Student Feedback

Importance of Student Feedback

The University aims to offer the best possible environment and learning experience to encourage students to perform to their full potential.

Students play a critical part in the evaluation, development and enhancement of the quality of this learning experience. Feedback from students allows the University to evaluate how its service provision is viewed by its most important group of stakeholders, namely its students.

The Bologna Process has put an increasing emphasis on the need for involvement of students in the quality assurance of higher education. Student involvement requires that students act as collaborators in, rather than merely passive receivers of, teaching and learning.

How is Student Feedback Obtained?

Students are invited, by means of an email providing a link, to complete a brief online feedback form, on an anonymous basis, towards the end of selected study-units. This process occurs on a twice-yearly basis: towards the end of the first semester, in January, and towards the end of the second semester, in June. In each case, feedback is collected after students have been assessed on that particular unit, but prior to publication of results.

Focus of the Student Feedback Form

The student feedback form focuses on the following issues:

1. General questions on the study-unit
2. Comparison between study-unit description and actual delivery
3. Lecturing methodology
Objectives of Student Feedback on Study-units

Student feedback on study-units has three main objectives:

1. To provide students with the opportunity to comment on the quality of their learning experiences, as required in preparation for and as part of review processes
2. To assess the success of academic provision in relation to the expectations of students
3. To provide feedback to lecturers in order to improve delivery and/or content of the study-unit

Anonymity of Student Feedback

The student feedback exercise is entirely confidential and anonymous.

The procedures below have been put in place to maintain anonymity and to ensure that students are not adversely affected by the feedback they submit:

1. Students who complete the online form are not asked at any stage for their names or any other personal details which may be used to identify them;
2. Student response data is grouped together for the entire class for the purpose of data analysis. It is therefore impossible to associate comments and responses provided with any individual student. Lecturers receive a report which summarizes all the information collated as percentage values;
3. Although students must log on to eSIMS to provide feedback, the system uses this information to present students with the relevant study-units for review. All student login data is kept separate from their feedback responses;
4. The online course evaluation system provides security and confidentiality that far exceeds that which is possible with traditional paper and pencil methods. The online format adopted is more conducive to maintaining student anonymity, since traditional paper and pencil methods require open-ended comments to be hand-written. In addition to this, students are able to provide their feedback in privacy, rather than during class time and in the presence of lecturers and other students;
5. Lecturers receive the aggregated results of student feedback after they have submitted the grades for study-units being reviewed. This ensures that the grades of students, even though not identifiable on an individual basis, are not affected as a group by the feedback which is submitted;
6. Only those study-units attended by a considerable number of students are included in the student feedback exercise;
7. Participation in student feedback is on an entirely voluntary basis. The system generates automatic reminder emails to those students who have not completed the feedback form. However, these students are not identified on an individual basis. There is also no penalty for abstaining from submission of feedback, since all grades are published irrespective of participation or non-participation in the student feedback exercise. Nonetheless, students are strongly encouraged to provide their feedback and use this opportunity to voice their opinions, since the validity of this exercise, and thus the continuing improvement of teaching at the University, relies on a high response rate.

How is Student Feedback used in the Quality Assurance Process?

After each semester, only a selection of study-units are evaluated to avoid student fatigue associated with this exercise, however all study-units will eventually be evaluated over a definite period. Results of the feedback process are made available to the lecturers of the study-units concerned, the Heads of Departments and the Rector, and areas for appropriate follow-up action are identified and communicated to the Departments. The results of the student feedback process, as well as the recommendations and the action taken on the basis of such recommendations are important considerations for the Programme Review which each Department is required to undertake.