



UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH

POLICY FOR LISTENING TO AND RESPONDING TO THE STUDENT VOICE

September 2017

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Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice September 2017			
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Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice

SUMMARY

What is this Policy about?

This Policy document sets out the ways in which students are able to voice opinions about their studies and the wider student experience. It specifies the mechanisms by which the student voice should be heard through means of student participation in committees, student surveys and other forms of student feedback. It also emphasises the need for timely action to be taken in response to valid issues and justifiable concerns raised through student feedback mechanisms and describes how this can be done. Furthermore, the Policy briefly outlines ways in which students will have opportunities to be involved in key aspects of our quality system.

Who is this Policy for?

This document will be of most interest to our students and staff. It will be of interest also to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). It may also be of interest to the wider public.

How does the University check this Policy is followed?

The student voice is important to the University. The extent to which the processes identified in this Policy are working is checked through our annual monitoring mechanism and through the periodic review process.

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this Policy?

If you are external to the University and you have any questions about this Policy please contact the University's Quality Management Division (QMD) at qmd@port.ac.uk.

If you are internal to the University please contact your Faculty Associate Dean (Students).

INTRODUCTION

The University is committed to working in partnership with its students in order to enhance all aspects of the student experience. This partnership as set out in the Student Charter recognises that students have rights and responsibilities to voice their opinions and that the University has obligations to respond to them. We expect our students to provide feedback on their experiences when requested to do so and it is essential that our students have sufficient opportunities to voice opinions about their studies and the wider student experience.

The student voice must be listened to and taken seriously, through student participation in committees, through surveys and other forms of student feedback, both institutional and course unit-based, and through activities led by the Students' Union. Importantly, it is also recognised that timely action is seen to be taken in response to valid

issues and justifiable concerns raised through student surveys or through means of the course representative system. Furthermore, the University attaches importance to creating a culture and environment that promotes student engagement and offers all students an opportunity to be involved in its quality system.

Consequently, this Policy covers three important aspects of listening to and responding to the student voice:

1. Student surveys
2. Student representation
3. Student participation in quality assurance and enhancement

1. STUDENT SURVEY POLICY PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 The primary purposes of student feedback are to:
 - inform all aspects of the student experience that have scope for enhancement;
 - help improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment;
 - ensure that quality management takes full account of student views.
- 1.2 The focus of our standardised feedback questionnaires undertaken at different levels of operation will be on student satisfaction and students' perceptions of the quality of their learning experiences.
- 1.3 It is necessary to 'close the loop' and tell students what has happened in response to their feedback. It is imperative that appropriate action is seen by students to be taken in response to legitimate concerns and issues raised through student feedback.

2. STUDENT SURVEY POLICY PROCESS

- 2.1 Student feedback should be systematically and anonymously collected from students on all taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses. It should take place through means of questionnaires focused at the following levels of operation:
 - the unit level – to be known as the Unit Satisfaction Questionnaire (USQ);
 - the course/institutional level – to be known as the University of Portsmouth Student Experience Questionnaire (UPSEQ).
- 2.2 In addition, the University will participate in the sector-wide National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and the United Kingdom Engagement Survey (UKES). IpsosMori carries out the NSS, a satisfaction survey of final year undergraduate students, and the Higher Education Academy provides the PTES satisfaction survey for postgraduate students, and the UKES, the only nationwide UK undergraduate survey to focus on student engagement.
- 2.3 Feedback from postgraduate research students will be collected on a biennial basis via a University of Portsmouth Postgraduate Research Student Experience Survey (UPPRSES). In addition, the University will participate in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) which is a biennial sector-wide survey provided by the Higher Education Academy. This survey will be completed in alternate years to the UPPRSES.
- 2.4 All academic departments should use common University-defined questionnaires, agreed annually by the Student Experience Committee (SEC), for securing systematic student feedback. There will be no scope for departments and subject/course teams to add their own specific questions to the standard ones.
- 2.5 In order to enhance the mechanisms used to gather, evaluate and respond to student feedback, the processing of institutional and all unit level

questionnaires will be conducted in conjunction with one or more external suppliers. The primary advantages being:

- a professional and independent service;
 - faster, more efficient processing of questionnaires;
 - more consistent and systematic evaluation and reporting of outcomes;
 - more effective benchmarking at unit and course/ institutional level.
- 2.6 The UPSEQ and the USQ will have an overall satisfaction question alongside a range of other questions stretching across both types of questionnaire, which will draw on the NSS.
 - 2.7 Benchmark scores will be used for evaluating outcomes. Any course or unit with scores below the identified benchmarks should be identified as a 'cause for concern' and should be subject to further critical scrutiny by the Head of Department.

