

Implementation Plan for Tell US

February 2020 (Amended August 2020)

Background

Gathering feedback about the student experience of modules and programmes by use of surveys is one of the key ways we can engage with students to help us understand the impact of the design and delivery of our courses. In order to help departments run surveys and get the most out of the response, the university is investing in a central platform for gathering this feedback.

This task and finish group, chaired by Professor Mary Vincent, Deputy Vice President (Education), was established to determine the policies, processes and practices to underpin the roll out and ongoing governance of a pan-institutional framework for delivery of programme and module feedback surveys.

This paper sets out the recommendations from the group.

In reaching this point, the group has sought to balance practical considerations around timing, administration, efficiency and data capture with proper consideration of equality, diversity, confidentiality, staff development and student feedback.

The terms of reference and membership of the group can be found in appendix A.

Principles

1. Module and programme feedback surveys are primarily a reflective tool for individuals and departments. They involve students at all stages in order to understand the learning experience, identify areas for improvement and to recognise and share best practice. They also have an institutional purpose as it is one of the ways in which we can:
 - a. Provide assurance on the conditions of registration relating to the quality of our learning and teaching. From a regulatory point of view, it is specifically mentioned by QAA as a method which institutions can use to demonstrate, in reference to the quality code, that they have processes in place to effectively engage with students in developing and maintaining high quality programmes.
 - b. Demonstrate that we act on student feedback for the purposes of TEF.
 - c. Help us recognise opportunities for improvement that we can pursue in a timely fashion.
 - d. Help us understand the progress we are making in taking a Programme Level Approach.

2. Module and programme feedback is a collaborative process. Surveys should be headed up with a short piece of text that reminds students that:
 - a. They are providing feedback to help us to recognise best practice and improve modules.
 - b. They should make their feedback clear and specific in order to enable us to understand and consider what actions we may need to take.
 - c. We trust all students to make honest comments with the level of professionalism expected of a Sheffield Graduate, and with respect for all concerned.
 - d. We should all be aware of the potential that each one of us has for inherent and unconscious bias and how this may affect the way in which we answer surveys. Taking time to reflect on this can help to overcome it.
 - e. Whatever steps they take after graduation, it's highly likely that students will need to give and receive feedback in a diverse environment; by responding to surveys in a reflective way, as indicated by points a) to d) above, they are honing a key interpersonal skill.
3. The university should provide and make available information and guidance for students in respect to point 2 above, and look to engage the Student Rep network in helping to support the communication of it.
4. In addition, each faculty should have a communication plan which is agreed at FLTC and which includes key messaging around:
 - a. The purpose of module and programme feedback surveys as a reflective tool for staff and students that focuses on the learning and teaching experience.
 - b. Encouraging module and programme feedback as part of an ongoing dialogue between students and staff.
 - c. The responsibility of students to give professional, clear and specific feedback in a respectful and bias free manner. The ability to give and receive feedback effectively is a life skill which is valued in academic circles and by employers.

Practice

5. All departments must use the central system for module and programme feedback surveys (Tell US).

6. Each department must assign a member of professional services staff to ensure effective administration of the system.
7. The HoD is accountable for ensuring module and programme feedback is working effectively and for making sure that suitable processes are employed, as outlined in point 12 below, to ensure the surveys are part of the ongoing dialogue with students.
8. The system will be programmed with a default survey window starting in Week 9 and ending in Week 11. Students will be able to access the survey at any time during this period. The survey window can be changed from the default by departments to suit local requirements.
9. Teaching time should be put aside for students to complete the survey in class.

Reporting

10. Individual staff must see the reports and survey responses relating to the learning and teaching experience they are delivering. This is a reflective tool to help colleagues understand their own practice.
11. Individual module reports can be shared according to local practice but departments should ensure that:
 - a. All reports are made available to the Module Convenor, HoD and DLT to enable oversight and ensure any support requirements are understood.
 - b. Individual tutors, including GTAs, should not be able to see reports which explicitly evaluate other individuals. However, aspects of good practice can be shared according to local discretion.
12. Lines of reporting should be as follows:
 - a. Module convenors will receive reports on their modules and should, according to local practice, use these to open up the conversation with students and relevant teaching staff to inform any future actions. This will help them to provide a view to the HoD/HLT on their proposed actions and any support required.
 - b. Department Learning and Teaching Committees and Student-Staff Committees will receive and discuss an overview of the data together with an indication as to the response the department has taken or is proposing to take.
 - c. HoDs will receive an overview of the data together with reports from the Department Learning and Teaching Committee and Student-Staff Committee.

