

‘Online Student Evaluations: Determinants of Response Rates and Possible Solutions’ – LTDS Student Intern Report

Key Findings and Recommendations at a Glance

Schools are often unaware of other schools’ experiences. Ideas, innovations and communication strategies should be shared more widely so schools can benefit from each other’s experiences. By establishing dialogue, schools – which are all equally concerned with response rates – could benefit from other’s experiences and collaboratively develop new ideas.

- Sharing practice and innovation is possible through the [Case Studies of Teaching database](#).

There is a gap in the feedback loop. The feedback process can be improved to make sure all students are aware of the effects their evaluations have. It is reality that most changes will only benefit the following cohort of students and therefore communicating actions does not make a difference. This could be solved by using some time in the first session of a module to highlight some feedback from previous years and following changes to the module for the cohort now taking the module. This way, students are ensured that their evaluations are taken seriously and feel as if they have already benefitted from it.

- Please see the [You Said, We Did webpages](#) for information about how the University has responded to student feedback expressed in national surveys.

External and internal surveys are perceived and treated differently. Certain surveys are prioritised. Within schools there is a clear prioritisation visible. The NSS receives more attention than any other survey or evaluation whereas other evaluations do not receive the same attention and careful planning. This reflects in response rates. However, the NSS is also prioritised because schools are getting more support from central units.

- Beside the NSS, central support for other external surveys such as ISB, PRES and PTES, and module and stage evaluations, is the responsibility of LTDS. Please visit the [‘Student Surveys’](#) section of the LTDS website for details.

There are some statistically relevant patterns which are independent from schools. Newcastle University is achieving response rates which are similar to the national average or significantly better than national average. With regard to module response rates, postgraduate students are more likely to engage with them than undergraduate students, Semester 1 evaluations achieve higher response rates than Semester 2 evaluations. Satisfaction can have an impact on response rates but the direction de-pends on the survey and the targeted population. Reminder emails seem to have a positive impact on response rates. Furthermore, based on statistics, it might be easier to recruit students before or soon after survey launch than towards the survey closure.

- Statistical patterns have been taken into account in the design of central support for surveys from 2016 onwards.