



Student Voice Policy

Purpose of Policy

To outline the University's approach to gathering, learning from and responding to the student voice (the individual and collective views of the student body).

Overview

The Policy establishes key principles for gathering students' opinions on their University experience and for learning from and responding to the student voice.

For the purposes of these principles to reflect the undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research student bodies, 'Programme Representatives' and elected 'School Representatives' will be referred to as 'Student Representatives'.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The Policy applies to all students and to staff with responsibility for gathering student opinion and for taking action in response.

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Document control

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UK Quality Code	UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance : Student Engagement				
Policies superseded by this policy	Principles and operational notes for Student Staff Liaison Committees Learning from and Responding to the Student Voice Policy Learning from and Responding to the Student Voice Code of Practice				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 651 4490.				
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Student Voice Policy

Introduction

The University has a clear commitment to excellence in learning and teaching and enhancing the student experience. To ensure that the University maintains a high quality student experience it is essential that all students have an opportunity throughout their study to reflect on and evaluate their experience of academic life and the wider service offering. To this end the University engages with its students through a variety of mechanisms with a view to learning from and responding to the student voice from students individually, collectively or through their representatives.

Our commitment to working in partnership with students is articulated at the highest level in the University's Strategic Plan and the University Learning and Teaching Strategy. Staff at the University of Edinburgh currently work in partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association to:

- ensure that students are central to governance and decision making,
- ensure that students are central to quality assurance and enhancement,
- provide opportunities for students to become active participants,
- foster collaboration between students and staff.

The student experience is used throughout this Policy to encompass the learning, teaching and assessment experience and the wider student experience including experience of student support services. This Policy recognises that student views about their experience of the University are an essential part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement framework.

Key Principles for Learning from and Responding to the Student Voice

The primary purpose of gathering student opinion is to assure the quality of learning and teaching and student services, and to enhance the student experience.

The methods used to survey the student opinion should not disadvantage any student from participating. The methods used should provide equal opportunity for all students to feedback on their experience.

Student surveying must be conducted within strict ethical guidelines¹. Data integrity must be maintained through systematic approaches to collection and management. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents must be ensured. Students must be informed of the purpose of the survey and the uses that may be made of the data. Careful consideration should be given to the timing of surveys.

The benefits of surveying student opinion must outweigh the costs².

Students should ensure that their feedback does not breach the University's Dignity and Respect Policy³.

The unit responsible for gathering feedback from students must communicate actions taken in response on a timescale appropriate to student needs

¹ Student Surveys Ethics Committee <http://edin.ac/2gyAUHf>

² Contact the Student Surveys Unit for an example cost/benefit analysis

³ Dignity and Respect Policy <http://edin.ac/1Cq0VZY>



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Multiple sources of information will be used to draw insights. Sources of information include: surveys; the student representative structure; and Staff Student Liaison Committees. Where relevant, the analysis of data should allow for benchmarking.

Communicating Action taken in Response to Feedback

It is extremely important that student feedback is acted upon and that the action taken in response to feedback is clearly and effectively communicated to students. This will ensure that students feel their feedback is valued, shared, reflected upon and used for enhancement and they are clear on the action taken by the University in response to their feedback.

Mechanisms for Listening and Responding to the Student Voice

The following mechanisms underpin the University's approach to listening and responding to the student voice (Schools may supplement these with local arrangements):

- Student Representation
- Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC)
- Student Surveys and Course Enhancement Questionnaires
- Mid-course feedback from Students
- Student participation in Internal Periodic Reviews and Student Support Service/Thematic Reviews
- Student Partnership Agreement
- Student Panel

Student Representation

The University's student representation system provides multiple opportunities for the student voice to be heard. The Students' Association facilitates the student voice through Programme Representatives, School Representatives, Activities Representatives, Section Group Representatives, Liberation Officers and Sabbatical Officers. The student representation system functions through various structures and systems, including Student Council, campaigns, student-led projects, and referenda.

The Senate Learning and Teaching Committee⁴ agreed that from 2019/20, all Schools are expected to implement a programme-level representation system for taught provision rather than following a tutorial or class representative model. Exceptions to this will be considered by Academic Services and the Students' Association, overseen by Senate Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)⁵.

The number of programme representatives ('student reps') for taught provision in each School should be broadly proportionate to the number of students on programmes in the School. While Schools have flexibility, in liaison with the Students' Association, to determine how they organize their programme reps, a ratio of 1:40 is a useful guide.

⁴ Senate Learning and Teaching Committee 23 May 2018

⁵ Academic Engagement Coordinator and VP Education, Edinburgh University Students' Association, Academic Policy Officer, Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance



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The Students' Association provide targeted in-person training for student representatives ('student reps')⁶ which focuses on the programme level. Online training will also be available for students on online programmes and students on placement.

In addition to operating Programme Rep arrangements for taught programmes, Schools will work with the Students' Association to operate appropriate student representational systems for postgraduate research programmes.