- d. Indicative response and satisfaction thresholds will be agreed at an institutional level to help HoDs and DLTs identify potential areas of concern.
- e. HoDs and DLTs should highlight any best-in-class modules to FDLTs as a recognition of excellence and to facilitate the sharing of best practice.
- f. HoDs and DLTs will be responsible for highlighting individual modules and the action being taken to the FDLT where there is a significant concern or shortfall in performance.
- g. HoDs and DLTs should define local practices to ensure they are sharing results and outcomes with the wider student body.
- h. Faculties will receive an oversight of the data in order to give assurance, enable best practice to be shared and to understand any systemic issues which they need to support.
- i. The Academic Programmes Office will have access to survey data to enable institutional analysis, and to support effective administration of the survey process and support to departmental teams.
- j. The Senate Learning and Teaching Committee will receive summarised reports from FLTCs to give oversight and assurance across the institution.

Questions and Data

- 13. The core questions will remain in place for 2019/20.
- 14. A panel comprising of internal experts (from SMI and other parts of the institution) will be commissioned to:
 - a. Define a single and manageable set of institutional questions, for both programme and module feedback, to be used from 2020/21 onwards.
 - b. Decide on an appropriate survey completion duration and align with a suitable limit to the number of non-core questions which may be asked.
 - c. Provide resources which enable departments to refer to expert guidance on question construction for where flexibility is given for non-core question setting in surveys.
 - d. Define indicative response and satisfaction thresholds based on the run of data over a period of time.
- 15. Establish an ongoing Module and Programme Feedback Steering Group.

- a. The group would:
 - i. Provide oversight of the process for module and programme feedback surveys.
 - ii. Monitor the data collected so that any issues that arise around response rates, satisfaction levels, differentials between staff groups (based on protected characteristics, subject to sufficient data) and student groups can be identified and any risk, for example of certain staff groups receiving less positive feedback, be mitigated.
 - iii. Invite departments and student staff committees to put forward examples of best practice in relation to collaboratively responding to feedback and communicating back to students.
 - iv. Define the terms of reference for the panel of internal experts, and receive their report to endorse to Senate Learning and Teaching Committee.
 - v. Ensure transparency by making available the report from the panel of internal experts together with the anonymised data to support it.
 - vi. Include members of the current Task and Finish group for continuity.

- b. This group will report back to Senate Learning and Teaching Committee.

Module & Programme Evaluation System Policy Group

Terms of Reference

The task and finish group will:

- Establish the policies, processes and practices to underpin the roll out and ongoing governance of a pan-institutional framework for delivery of programme and module evaluation. These will balance practical considerations around timing, administration, efficiency and data capture with proper consideration of equality, diversity, confidentiality, staff development and student feedback. The following areas of work will be included;
 - Mechanisms for the administration of surveys.
 - Annual cycle for data collection and review.
 - Hierarchies of access and extent of local permissions to adapt question and content beyond the core.
 - Mechanisms for the sharing of results, appropriate hierarchies and clarity around the appropriate use of any data collected.
- Ensure that students are engaged meaningfully in the development of new approaches and in determining their ongoing role in reviewing and responding to feedback.
- Develop a communications plan and ensure that this is used effectively to engage and support academic and professional services staff through the transition.
- Agree changes to the core questions for implementation in 2020/21.
- Ensure the Module & Programme Evaluation System Task & Finish Group has the information it needs to work effectively with the system supplier to ensure implementation within agreed timeframes and budgets¹.

The task and finish group will not;

- Revisit the decision to implement a single system approach or the need for a minimum set of standard questions.

Operating Principles

- Open, honest and transparent.
- Input will be sought from outside the group where appropriate.

Membership

Professor Mary Vincent (Chair) Interim Deputy Vice President (Education)
Jamie Butler Head of Academic Programmes Office
Dr Dave Forrest Faculty Director of Learning & Teaching (Arts & Humanities)
Professor Andy Hindmoor Head of Department
Dr Kirsten Bartlett Director of Learning & Teaching (Psychology)
Dr Matt Carré Director of Learning & Teaching (MEC)
Richard Simpson Representative of the Extra Faculty
Sissi Li International Student Officer & Representative of the Student Union
Charlie Porter Education Officer and Representative of the Student Union
Mick Ashman Campus Trade Unions and Department of Nursing
Patrice L Panella Head of Academic & Workplace Systems, IT Services
Katie Attwood, Interim Education Product Manager, IT Services
Daniel Morton (Secretary) Student Voice & Engagement Adviser, APO

Meetings are scheduled weekly but will be cancelled if not required.

¹ To be agreed as part of the contracting process.