University of Portsmouth Student Experience Questionnaire (UPSEQ)

- 2.8 Institutional-level feedback will be secured annually from all students at levels 4, 5 and 7 through means of a centrally administered questionnaire. Faculties/ Departments will have a choice of using either a paper-based or online version of the standard questionnaire agreed annually by the SEC for level 5 and will pilot in 2017-18 an online administration of the questionnaire at level 4. The target completion rate by campus-based full-time students for the UPSEQ should be at least 50% for each Faculty/Department. This survey will not be administered at level 6; rather the focus at this level will be on securing high feedback response levels for the NSS.
- 2.9 The UPSE questionnaire will seek information about students' satisfaction with learning, teaching and assessment at the course level along with wider aspects of their experience, including the extent to which they perceive they have a voice in university processes.
- 2.10 An annual report on UPSEQ outcomes will be centrally produced and distributed by DCQE.
- 2.11 Outcomes of UPSEQs may form part of Performance, Development and Review (PDR) discussions, in which the focus should be on the full range of scores, including excellent results as well as outcomes presenting cause for concern. Evidence of high quality teaching performance over a period of time taken from UPSEQ reports can also be used to support claims for recognition and reward for excellence in learning and teaching.
- 2.12 In addition, students can raise any immediate concerns about their course via a Moodle page and those concerns will be addressed by the relevant Faculty Associate Dean (Students).
- 2.13 Students must be informed in a timely way about the outcomes of questionnaires and the actions being taken to address any issues arising.

Unit Satisfaction Questionnaires (USQ)

- 2.14 Unit level feedback should be sought each time a course unit is delivered. Faculties/Departments will have a choice of using either a paper-based or online version of the standard questionnaire agreed annually by the SEC. The target completion rate by campus-based full-time students for USQs should be at least 50%.
- 2.15 The USQ will be relatively short, contain standard questions and will be anonymous.
- 2.16 Outcomes of USQs may form part of Performance, Development and Review (PDR) discussions, in which the focus should be on the full range of scores, including excellent results as well as outcomes presenting cause for concern. Evidence of high quality teaching performance over a period of time taken from USQ reports can also be used to support claims for recognition and reward for excellence in learning and teaching.
- 2.17 Students must be informed in a timely way about the outcomes of questionnaires and the actions being taken to address any issues arising.

Unit mid-point review

- 2.18 A unit mid-point review should be conducted for all year-long units. The purpose is to allow scope for students to voice any immediate concerns about a unit and to provide early feedback while the unit is being delivered. The mid-point review can take different forms but students should not be asked to complete any other kind of survey at this point.
- 2.19 Reports dealing with the feedback obtained and the resulting changes from unit mid-point reviews should be considered at Faculty Staff-Student Consultative Committees.

Other surveys

- 2.20 Systematic evaluation of, and response to, the student voice to improve the student experience is integral to this Policy. We will seek to maximise student participation in surveys, minimise survey fatigue and maximise the value derived from each survey by rationalising the number of student surveys conducted.
- 2.21 Any proposal to conduct a university-wide or cross-university survey where the sample size is >250 students and/or the student sample is taken from more than one Department/School or Central Service will require the permission of the Student Survey Requests sub-group of SEC. This will ensure that:
 - the survey is scheduled at the most appropriate time;
 - ethical and data protection considerations have been taken into account;
 - the proposers have considered the evaluation and dissemination plan and have identified which Faculty and/or university committees will consider the outcomes and how the outcomes will be fed back to students;
 - the results will be made available to the wider university community.

- 2.22 Requests to undertake university-wide or cross-university surveys should be made to:
surveyrequests@port.ac.uk.

