Imperial College London

Student Surveys Policy

1. Feedback from student surveys provides a valuable indicator of student satisfaction. It is used to continuously improve education and the wider experience at the College. This policy sets out the key principles which should inform all student surveys in the College and defines our surveys framework.

2. Key principles

2.1. We will ensure that data collected by student surveys are:

- Designed to contribute to reflection and continuous improvement by the College and Union

- Timely and relevant

- Based on a streamlined approach in which every question has a purpose

- Put to best use

- Based on consistent questions to ensure that progress can be tracked

- Where possible collected using sampling techniques to avoid 'survey overload'

- Collected through a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions

- Designed to enable internal and external benchmarking

3. Our Commitment

3.1. The College and the Union will:

- Ensure that sufficient resources are in place to analyse the results before undertaking any survey, using a range of analytic techniques to maximise the value of our data

- Only use a survey when other sources of feedback are not appropriate

- Ensure that all internal surveys follow the College's survey procedures and guidance

- Communicate the purpose of each survey, publish the results, produce clear action plans and report on outcomes, all in a timely manner. This will include sharing results with all relevant people within the institution

- Work together to encourage student participation and engagement

- Handle student and staff data responsibly with an emphasis on ensuring confidentiality. All personal data will be processed in accordance with the relevant Data Protection Legislation which is set out within the College's [Data Protection Policy and associated Codes of Practice](#) and the [Student Privacy Notice](#)

4.   Survey framework

4.1.   External surveys

- We will participate in NSS each year and in PTES and PRES in alternate years.

4.2.   College-wide surveys

- We will evaluate the quality of our educational experience using our internal lecturer/module evaluation survey (known as SOLE or MODES).

- We will evaluate the wider student experience using our internal Student Experience Survey (SES). Questions will be tailored to each student and will be designed to evaluate a wide range of services provided by the College and the ICU.

4.3.   Union Surveys

- The Union will adhere to the College's key survey principles outlined above.

- Other than the agreed surveys (listed above) the Union will only contact all students about a survey through existing Union communication channels e.g. Union Newsletter, Felix, Union Website, etc. Students who may have used a service may be approached for their feedback e.g. Summer Ball attendees.

4.4.   Local surveys

- Faculties, departments and support services may continue to run local surveys. However, these should adhere to the key principles outlined above.

- Support services may not contact students en masse to request participation in a local survey. However, surveys may be publicised using existing channels of communication e.g. via Felix, regular newsletters and on websites. Students who have used a service may be approached directly to provide feedback on their experience.

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Student Surveys Procedures

1. These procedures cover all College-wide surveys, as set out in the Surveys Policy. A College-wide survey is defined as a multi-Faculty survey.

2. **Oversight**

    *   Faculties, departments, support services and individuals wishing to run a new College-wide student survey should submit their request to the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) at least one term before the proposed survey start date. Departments should initially consult the surveys website and discuss their plans with the Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) so that consideration can be given as to whether the feedback sought could be obtained via an existing survey.

    *   Proposals for new surveys made to QAEC should include the following information:

        o   Brief details of why a new survey is required

        o   The proposed survey questions (or an outline of the areas to be covered)

        o   The proposed frequency of the survey and dates when it will first run

        o   Information on who will be responsible for the organisation of the survey and subsequent analysis of the results.

        o   Details of which committees will receive the survey and results, and how action taken in response to the survey will be agreed and communicated to students.

    *   Certain surveys may also require approval through additional routes (for example ethical approval).

    *   QAEC will approve the College-wide student surveys to be run each academic year.

    *   Any changes requested to surveys mid-year should initially be raised with the Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement). Major changes to existing surveys must be approved by QAEC. All proposals for changes, whether minor or major, must be raised with the Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) at least one term before the survey is due to start.

3. Content and participation

- Surveys normally should be run using the Qualtrics survey platform.

- Students should be advised when third party providers are being used to deliver/analyse surveys. The following suggested text may be used: "We use a third party provider, Qualtrics, to deliver/analyse our surveys. For more information, please see Qualtrics Privacy Statement." Alternatively if a different application is used then their Privacy Notice must be embedded instead.

- All surveys should aim to follow the same question format and scaling convention as NSS, PTES and PRES. The response set should be, from left to right:

  o "Definitely Agree, Mostly Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Mostly Disagree, Definitely Disagree, Not applicable"

- Where demographic data is being collected, questions and response sets should follow the guidance set out by the Equality Challenge Unit.

- It should be made clear to students whether the survey is anonymous or confidential.

- Students should be advised not to include personal data in their responses.

