4) + (1 \times 3)) / 20 = 5.5$**

3) This question sought suggestions for further areas which might be explored by the project. 25% of delegates responded to this question, but only three of the responses actually suggested further areas for the project to explore, suggesting that coverage is seen as at least adequate and at most wide-ranging enough to be viewed as comprehensive.

“Maybe reception by actual contemporary young people would be salient, though difficult...”

“I was fascinated by Hercules outside the West - would love to see more re Hercules in the far east and global south.”

“Differences from depictions of Hercules in antiquity itself.”

The other two responses focused on the usefulness of the project/conference (“Very interesting and informative - helpful especially for ideas for teaching mythology.”) and a request for information (“A summary of Emma's closing talk by email.”).

4) 85% of delegates replied to the question asking what they would do as a result of the conference. Given that the initial call for papers had outlined the Hercules Project’s publication plans and that accepted papers were to be considered for publication, it was not surprising that answers were focused upon the publication of the papers delivered, but responses went beyond publication alone and also covered the development of research directions and incorporation of material into teaching.

#### **Publication alone (8/17 47%)**

- Submit an article to the conference volume.
- Revise talk for publication
- Submit an abstract for the Modern Hercules

- Publish, hopefully in the volume!
- Keep working on my paper and have it published.
- Prepare a conference-paper article.
- Publish the article
- Publish my paper

#### Publication plus (4/17 24%)

- Revise my paper in the light of what I learned.
- Rewrite my paper to incorporate feedback received.
- Hope to write up my paper following questions and comments and conversations, with enhanced awareness of Herakles in other contexts.
- Turn my paper into an article or book chapter. Incorporate ideas into my teaching and research.

#### Research direction (5/17 29%)

- Do more work on reception
- Consider the feedback and how it impacts my work.
- I plan to continue to work on Hercules and write a paper (a proper paper).
- Read more Hercules stuff.
- Look into evidence of modern and ancient local / national identities drawing on heroic figures like Hercules from the classical period in Spain / Portugal.

- 5) The organisation of the conference was acknowledged to be excellent with scores for the organisation \*before\* and \*at\* the conference scoring identically.

Excellent (6)	Very Good (5)	Good (4)	Satisfactory (3)	Disappointing (2)	Awful (1)
95%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%

**Overall rating:  $((18 \times 6) + (1 \times 5)) / 19 = 5.9$**

Additional comments were: "Thank you Eleanor once again for the excellent organisation and also to Maria, who did a great job!", "The \*best\* organised conference! Kudos for Emma, Eleanor, and Maria."

- 6) The catering was also ranked highly.

Excellent (6)	Very Good (5)	Good (4)	Satisfactory (3)	Disappointing (2)	Awful (1)
42%	26%	11%	21%	0%	0%

**Overall rating:  $((8 \times 6) + (5 \times 5) + (2 \times 4) + (4 \times 3)) / 19 = 4.9$**

Additional comments were: "The catering was very good: the lunchtime food didn't look fresh made. The dinners were better (very good).", "Beautiful - and beautiful looking - food, but very small portions at the conference dinner (emphasised by the very large plates!)."

- 7) 6 of the respondents had not stayed in the conference accommodation, but those who had rated it highly and were impressed with the quality given the price.

Excellent (6)	Very Good (5)	Good (4)	Satisfactory (3)	Disappointing (2)	Awful (1)
46%	46%	8%			

**Overall rating:  $((8 \times 6) + (6 \times 5) + (1 \times 4)) / 13 = 6.3$**

Additional comments were: “Wow, very affordable for those of us w/o significant research support from our universities.”, “It was very refreshing to have an affordable yet excellent accommodation/meals packages - we thank Leeds University.”, “Thank you for the excellent consideration and being so helpful with everything.”, “The accommodation at Storm Jameson is excellent.”

### Acknowledgement of Support (Funding)

Funding was received from:

- the AHRC for attendance by volume editors and Hercules Project Staff as part of the Hercules Project AHRC Network grant,
- the Classical Association for bursaries for PGRs (UK and USA) and a recent PHD graduate (UK),
- the Hellenic Society for a bursary for an early career academic (Germany)
- the Institute of Classical Studies for an overseas interdisciplinary speaker (Tomas Macostay, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain) and the presentation of a film of the world premiere of the 2017 dramatic musical work *Herakles* by Yorkshire Composer Tim Benjamin. Some feedback is available through the Hercules Project website (<https://herculesproject.leeds.ac.uk/musical-drama/>), more detailed feedback is available on request.