Further information:

Student Representation <http://edin.ac/2qz69C2>

Students' Association <https://edin.ac/2wnxO1d>

Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC)

Student Staff Liaison Committees are held in every School and are the main forum for staff and student representatives to discuss matters relating to degree programmes and the student experience.

SSLCs provide a formal mechanism for communication and discussion between academic and administrative staff and representatives of the student body, on all matters related to improving degree programmes (at all levels of study including undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research) and the student experience. In line with the Programme Rep model, it is suggested that SSLCs would benefit from taking a programme-level approach. This would draw on the Student Representatives' feedback and mid-course feedback to identify areas of improvement within the student learning experience which contribute to the degree programme. Schools are encouraged to have a formal written remit for SSLCs.

At least one formal SSLC meeting should be held in each semester. This should be agreed in consultation with School staff and Student Representatives and ideally avoid clashing with courses students may be taking typically within the School. All SSLC members should be informed of the date, time, and location of the meeting, and invited to suggest any items to be added to the agenda. Schools should publish the dates of the meetings ahead of the meeting and agendas should be available in advance of the meeting. Online Learner Students and Student Representatives should have the opportunity to participate virtually or otherwise input electronically <http://edin.ac/2qzE25y>

Staff and Student Representatives are responsible for ensuring that students are made aware of how their feedback is acted upon after the SSLC meeting.

Operational Guidance: <http://edin.ac/2AiKqSo>

Student Surveys and Course Enhancement Questionnaires

Student surveys are a key element in seeking feedback from students and obtaining information to improve services and the student experience. Results are analysed and recommendations for change made based on the findings. Some of the findings may prompt further research to gain more of an understanding of how students feel about particular issues. Important student surveys include: the National Student Survey; the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey; the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey; and Course Enhancement Questionnaires.

⁶ Online training will continue for online learners, students on placement and in other exceptional cases.



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Further information: <http://edin.ac/2i1banf>

The main purpose of **Course Enhancement Questionnaires** (CEQs) is to enhance student learning, to provide School staff with information that they can use to guide and evaluate changes in course content and teaching, and to enhance support for learning across programmes and the broader University. All taught, credit bearing courses (UG and PG) that have students enrolled on them and are delivered by the University of Edinburgh, including the taught portion of research courses, should be surveyed using the University's standard survey tool and question sets.

Further information: staff <http://edin.ac/2w1vj1o> and students <http://edin.ac/2gAJEfQ>

Mid-course feedback from Students

Mid-course feedback aims to provide students with an opportunity to provide feedback to staff *whilst courses are running* on what is going well and to identify any problems with the course. Students will receive a response to their feedback, again whilst the course is still running. This allows students to identify issues which staff can adjust during the course so that the current cohort of students can benefit from changes made; and to highlight aspects that are working well. It also allows staff to respond to items raised which cannot be adjusted during the course and to provide reason(s) for this.

Schools must ensure that mid-course feedback is collected and responded to for all undergraduate courses which run for 10 weeks or more. Schools are responsible for determining how mid-course feedback is carried out, for ensuring that it operates in an appropriate way and encourages constructive feedback. If Schools think that a particular approach to gathering mid-course feedback might raise equality and diversity issues then they should take steps to mitigate the risks.

Further information:

- Examples for students <http://edin.ac/2i1J0Z5>
- Guidance for staff <http://edin.ac/2dOmswH>
- Equality and Diversity guidance <https://edin.ac/2wIXeMI>

Student participation in Internal Periodic Reviews and Student Support Service/Thematic Reviews

Student views are gathered as part of the University's internal periodic review and student support service/thematic reviews. For internal periodic review, mechanisms for engaging with students prior to the review are detailed in the [guidance](#) issued by Academic Services and for Student Support Service/Thematic Reviews, a reflection on feedback from students forms part of process.

Further information: <http://edin.ac/2gz59hg>

Student Partnership Agreement

The Student Partnership Agreement states how students and the University are working in partnership. It is reviewed annually and, over time, will document activity.

The University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh University Students' Association enjoy a long and productive partnership. This agreement builds on the strength of that partnership. It highlights how the wider University, including all students and staff, can effectively work together to enhance the student experience. It sets out our values, our approach to partnership and the priorities we have agreed to work on together.



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Further information: <http://edin.ac/2i1pIDg>

Student Panel

The Student Panel is intended to provide staff with easy access to a broadly demographically representative sample of the student population for research purposes, whilst insulating the wider student population from ad-hoc insight activity in an effort to prevent survey fatigue.

By signing up for the Student Panel, a student is agreeing to be contacted by the Student Data and Surveys team on a regular basis and asked to complete a variety of tasks. These tasks can range from filling out a short survey to attending a focus group. In return for their time, any student that participates in a task is awarded panel points which they can exchange for vouchers.

Contact: Student Surveys Unit student.surveys@ed.ac.uk

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