

Student Surveys Policy

Introduction

Student surveys are a valuable method of collecting feedback, which when acted upon can bring about positive change and improve the student experience. Surveys are therefore an important part of the overall approach to quality assurance and enhancement, and to the gathering of feedback from students. As such, it is important that surveys are effectively administered and promoted, that results are analysed and shared, and that actions taken in response to feedback are reported in order to 'close the feedback loop'.

This policy is concerned specifically with student surveys, as policies and best practice for other methods of gathering feedback are covered separately elsewhere. It aims to establish a coordinated approach for student surveying at Queen Mary by:

- defining the types of student surveys undertaken at Queen Mary and the responsibility for approving new surveys;
- assuring the quality of student surveys;
- maximising student participation in surveys through effective promotion and by monitoring the frequency at which students are asked to participate in surveys;
- setting expectations for the timely sharing of results;
- providing assurance that survey results are used for the intended purposes.

At Queen Mary, the Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB) is responsible for analysing relevant performance indicators in relation to student satisfaction.

Scope

This policy covers all surveys in which Queen Mary students are invited to participate. It does not cover surveys of staff, alumni or applicants, as this guidance would be more appropriately covered elsewhere.

The surveys covered by this policy are either administered directly by Queen Mary or are externally administered surveys in which Queen Mary has opted to participate. It does not cover surveys which are run entirely by external organisations where students are contacted directly (such as market research surveys). Surveys run by QMSU are also outside the scope of the policy, although the policy does promote ongoing cooperation with QMSU on matters relating to survey design, delivery and follow-up.

Types of survey

There are three types of survey at Queen Mary:

1. Core surveys

Core surveys are typically undertaken on a cohort basis and are centrally administered. They take place annually, or on some other recurring basis. The core question set will ordinarily remain the same to allow for internal, and where relevant, external, year-on-year comparisons. The Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB) determines which surveys are designated as core, and will generally receive an analysis of the results of core surveys. The following surveys are currently designated as core:

Survey	Frequency	Dates	Coverage	Responsible
National Student Survey (NSS)	Annual	January-April	All final year undergraduates	Student Experience and Surveys Coordinator
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)	Annual	March-June	All postgraduate taught students	Student Experience and Surveys Coordinator
Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)	Every two years	March-May	All postgraduate research students	Doctoral College
United Kingdom Engagement Survey (UKES)	Annual <i>(not running in 2021/22)</i>	February-April	All non-final year undergraduates	Student Experience and Surveys Coordinator
Module Evaluations	Two/three times per year	Between weeks 8-12 of each Semester	All undergraduate and postgraduate taught students	Academic Registry and Council Secretariat
Arrivals Survey	Annual	September/October	All new students registering to Queen Mary for the first time	Student and Academic Services

Proposals to add or remove a core survey should be brought to EQSB.

2. Non-core surveys

Non-core surveys are typically one-off in nature and may be limited to a specific School/Institute or Faculty. These could relate to a specific issue or set of issues, or be held to inform a wider analysis or evaluation of a topic or service. These surveys should be:

- Anonymous
- Used only for the purposes described
- Consistent and concise
- Relevant
- Timely
- Similar in design to the core surveys (i.e. make use of a five point Likert scale wherever possible)

Advice on the design of these surveys is available from the Student Experience and Surveys Coordinator. In some instances, ethical approval may be required for the survey.

Approval of a survey in a School/Institute should be sought from the relevant Dean (Education). Surveys which would cover more than one School/Institute are approved by the relevant Dean(s) (Education) in conjunction with the Heads of School / Institute Directors concerned. Proposals for surveys of an entire year or other cohorts require the approval of the Vice-Principal (Education), who may refer the proposal to the Education Strategy Advisory Team (ESAT) or the Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB).

3. Pulse surveys

Pulse surveys enable students to give immediate feedback on their experience. They are typically brief, with the same questions asked at regular intervals. The questions should relate to broad themes, and should avoid duplication across other surveys or module evaluation questionnaires.

Queen Mary has an institutional Mentimeter license to enable pulse surveys to be delivered during taught sessions. Detailed guidance on effective practice with pulse surveys is available from the Faculty Education Managers.

Limiting survey fatigue

It is important that students are not over-surveyed, particularly at critical times in the year such as when the core surveys are open for responses. The dates for the core surveys are published to staff and students (via Connected and MyQMUL respectively).

Minimal overlap in collected data

A lack of coordination can result in similar surveys being simultaneously administered to the same students, creating confusion and frustration for respondents as well as survey administrators. To prevent duplication of existing survey data, those looking to hold a non-core survey should first check whether the information sought is available from the core surveys, or from other sources. Before developing a survey for approval, it should also be considered whether there are alternative approaches to seeking feedback, such as focus groups or via Student-Staff Liaison Committees. Surveys should be held where they are the most appropriate mechanism for gathering feedback and do not duplicate existing efforts.

Survey promotion

Effective promotion is central to the success of surveys. The University makes guidance available via Connected and other sources. For core surveys, the response rates are available to School/Institute survey contacts during the survey window. Promotional activities, including with QMSU, are organised centrally for the core surveys.

In some instances, such as for the National Student Survey, there is external guidance on survey promotion. This guidance must be followed where it applies, and should be followed as a matter of good practice for other surveys.

Survey incentives

In some instances, it may be appropriate to offer incentives to encourage survey participation. Any survey incentives offered at a University level will be recommended by ESAT, taking into account any external guidance and/or requirements as necessary. Where Schools/Institutes wish to offer their own incentives for survey promotion, for either core or non-core surveys, the approach should be approved by the relevant Dean (Education).

Use of data and reporting of results

Timely analysis and reporting of results is a central element of delivering surveys. For core surveys, the reporting and any institutional analysis will be conducted centrally. Schools/Institutes and Faculties will have access to data in order to develop local action plans and responses.

It is expected that results from both core and others surveys are shared as appropriate with students and staff, and discussed at Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs), and School/Institute Education Committees. Relevant actions should be identified by these committees, and progress with their implementation should be tracked and reported. Wider dissemination of the results via QMplus and other channels should also take place.

Actions and responses relating to the survey results should also contribute to planning and review activities, and made available to reporting back to students where appropriate.

Storage of survey data and survey tool

The data from each core student survey will be disseminated as appropriate internally. Where possible, this will be via the Queen Mary business intelligence system, PowerBI.

For non-core surveys, staff should refer to separate guidance on data protection and retention.

Guidance and support

If survey administrators have questions about whether their survey needs approval or any other aspect of the Student Surveys Policy, they are encouraged to contact the Student Experience and Surveys Coordinator. Further guidance is also available from Connected.

Approved by EQSB: September 2021