



Student Voice Policy

Purpose of Policy

The Student Voice Policy outlines the University of Edinburgh's approach to engaging our students in dialogue about their teaching and learning and wider student experience. It outlines what mechanisms are in place to support this dialogue at Course, Programme, School across the University as a whole.

Overview

Dialogue with students is integral to delivering a high-quality student experience. It is essential that all students have opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their experiences of academic study and the wider service. Students should have opportunities to feedback on their courses, to their School(s) and to participate in University wide feedback exercises.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

All students should have opportunities to participate in feedback exercises.

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Document control

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Approving authority	Senate Quality Assurance Committee				
Consultation undertaken	SQAC, Education Committee, Directors of Quality and Directors of Teaching network, and University wide consultation activities				
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Student Analytics, Insights & Modelling, Student Systems and Administration, University Secretary's Group				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Student representatives Student Staff Liaison Committee Guidance Dignity and Respect Policy Data Protection				
Policies superseded by this policy	Student Voice Policy Course Enhancement Questionnaire Policy Mid Course Feedback Guidance				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email student.analytics@ed.ac.uk				
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Student Voice Policy

Introduction

1.1 The University has a clear commitment to excellence in learning, teaching and postgraduate research and to enhancing the student experience at all levels of study and across degree programmes.

1.2 To maintain a high-quality student experience, it is essential that all students have opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their experiences of academic study and the wider service offering. To this end, we engage our students through a variety of mechanisms with a view to learning from and responding to their feedback individually, collectively and through their representatives.

1.3 Our commitment to working in partnership with our students is articulated at the highest level in the University's Strategy 2030. We work in partnership with the 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 in their learning;
- foster collaboration between students and staff.

1.4 Throughout this Policy, the student experience encompasses the learning, teaching and assessment experience and the wider student experience, including the experience of student support services. By its nature, experience is subjective and context specific. Student feedback is therefore an important counterpart to other quality measures such as summative assessment, employment destinations or the professional accreditation of programmes and the professional recognition of staff.

1.5 Students are not a homogenous group and as such there will be a range of student voices within the University. All conversations with students should recognise that our student body is diverse and that students will have varied views on issues. When seeking feedback from students, colleagues should ensure that conversations are inclusive and enable all students to participate so that as many student voices as possible may be captured.

1.6 Students' views of their University experience and student voice mechanisms are an essential part of the University's (including Colleges and Schools) Quality Assurance and Enhancement framework.

2. Quality Assurance Agency expectations

2.1 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education sets out the expectation that students are actively engaged, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.¹ This includes engaging students in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience. Formal structures of collective student representation and individual student feedback are twin core elements.²

2.2 Student engagement should be strategically led but widely owned by both students and staff at all levels, with students considering, deliberating and developing informed views independent of

¹ The Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education, 2018, 3, at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code#>.

² UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance: Student Engagement, 3–5, at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/student-engagement>.



Student Voice Policy

the University. The purposes of engagement are enhancement, innovation and transformation, and their effectiveness should be monitored and evaluated regularly, including via key performance indicators. Engagement should be inclusive and adequately resourced and supported, with responses to feedback communicated back to students.

2.3 Senate Quality Assurance Committee, as a key part of the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement framework, ensures adherence to these external expectations. Schools are required to report on student feedback and actions taken in response through their Annual Quality Report and periodically via Internal Programme Review, which also includes reflection on the effectiveness of the School's approach to student voice activities.

3. Underlying principles for student voice activities

- 1. Be enhancement-focused:** Ensuring each student has a voice, whether via representation or other feedback mechanisms, enables students to be co-creators of an improved educational experience.
- 2. Include all students:** It is essential that student representation and feedback activities be inclusive and accessible to all.
- 3. Celebrate and share positive practice as well as identify areas for improvement:** Representation and feedback should be valued by all as opportunities to celebrate strengths as well as to identify and share concerns, and student voice activities should enable both to be captured.
- 4. Involve students in the co-creation of feedback mechanisms:** To ensure greater engagement by students, and open, honest and balanced feedback, students should, as far as possible, be given opportunities to collaborate in the design and delivery of feedback activities³. Students should be made aware of the opportunities they will have to give feedback.
- 5. Adhere to ethical standards and be conducted with dignity and respect:** Feedback mechanisms must adhere to ethical standards, and feedback should be given and received in accordance with the University's Dignity and Respect Policy⁴. Students should be free to give honest feedback with no undue influence.
- 6. Adhere to data protection regulation:** Any activities that involve the gathering and storing of data must adhere to the University's Data Protection Policy⁵. This includes ensuring the use of compliant software (such as survey and polling tools). Where feedback results are shared, steps should be taken to protect respondent anonymity unless the student or students have consented to share their feedback without anonymity.
- 7. Be transparent:** When feedback is collected from students, it should be made clear why it is being collected, what will be done with it, how it will be used and by whom. There should be clearly outlined escalation routes for when feedback cannot be responded to directly. When decisions are made, or changes are effected as a result of student feedback, this should be highlighted.

³ Good practice examples of

⁴ [dignity and respect policy 2022.pdf \(ed.ac.uk\)](#)

⁵ [Policy and handbook | The University of Edinburgh](#)



Student Voice Policy

- 8. Be considered and responded to:** Students should be made aware of the information gathered, the conclusions drawn and, where relevant, the actions taken and why. Feedback may not automatically lead to change or action but should always result in a response and explanation.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give open and constructive feedback • Ensure feedback is in line with the University's Dignity and Respect Policy
Course Organisers/ Programme Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer at least one opportunity for students to provide feedback on their course each year • Ensure that all students have an opportunity to provide feedback • Engage with students in the design of feedback collection and explain how students can provide feedback on their course • Listen to student feedback and let students know how their feedback has or has not been acted on and why
Heads of School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out the School's approach to collecting course, programme and School level feedback, ensuring that the principles in this Policy are followed • Ensure that all students are offered appropriate ways of providing feedback at course, programme and School level • Ensure that students are engaged in the design of feedback processes • Ensure that School approaches to student feedback are reported and reflected on in the School's Annual Quality Report
Senate Quality Assurance Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that there are a range of appropriate ways for students to provide feedback • Review School Annual Quality Reports to ensure student voice activities are in line with the expectations in this Policy
College Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide fora for sharing best practice and resources • Advise on areas for development in the student voice guidance and toolkit

5. When can students expect to be able to give feedback?

This list is not exhaustive. Links to relevant policies and guidance are included.

Course feedback	All courses should offer at least one opportunity for students to provide feedback. This can be in the middle of the course, towards the end or both.
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Student Voice Policy

Student representatives ⁶ / Student–Staff Liaison Committee ⁷⁸	All appropriate School, College and University committees include student members who are supported to enable meaningful student participation.
School-specific channels	Schools may offer town hall meetings or other opportunities to provide feedback on School-specific issues.
University-wide surveys	Annual surveys offer an opportunity to provide feedback on a range of issues and more general feedback on how the University is doing. All feedback is anonymised and respondent anonymity is protected in published results.
Student Panel	Participation enables students to provide feedback on specific questions and to shape service design and delivery.
Have Your Say mailbox	Students may post comments about specific issues. These are shared with the relevant team and summaries of comments received are published on the University website.

6. Monitoring student voice activities

6.1 All Schools are expected to set out their approach to course, programme and School-level student voice activities. It is good practice for these approaches to be agreed with student representatives as part of SSLC discussions. Schools should report on their approach to student voice activities in their Annual Quality Report.

20th May 2021

⁶ [Student representation | The University of Edinburgh](#)

⁸ [sslcpolicy.pdf \(ed.ac.uk\)](#)