



Student Survey & Feedback Mechanisms Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy provides an operational framework to enable a coordinated approach for the implementation of surveys and other student feedback or evaluation mechanisms within the University. The policy is not intended to constrain initiatives in gathering feedback from students via surveys. It does, however, aim to assure or improve the quality of such surveys and to monitor and regulate the frequency with which students are asked to participate in surveys.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework to;

- identify student evaluation mechanisms and describe their purpose;
- ensure the quantity and scheduling of student surveys is coordinated to prevent student survey fatigue and reduce the impact on response rates of core university surveys;
- ensure that data is collected, managed and stored according data protection, privacy and ethical principles;
- set out the requirements for closing the feedback loop;
- set out an approval mechanism by which surveys from external bodies can be deployed.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 *To whom does this policy apply*

This policy applies to all UL staff distributing a new or existing student feedback mechanism. This includes student surveys conducted by third parties, including benchmarking surveys, on behalf of UL and external surveys facilitated by UL.

1.2.2 *In what situation does this policy apply*

This policy applies to the use of student feedback mechanisms e.g. surveys, focus groups which are undertaken under the auspices of institutional research e.g. quality assurance and/or quality enhancement activities in support of quality reviews, professional /regulatory body accreditation or teaching and learning enhancement.

This policy applies to feedback mechanisms that are common to staff and students

This policy does not apply to surveys or focus groups used in independent research projects by staff or students. These mechanisms should be approved by the relevant research and ethical approval process.

1.2.3 *Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedure) is implemented and monitored?*

The Provost and Deputy President as Chair of the Quality Committee has overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy. In addition, the following roles have particular responsibilities.

- The Feedback Mechanism Owner is responsible for ensuring that the feedback mechanism is implemented in accordance with the principles outlined in this policy.

- The Feedback Mechanism Proposer is responsible for consulting the survey calendar to ascertain whether the information required is not already available prior to proposing a new mechanism to the Quality Committee.
- The Director of Quality is responsible for the maintenance of the survey calendar and providing guidance on the creation of new feedback mechanisms.

1.3 Definitions

Core university feedback mechanisms are those intended to assist the University to achieve its strategic objectives by informing institutional planning, policy development and decision-making in areas related to the student experience.

Implementation means the release and conduct of a survey of students.

Local feedback mechanism means a feedback mechanism that is not on the university calendar of core feedback mechanisms. A mechanism proposer may request the addition of a local feedback mechanism to the calendar for a specific purpose not already served by the core feedback mechanism. e.g. programme survey for accreditation purposes

Feedback Mechanism owner is responsible for ensuring that the evaluation mechanism is activated in accordance with the principles outlined in this policy.

Feedback Mechanism proposer is responsible for consulting the calendar of core feedback mechanisms to ascertain whether the information required is not already available prior to proposing a new mechanism to the Quality Committee.

Policy refers to any decision or directive that sets out the University's official position on an aspect of its activities. The Executive Committee, Academic Council, and/or Governing Authority can approve policies. These policies apply across the University.

Quality assurance refers to actions taken to monitor, evaluate and report upon the fitness for purpose, functional excellence and effective implementation of a particular activity in an evidence-based manner.

Quality enhancement refers to initiatives taken to improve the fitness for purpose, functional excellence and effective implementation of the target activity.

Independent research projects: Projects undertaken by staff members or students that undertaken for the purposes of personal research.

Staff members refers to individuals employed by the University on a full or part-time basis.

Survey means a set of structured questions that require recorded responses from an individual.

University community means all staff members and students of the University.

University means the University of Limerick and includes all subsidiaries.

University-wide refers to surveys that are advertised and open to all enrolled students.

2 Context

2.1 Legal & Statutory Context

This policy complies with the requirements of the following legislation and guidelines:

- [QQI statutory core guidelines for quality assurance](#)
- [European Standards and Guidelines](#)
- [Data Protection Legislation](#)

2.2 Policy Development and Consultation

This policy was developed as a result of widespread consultation with staff and students of the University and funded by the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement fund (2019). Consultation included workshops, staff survey (n=96), staff focus groups (n= 46) and student focus groups (n=31).

