STUDENT VOICE POLICY – VALUING STUDENTS' VIEWS AND OPINIONS

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Student Voice Policy – Valuing Students' Views and Opinions

SUMMARY

What is this Policy about?

This Policy document sets out the ways in which students are able to voice views and 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 obtaining student feedback. It also emphasises the need to value the feedback, and 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 partners 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 process, 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 Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships team within the Department for Student and Academic Administration at **asqp@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. Our partnership, as set out in the Education Strategy and embodied in the co-created Student Charter, means that we work with our students both to hear and value their views and opinions about their studies and the wider student experience, and how to respond to them.

We hear and value the student voice through student participation in committees, through surveys and other forms of student feedback, and through activities led by the Students' Union. Furthermore, we create a culture and environment that promotes student engagement and offers all students an opportunity to be involved as partners in our quality system.

Consequently, this Policy and its associated Operational Annex covers three important aspects of the student voice:

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

1. STUDENT VOICE PRINCIPLES

1.1. The primary purposes of student feedback are to:
- inform all aspects of the student experience with regard to its continual 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 and suggestions for enhancement raised through student feedback.

2. STUDENT SURVEY POLICY

2.1 Student feedback should be systematically and confidentially collected from students on all University of Portsmouth-delivered taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses (see Section 4 for Collaborative provision) and from postgraduate research (PGR) students. The aim is to hear the opinions of all of our students. For taught courses feedback should be sought through means of questionnaires focused at the following levels of operation:
- the module level – to be known as the Module Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ);
- the course/institutional-level – to be known as the University of Portsmouth Course Questionnaire (UPCQ).

2.2 In addition, the University will participate in relevant sector-wide surveys including the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and the Graduate Outcomes (GO) survey. IpsosMori carries out the NSS, a satisfaction survey of final year undergraduate students, and Advance HE provides the PTES satisfaction survey for postgraduate taught students. HESA is overseeing the GO survey of graduates' career destinations and development 15 months after they complete their studies. The University will review its participation in these, and other sector-wide surveys, in line with sector developments.

2.3 Feedback from PGR students will be collected using questions from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), which is a sector-wide survey provided by Advance HE, and internal surveys such as the University of Portsmouth MRes Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

2.4 All Schools[1] 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 Schools and subject/course teams to add their own specific questions to the standard ones.

2.5 The aim is to hear the opinions of all of our students.

Course-level feedback

2.6 Institutional-level feedback will be secured annually from all students at Levels 4, 5 and 7 through means of a centrally-administered questionnaire, the UPCQ. This survey will not be administered at Level 6[2], rather the focus at this Level will be on securing high feedback response levels for the NSS.

2.7 The UPCQ 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.

2.8 An annual report of summary data on course outcomes will be centrally produced and distributed.

Module-level feedback

2.9 Module-level feedback, via the MSQ, should be sought each time a course module is delivered. The MSQ will be relatively short, and contain standard questions.

2.10 A module mid-point review should be conducted for all modules. The purpose is to allow scope for students to voice any immediate concerns about a module, and to provide early feedback while the module is being delivered.

2.11 Reports dealing with the feedback obtained and the resulting changes from module mid-point reviews should be reported at Faculty Student Voice Committees (SVCs).

2.12 Students must be informed in a timely way about the outcomes of questionnaires and the actions being taken to address any issues arising.

2.13 The details of the student survey process are set out in the Operational Annex.

Other surveys

2.14 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.

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[1] Throughout this Policy reference will be made to Schools, this should be taken to refer to Schools, Departments or Subject Groupings as appropriate.

[2] With the exception of Integrated Masters' courses.

We will inform students of the number of University surveys they will be asked to complete in a year, and all other surveys will be voluntary, subject to approval by the Student Surveys Requests group.

2.15 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 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.

2.16 Requests to undertake university-wide or cross-university surveys must be made to: **surveyrequests@port.ac.uk**.

Other mechanisms

2.17 In addition, students can raise any immediate concerns about their course via a DropBox and those concerns will be addressed by the relevant Faculty Associate Dean (Students).

2.18 The Dean of Learning and Teaching also runs regular informal drop-in sessions with students to gather students' views on their experience.

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. A University-wide calendar of timings for the opportunities for students' views and opinions to be heard enables this partnership-working and for the student voice to effectively feed into the relevant committees. This is set out in the Operational Annex.

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 Voice Committee (SVC), utilising the Student and Academic Representation Tool (StART), and also ensuring that, where appropriate, matters of particular importance are discussed at Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee (FESEC) meetings.

3.3. There is 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. In addition there are a jointly developed Academic Representation Framework Code of Practice and an Accountability and Removal process (provided in the Operational Annex).

3.4. The number of Course Representatives for any course 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. Members of academic staff should be given lead responsibility for the Student Voice at School-level[3]. As well as overseeing the student surveys aspect of student voice, working with the named member of administrative staff per School as appropriate, their responsibilities should include effective facilitation of the Course Representative system.

Student-Voice Committees (SVCs)

3.6. SVCs are opportunities for representatives of all Levels of a course or set of courses to discuss the course and students' experience of it.

Faculty Student Forum

3.7. This is a meeting of all School Representatives (SVC Student Chairs) in a Faculty with senior Faculty staff, normally chaired by the Associate Dean (Students).

Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee (FESEC)

3.8. The Faculty Representative will be a member of FESEC. Faculty Representatives and School academics responsible for Student Voice will be responsible for reporting on common issues emerging from SVC meetings taking place in their School and also those

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[3] This responsibility will be delegated as appropriate by the Faculty/School and would normally be carried out by an Associate Head (Education) or equivalent role in each School, working in conjunction with Department of Student & Academic Administration (DSAA) Faculties administration staff in Schools

overseen by DSAA. Those carrying out this responsibility have previously been referred to as Student Voice Coordinator (Academic), and were supported by a role referred to as Student Voice Coordinator (Administrative).

arising from Faculty Student Forum meetings, along with the Associate Dean (Students).

4. STUDENT SURVEY AND REPRESENTATION MECHANISMS FOR COLLABORATIVE COURSES

4.1. Students registered on collaborative courses form an important 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 hear and respond to the student voice set out in this Policy should be implemented for collaborative courses, or comparable mechanisms should be implemented to seek student views.

4.2. Feedback will be secured periodically from all students at Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 on collaborative courses.

4.3. Module-level and course-level feedback should be systematically sought by a collaborative partner, including each time a course module is delivered.

4.4. Collaborative partner institutions are also expected to engage with the course representative system, and to appoint and train Course Representatives, as far as it is practicable, 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 have been implemented.

5.2. Mechanisms for the student voice to inform and enhance all aspects of course design, delivery and review have been developed. A pool of trained student representatives has been 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. Guidance from the Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships team within the Department for Student and Academic Administration is available 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 Annual Monitoring, 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.