Student Feedback Policy

Policy statement

Every student will have the opportunity to give their feedback of the different aspects of University life.

Overview

The University of Southampton (the University) and the University of Southampton Students' Union (SUSU) are committed to working in partnership to provide effective structures for student feedback.

This policy covers how feedback from students about their University experience is gathered and utilised in quality assurance and enhancement activities.

The University considers it important to create a culture and environment that promotes student engagement throughout the institution. As part of that, the University and SUSU are responsible for providing opportunities for students to give feedback on their experiences. The University listens to the student voice captured at programme, discipline and Faculty level and institutionally, and through activities led by SUSU, through mechanisms such as;

- Surveys (e.g. National Student Survey, i-barometer and a range of ad-hoc surveys)
- Focus groups and interviews
- Module survey
- Student representation through elected Course Reps, Academic Presidents and Faculty Officers
- Staff student liaison committees (SSLC's)

Collecting, analysing and responding to evidence are fundamental features of a research-intensive university, and the University employs professional researchers to conduct and analyse feedback from students at institution-level in order to make improvements to the student experience. There is a commitment to closing feedback loops demonstrated through regular 'You Said, We Did' campaigns.

Governance

This policy is jointly owned by the University and SUSU, who will work together to ensure the principles below are adhered to. In particular, the Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC) Education and SUSU's Vice President (VP) Education will have responsibility for ensuring that feedback is collected responsibly, acted upon where necessary and any actions taken are fed back to students effectively.

There are two formal groups which are responsible for different aspects of student feedback - the Market Research Planning Group and the Management Information Scrutiny group. Both have a reporting line to the Education and Student Experience Executive Group (ESEEG), and through there to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (ASQC), and both of which have student representation.

The Market Research Planning Group is responsible for co-ordinating a calendar of research projects conducted by the University and SUSU, to ensure that students have opportunities to provide feedback without creating survey fatigue and over-surveying.

The Management Information Scrutiny Group is responsible for reviewing analyses of research results and other management information, and making recommendations for actions to be taken by ESEEG and ASQC. It also has responsibility to support the regular 'You Said, We Did' campaigns.

In addition, there is a cross-University informal network which shares good practice around the National Student Survey, and there are a number of working groups which are established to support individual project lifecycles.

Student representation operates in line with the Academic Student Representation Policy.

Principles

1. Any primary research to be conducted responsibly and ethically

The research professionals employed by the University to conduct student research abide by the Market Research Society (MRS)'s code of conduct as do any agencies whom work is outsourced to.

The University also has its own ethical approval system, ERGO, which assesses all research using a risk-based approach. Where appropriate, student research may be referred to an Ethics Committee for further discussion.

Both the MRS code of conduct and ERGO share the same core principles for research methodology, for example;

- fairness of access
- protection of (vulnerable) participants
- anonymity and confidentiality for responses
- data protection

Where open-ended comments are collected, these are monitored for inappropriate language or identifying individuals before they are disseminated with the University or SUSU.

In order to protect the anonymity of respondents and provide robust data to be acted upon, a minimum report-able response rate/ number of responses are set specific to each project, both for analyses of 'total responses' and for sub-groups.

Any complaints raised through student feedback mechanisms will be referred through the Student Complaints and Appeals process.

2. Student feedback to be used to enhance the quality of the student experience and to ensure that the management of academic quality takes account of student views.

Student feedback is analysed at a number of levels, such as institutional-level, faculty-level, programme-level, and by demographic factors (such as fee status, widening participation factors etc.). These different analyses will need to be discussed in the relevant forums, for example ESEEG or ASQC for institutional analyses, Faculty Programme Committees or Executive Groups for faculty or programme level analyses etc.

Student feedback is routinely used in the formal processes of the University in order to enhance the quality of the student experience. Faculty performance agreements, business planning, programme validation and QME annual monitoring processes, all require commentary from the faculties and academic units on the issues raised in student feedback mechanisms, and any actions taken or proposed.

3. The University will feed back to students and SUSU about actions taken in response to student feedback.

Student feedback received through surveys or other research should be actively linked to the student representation system, with student representatives given access to the relevant analyses, allowing them to be should be discussed in forums such as Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLC's).

There are a number of mechanisms which may be used to directly feed back to students the actions taken as a result of feedback. These include;

– Emails from Director of Programmes, Heads of Unit etc.
– Regular 'You Said, We Did' campaigns, supported by a website
– Social media – for example the Library uses Facebook and Twitter

Guidance

Further guidance is available from the Market Intelligence team in Strategy, Planning and Analytics (SPA), contactable at planning@soton.ac.uk and/or the Quality MI Manager, contactable at h.ralph@soton.ac.uk

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