3. STUDENT REPRESENTATION POLICY

- 3.1 The student representation system is jointly owned by the University and the Students' Union. The University is committed to working in partnership with its students as members of a shared academic community. Partnership means that students should be involved in decisions affecting their learning experience and opportunities should be available for students and staff to work in collaboration to strengthen learning and teaching at the University.

Course representative system

- 3.2 Course representatives are a vital means of ensuring that the student voice is heard within the University. A course representative is responsible for finding out and expressing their peers' views on their course and the wider student experience. This will be done primarily through bringing shared issues and matters of concern to the attention of their Student-Staff Consultative Committees, utilising the Student and Academic Representation Tool (StART), and also ensuring that, where appropriate, matters of particular importance are discussed at Board of Studies and Faculty Board meetings.
- 3.3 There will be an agreed role description for the position of course representative, developed in partnership with the Students' Union, which clearly specifies their expected duties and responsibilities.
- 3.4 The number of course representatives for any course programme or subject area should not be unduly prescriptive. The aim should be to secure an optimal number of course representatives and to maximise continuity of representation across years.
- 3.5 Elections of course representatives should take place within four weeks of the start of the academic year. Course representative training should be provided as soon as possible afterwards by the Students' Union in partnership with the University.
- 3.6 A member of academic staff should be given lead responsibility for the student voice at departmental level. As well as overseeing the administration of questionnaires, their responsibilities should include effective facilitation of the course representative system.

Student-Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs)

- 3.7 SSCCs are required for each department or cognate area.
- 3.8 SSCCs should consist of representatives of all years/levels of a course or set of courses. A rolling term of office covering different years of study should be the norm for full-time undergraduate students taking on the role as either level 4 or level 5 students.
- 3.9 SSCCs should regularly address the experience of students taught in different departments/cognate areas that are involved in delivering a significant shared curriculum.

- 3.10 Staff membership of SSCCs should be limited to ensure that students clearly form a majority.
- 3.11 As far as it is feasible, SSCCs will be chaired by a course representative. It is expected that this will be the case with all SSCCs for campus-based courses.

Faculty Forum

- 3.12 This is a meeting of all School Representatives (SSCC Student Chairs) in a Faculty with senior Faculty staff, normally chaired by the Associate Dean (Students). Meetings of the Faculty Forum should take place at least three times each academic year with reports made to Faculty Board.

Faculty Board

- 3.13 The position of School Representative will be undertaken by one of the SSCC Student Chairs who will represent the School/ Department as a member of the Faculty Board. School Representatives will be responsible for reporting on common issues emerging from SSCC meetings taking place in their School/ Department and also those arising from Faculty Forum meetings, along with the Associate Dean (Students).

4. STUDENT SURVEY AND REPRESENTATION MECHANISMS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMES

- 4.1 Students registered on collaborative programmes form a substantial section of our student body and it is essential that they have sufficient opportunities to voice opinions about their studies. As far as it is practicable, the mechanisms used to listen and respond to the student voice for campus-based students should be implemented for collaborative programmes.
- 4.2 Feedback will be secured periodically from all students at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 on collaborative programmes through means of an amended version of the UPSE questionnaire, which will be administered by collaborative programmes in association with DCQE.
- 4.3 Unit level and course level feedback should be systematically sought by a collaborative partner, including each time a course unit is delivered.
- 4.4 Collaborative partner institutions are also expected to engage with the course representative programme, and to appoint and train Course Reps, in partnership with the Students' Union.

5. STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

- 5.1 To enable students to benefit from the quality system it is necessary to put them at the heart of the process. Consequently, different ways of securing student participation in the quality assurance and enhancement process will be implemented.
- 5.2 We will further develop mechanisms for the student voice to inform and enhance all aspects of course design, delivery and review. In order to do so, it is considered appropriate that a pool of trained student representatives is developed which can be drawn upon to provide student participants in different aspects of the quality system.
- 5.3 Students will also be consulted on any 'material' changes to their course, in order to meet Competition & Markets Authority Requirements. Guidance from the Quality Management Division within Academic Registry will be provided to Faculties in order to facilitate this.

Student participation in internal and external reviews

- 5.4 The participation of students in internal and external quality review processes such as Periodic Reviews, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation and QAA visits should be effectively facilitated. In particular, an opportunity for review panels to meet and gather information from a selection of students who are appropriately informed about the process should always be provided.

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