(Author)
University Policy on the Collection and Use of Student Feedback at Module Level

(Title)
Student Needs and Academic Development Committee

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Introduction

1. In December 2009 the Academic Board asked the Student Needs and Academic Development Committee to review University policy and practice in relation to the collection and use of student feedback at module level. This document summaries the results of SNADC discussions and proposes amendments to existing policy and practice. The document will be presented to AC at its meeting on 28 January 2011 for discussion and approval. Colleges and AB are asked to consider the proposals at their January meetings with a view to formulating feedback that will inform the AC discussion of this matter. Colleagues are asked to note that the proposed generic questionnaire is currently being piloted and the results of this exercise will be assessed by SNADC before finalization of the content and format of the questionnaire.

Existing Policy and Practice

2. Current University policy on student feedback dates to 2005 when AC agreed that all modules or significant parts of modules should be subject to a student evaluation survey. Such student surveys were already in widespread use across the University and most, if not all, modules are evaluated through the use of some kind of questionnaire. The Quality Promotion Unit (and in the past the Teaching Development Unit) provides samples of questionnaires but it is the responsibility of academic units to choose their own questions and format. Staff and academic units also solicit student feedback through a number of other means including reports from tutors, discussions with student representatives, and learner diaries and class interviews.

3. Under the existing policy the results of student surveys are confidential to individual academic staff, the role of Heads of academic units restricted to ensuring that such surveys are conducted. While there is considerable anecdotal evidence that student surveys play an important role in prompting changes to module content, learning methods and teaching practices, there are no mechanisms for monitoring staff responses to feedback and the improvements that may result.

4. There is no central database of student feedback results; hence the University has no systematic information on student perceptions of teaching quality and no systematic means of reporting and evaluating general improvements in the institutional learning environment.

Proposed Changes

5. SNADC proposes that all modules or significant parts of modules should be evaluated by a generic student feedback questionnaire. A copy of the proposed questionnaire

is appended to this report. Provision would be made for staff and academic units to include additional questions on the questionnaire used to evaluate their modules. (**Note**: available resources may restrict or delay the rolling out of this aspect of the proposed new system). It is envisaged the questionnaire will be strictly numeric and quantitative i.e. there will be no space for open-ended comments by students (as is common in many of the paper questionnaires currently in use). SNADC's view is that it would be inappropriate to allow such comments when questionnaires' results will be centrally processed and stored and shared with Heads of academic units. Qualitative feedback from students is very important but there are other and better means through which this may be secured, including from student representatives and staff-student committees. It would also be open to staff and academic units to issue their own questionnaires seeking open-ended student comments, if they so desire.

6. The proposed questionnaire would completed by students online. The numeric results would then be made available to staff and Heads of academic units. A database of the results of all module surveys would be maintained centrally by the University and used to generate higher level aggregate reports that can be made available to the academic community and to public bodies.

7. The role of academic heads in this process will be to review the results of student surveys and, if necessary, to discuss with individual staff improvements in module content, teaching, learning and assessment practice. It should be emphasised that the results of student surveys of particular modules will be confidential to individual members of staff and the Head of their academic unit. This information will not be communicated, directly or indirectly, to third parties by the Head and will not form part of an individual staff member's personnel record. The sole purpose of this exercise is developmental and is aimed at improving the student learning environment.

8. It is envisaged that in most cases Heads of School will be responsible for the review, in conjunction with staff, of student feedback results but it may be deemed appropriate to devolve this function to the discipline, departmental or other sub-organisational unit level. Feedback from students on modules taught by the Head of an academic unit should be reviewed by their academic line manager (for example: the Head of College in the case of Heads of School).

9. Separate arrangements will be put in place for members of staff who wish to submit to promotion boards the results of student evaluation of their modules.

Action

10. Colleges are asked consider the proposed policy and questionnaire at their January 2011 meetings with a view to feedback to the January AB and AC meetings. AB and AC are asked to consider this feedback and, if appropriate, to approve the new policy and system with a view to implementation in academic year 2011-2012.

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Student Feedback at Module Level: Proposed Generic Questionnaire

Overall satisfaction
The questions in this section seek to assess your overall satisfaction with this module and how well it met your expectations.

1. To what extent were you satisfied with the quality of this module?

    To a great extent   *1   2   3   4   5   Not at all*

2. To what extent did this module meet your expectations?

    To a great extent   *1   2   3   4   5   Not at all*

3. *How valuable do you consider this module has been for you?*

    Extremely valuable   1   2   3   4   5   Not at all valuable

Learning, Teaching and Assessment
The questions in this section seek to gather your views on the extent to which the workload was appropriate for the credit available and the extent to which it stimulated your intellect.

4. To what extent was there a clear match between stated learning outcomes and course material?

    To a great extent   *1   2   3   4   5   Not at all*

5. Were the marking criteria for this module clear?

    Very clear   *1   2   3   4   5   Not at all*

6. How much did this module stimulate your interest in the subject matter?

    A great deal   1   2   3   4   5   Not at all

7. To what extent did this module challenge you to think?

    A great deal   1   2   3   4   5   Very little

8. Did this module improve your understanding of concepts and principles in this field?

    Yes, greatly   1   2   3   4   5   No, not at all

9. Would you say that the workload for this module was comparable to the workload for similar modules on your programme?

    A great deal   1   2   3   4   5   Not at all

Feedback on assessment

The questions in this section seek to assess the usefulness of feedback you received on your assignments undertaken in continuous assessment whether they be essays, reports or other work for which you receive marks.

If you answer no to question 10 please go straight to question 15. If you answer yes to question 10 please answer questions 11 -14.

10. Did you receive feedback on any of your continuous assessment assignments for this module?   *Yes or No*

11. To what extent did feedback on your work help you clarify things you did not understand?

    To a great extent   *1   2   3   4   5*   *No, not at all*

12. Was feedback on your work timely?

    To a great extent   *1   2   3   4   5*   *No, not at all*

13. How appropriate was feedback on your work?

    To a great extent   *1   2   3   4   5*   *No, not at all*

14. Did you receive detailed constructive comments on your work?

    To a great extent   *1   2   3   4   5*   *No, not at all*

Skills Development

The questions in this section seek to assess the extent to which this module provided opportunities to develop additional skills and competencies besides core knowledge in the subject.

15. How valuable was the module in developing new skills and techniques?

    Extremely valuable   *1   2   3   4   5*   *Not at all valuable*

16. Did you improve your ability to communicate clearly about this subject?

    Yes, greatly   *1   2   3   4   5*   *No, not at all*

17. Did you improve your communication/presentation skills overall?

    Yes, greatly   *1   2   3   4   5*   *No, not at all*

18. Would you say that as a result of this module you feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems?

    Yes, greatly   *1   2   3   4   5*   *No, not at all*

Course management and learning environment
The questions in this section seek to assess how well the module is managed and administered and to gather your views on the overall quality of the learning resources provided for this particular module.

19. Were changes in the module content or assessment scheme communicated effectively?

    To a great extent   1   2   3   4   5   Not at al

20. Were these changes notified in a timely manner?

    To a great extent   1   2   3   4   5   Not at all

21. Would you say that the module was well organised and ran smoothly?

    To a great extent   1   2   3   4   5   Not at all

22. How would you rate classroom facilities for this module?

    Very good   1   2   3   4   5   Very Poor

23. To what extent were there sufficient course materials to support your learning in this module?

    To a great extent   1   2   3   4   5   Not at all