- Final year undergraduates (plus any non-final year students who are included in NSS) should not be surveyed in any College-wide survey except for NSS and SOLE. Year Abroad/Placement students should not be surveyed whilst on year abroad or placement.

- Surveys should run in accordance with the Surveys Policy and Guidance found on the Good Practice for Surveys Website.

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Student Surveys Guidance

1.   Designing your Survey

- The HEA have advised that when writing survey questions the following should be considered:

  o   Is the question relevant to the target group of respondents?

  o   Is the question compatible with the overall theme and purpose of the survey?

  o   Will the information from this question be useful? Can it be acted upon?

  o   What response format best suits the question (e.g. drop down list, multiple choice, free text)

  o   Are all the response options provided consistent with each other?

  o   Should the question be mandatory? Can everyone answer it?

- Keep the survey brief – an overly long questionnaire can negatively affect response rates.

- Consider the value of quantitative results vs qualitative results. Quantitative results are quick and relatively easy to analyse, qualitative results can provide insight but are time consuming to review.

- It should be made clear to students when third party providers are used in delivering surveys. Suggested test to use when running a survey via a third party provider is:

  We use a third party provider, Qualtrics, to deliver/analyse our surveys. For more information, please see Qualtrics Privacy Statement.

  Alternatively if a different provider is used then their Privacy Notice must be embedded instead.

- It should be clear to students that their data will be treated in accordance with Data Protection requirements. Suggested text to use is:

  All personal data will be processed in accordance with the relevant Data Protection Legislation which is set out within the College's Data Protection Policy and associated Codes of Practice and the Student Privacy Notice

- It should be clear to students whether the survey is anonymous or confidential. Anonymous is where it is impossible for the survey responses to be linked to an individual student. Confidential is where those administering the survey can link the students' responses to

individuals. If the survey is confidential, students should be assured that the results will only be published/shared on an anonymised basis. Suggested text to use when running a confidential survey is:

All data collected in this survey will be held securely. Results are confidential to [X], though we may choose to share or publish aggregated, anonymous results. We will not identify any individuals when reporting the results [internally or externally], and we will use our best efforts to ensure that no individuals can be identified by implication.

- If the survey is confidential, student data should be pre-loaded into the survey rather than requesting students to supply this information themselves, e.g.

  o Programme and department

  o Demographic information

  o CID number

- Students should be advised not to include personal data in their responses.

- Consider whether to include a Finish Later option which allows students to pause and resume the completion of the survey. (The HEA advises that Finish Later options can have a negative effect on response rates.)

- Consider allowing students the option to print their survey responses.

- The College's preferred survey software is Qualtrics. http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/webguide/technologyservices/qualtricssurveytool

- Plan the optimal dates for opening and closing the survey – refer to the Surveys Calendar to avoid clashing with existing surveys.

- In the introduction to the survey

  o Explain the rationale for the survey and indicate how long it is estimated it will take to complete

  o Tell students when/where they will be able to access the survey results

  o Provide students with a contact for any queries with the survey

  o Have a strategy for launching the survey, monitoring response rates and reminder emails.

2.   Participants

- Final year UG students (plus any non-final year students who are included in NSS) should NOT be surveyed in any College-wide survey EXCEPT for NSS and UG SOLE lecturer/module evaluations.

- Year Abroad/Placement students will not be surveyed whilst on year abroad or placement (unless survey is specifically for these students).

- Occasional students should not be included in College wide surveys, unless it is considered important to do so.

- For Master's level surveys, consider whether you need to include both part-time first year and second year students. [Part-time students are less likely to respond to surveys than full-time students, for this reason, the College includes only 2nd year part-time students in the PTES survey]

3.   Results

- Students may accidentally or purposely identify themselves or others or others in free text comments. You will need to have checks in place to assure that an individual's right to anonymity is protected prior to the circulation of results.

- Similarly, when analysing results, or allowing colleagues access to the raw data to carry out their own analysis, checks need to be in place to ensure that no individual can be identified from the demographic (or other similar data).

- When carrying out analysis make sure that results are not quoted for areas that have fewer than at least 5 responses and preferably 10 responses. This way students can be assured that any reported results will be anonymous and that they will not be identifiable.

4.   Feedback to Students

4.1.   It's important for students to have faith in the surveying process and that their responses will be considered and that they will receive feedback.

- Plan your feedback process in advance

- Send a "Thank you" email after the survey – thanking the students for taking part and telling them what will happen next with their results and when

- Formulate an action plan

- Ensure results (and action plans) are discussed in appropriate fora, e.g. Staff-Student Committees

- Publish results and action plans (consider the format and whether this should be public or internally accessible)

Approved by QAEC / Senate

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