3 Policy Statement

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 feedback mechanisms with a view to learning from and responding to the student voice from students individually, collectively or through their representatives. Requests for such feedback will be undertaken only when necessary and where information is not available from other sources. This is to ensure quality and timing of surveys, maximize benefit from survey results, and ensure objectivity in analyzing and reporting the results.

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. This policy is informed by the following principles.

3.1 University Approved Mechanisms

The University will only use a number of approved feedback mechanisms to allow students and stakeholders evaluate and provide feedback on its activities. The University will agree its approved Core University Feedback Mechanisms. This shall be reviewed and published annually by the Quality Committee.

The calendar shall outline

- the title,
- purpose,
- intended audience
- frequency
- Owning unit
- Method of communication of outcomes and actions taken

Centralised surveys will facilitate a combination of core questions and questions that may be used to reflect disciplinary requirements, programme or context specific requirements or additional ad hoc requirements.

3.2 Local Feedback Mechanisms

The use of local feedback mechanisms shall be limited and proposed only where University approved mechanisms do not provide the information required for the purpose of local mechanisms. The mechanism proposer shall submit requests to use local feedback mechanisms to the Quality Committee using the approved procedures.

3.3 Closing the feedback loop

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 that they are clear on the action taken by the University in response to their feedback.

The Feedback Mechanism Owner is responsible for communicating the outcomes and actions of all feedback mechanisms to participants. This may be through publication on the University's website, on appropriate pages of the VLE, via email to specific cohorts or other mechanisms deemed suitable by the proposer. Actions shall be taken where feedback is representative of the cohort involved. Where action is not possible, the reasons for not taking action shall be communicated to the cohort involved.

3.4 Legal and Ethical Considerations

The data and privacy of those that engage in these mechanisms shall be protected by managing data as laid out in the University Data Protection Policy.

While the mechanisms covered under this policy are not subject to formal ethical approval, the mechanism owner is responsible for;

- clearly identifying the purpose of the mechanism,
- being sensitive to the frequency with which an audience is being asked to respond to requests to engage in feedback mechanisms
- ensuring participation is on the basis of informed consent,
- being clear about anonymity, pseudonymisation, and confidentiality and
- being sensitive to the issues that may be raised for participants in certain contexts.

3.5 Requests from External Bodies

Requests for student participation in evaluation or feedback mechanisms from external bodies e.g. HEA and collaborative partners shall be considered by the Quality Committee prior to their deployment. Requests will be considered on the basis contribution to national policy, inclusion in ranking activities, benchmarking activities, timing in relation to University mechanisms and relevance to the University community.

3.6 Tools Used for Student Feedback Mechanism

Any tools used for core institutional or local feedback mechanisms should be approved through the relevant university procedures in order to assure their compliance with data protection legislation and university policies on security.

4 Related Procedures

Procedures for requesting approval of a student evaluation mechanism are outlined in Appendix 1.

5 Related Documentation

- [Data Protection policy](#)
- [Research Integrity Policy](#)
- [Guidelines in Support of Research Ethics Procedures](#)
- [Records Management and Retention Policy](#)
- [Student Privacy Notice](#)
- Use of Data to Enhance Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy

6 Policy Review

This policy shall be reviewed within one year of implementation.

7 Document Control

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8 Appendix 1: Procedures for requesting approval for the addition of a student evaluation mechanism to the University calendar

Purpose

To provide a mechanism by which staff can request the permanent or temporary addition of a student evaluation mechanism to the University calendar of student evaluation mechanisms.
To provide oversight of such mechanisms to reduce the burden of surveys on students and minimise duplication.

Responsibility

The feedback mechanism proposer (MP) is responsible for submitting the request for approval of the mechanism to the Quality Committee.

The Director of Quality (or nominee) is responsible for communicating the outcome of the decision of the Quality Committee to the mechanism proposer.

Procedure

The MP will submit the request using the approved online form.

The Director of Quality will bring the request to the attention of the Quality Committee for consideration. This may be done by electronic means to facilitate a speedy response to the MP.

A decision will be communicated within 14 days of the request.

Form to be completed

<https://forms.office.com/r/gY3rS2rmh9>