Policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching

Purpose

1. This policy sets out the approach taken by Newcastle University (the University) to student evaluation of teaching. It should be read in conjunction with the Procedures for Implementing Student Evaluation of Teaching for National and Institutional surveys.

Overview

2. The University is committed to providing its students with a high quality student experience and ensuring that staff and students work in partnership to co-create learning experiences, as outlined in the University’s Education Strategy.

3. The University values and actively seeks feedback from students with the intention of supporting openness and responsiveness, as well as to improve the student experience.

4. This policy establishes key principles for gathering student feedback on the student experience and for responding to the student voice.

5. It supports the University’s key performance indicator to be in the top quartile of UK HEIs in each of the domains as measured by the national surveys: National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).

Scope

6. The policy applies to the systematic gathering of student feedback related to the student experience from any Newcastle University student. It also relates to access and use of results, and closing the feedback loop (see Figure 1). This policy does not include student research projects, nor does it include surveys targeting undergraduate (UG) or postgraduate (PG) decliners, leavers or alumni. This policy also does not apply to student opinion surveys conducted by Newcastle University Students’ Union.

Acronyms and Definitions and Acronyms

7. Acronyms applicable to this policy are located in Appendix A, while definitions are located in Appendix B.

Policy Principles

8. Every student must have opportunities to provide feedback on their experience at the University; however, participation in any feedback exercise is discretionary. According to the Student Charter, “students undertake to ... participate in opportunities to develop and improve provision, such as supporting student representatives and completing feedback forms.”

9. It is important for the University to use student feedback to support the process of assuring academic standards, as well as to underpin the enhancement of the student experience and quality of learning opportunities. Student feedback should be used in a number of ways including:

   • to ensure the effectiveness of programme design and delivery
• to enable a dialogue with students
• to help students reflect upon their experience
• to identify good practice
• to measure student satisfaction.

Figure 1. Student Evaluation of Teaching Feedback Loop for National and Institutional Student Surveys

10. Where relevant, data analysis should allow for benchmarking (e.g., against previous years, other internal data, and external sector data). In addition, data interpretation must take into account other forms of feedback supplied by University staff, external examiners, and, where possible, Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

11. In addition to the national surveys (i.e., NSS, PTES, PRES, and ISB), the University administers and endorses several institutional surveys, including student evaluation of teaching at stage level, and the Newcastle Student Survey (an NSS equivalent for non-UK based students). Information relating to the process for conducting stage, mid-module and end-of-module evaluation can be found in the procedures document accompanying this policy.

12. All UG and PGT stages are evaluated every semester using the University’s online survey system, unless an exemption has been approved (see Register of Exemptions). Student evaluation of teaching at stage level is set up and administered centrally by LTDS.

13. Any requested end-of-module evaluations, for instance for new modules or as part of a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirement, are run by LTDS.

14. Mid-module evaluations are expected to be conducted approximately half-way through any active module.

15. The University recognises that it can be beneficial to academic units to collect student feedback on specific issues via additional surveys, but academic units and services should be cautious not to over-
survey students. Information on the process for conducting additional surveys is available in the procedures document accompanying this policy.

16. Terms and conditions must accompany any survey where an incentive or other prize is offered for participating in the survey.

**GDPR and Confidentiality**

17. Student surveying must be conducted within strict ethical guidelines. Integrity of student evaluation mechanisms is paramount. Data integrity must be maintained by developing systematic approaches to collection and management at all levels within the University, and should adhere to the University’s Data Protection Policy and GDPR.

18. The University will be responsible for data collected for internally endorsed surveys even when it uses third party systems to support the evaluation process. All personal and performance-related data that could identify an individual student or member of staff is likely exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Private companies holding and/or processing University data on behalf of the University are exempt from the FOIA and contractually will be subject to the University’s standard terms and conditions, which require data to be handled in a secure and confidential manner.

19. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents must be ensured. The reporting process must not identify any individual student respondent unless their permission is explicitly sought and granted. Attention should be taken if sample sizes are very small to avoid inadvertently revealing an individual student. Students must be informed about how their feedback will be used, including the level of aggregation used in analysis and reporting of results, and the possible use of anonymised quotes; see Appendix C for more information.

**Free Text Comments**

20. Degree Programme Handbooks and Module Handbooks should include a statement about the student’s responsibility to provide constructive feedback on student surveys. This statement should acknowledge that feedback may be critical; however, feedback should not breach the Dignity at Work and Study Code of Practice. If a member of staff receives feedback on an evaluation in the form of an anonymous open comment that they believe breaches the Dignity at Work and Study Code of Practice, they should follow the process set out in the procedures document for internal surveys.

**Closing the Feedback Loop**

21. The University will ensure that students are made aware of the results of surveys and any actions to be taken based on them. This will include current students, future students and alumni as appropriate. Summary results derived from quantitative questions on national and institutional student surveys should be discussed at relevant Boards of Studies (BoS), Student-Staff Committees (SSC), and any other relevant School or service bodies.
22. Schools are required to provide all students with consolidated feedback on key actions taken in response to student feedback at the start of each semester. In case of mid-module evaluations, any actions that can be taken while the module is still running should be communicated to students before the module ends wherever possible. Guidance is available on the LTDS website.

23. Academic unit action plans should be received at and appear in the minutes of the relevant Board of Studies and Student-Staff Committee. Relevant action points and examples of effective practice should be included in the Annual Monitoring and Review report (for taught provision) and the Annual Report (for research degree programmes). Services should report on their responses and actions in the annual Planning Update, which is presented to Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC).

Roles and Responsibilities

24. This policy requires involvement from:
   a. staff with responsibilities for planning, delivery and/or leadership of learning and teaching within University programmes, including casual, sessional, fixed-term and contract teaching staff;
   b. staff with administrative responsibilities relating to learning and teaching within University programmes;
   c. staff with responsibilities for planning, delivery and/or leadership of University student support services, including extra-curricular activities; and
   d. students, both individually and the organisations that represent them.

25. Specific roles and responsibilities are outlined in the Procedures for Implementing Student Evaluation of Teaching which accompany this policy.

List of Appendices

26. Appendices that accompany this policy include:

- Appendix A: List of Acronyms
- Appendix B: Definitions
- Appendix C: University Endorsed Survey Summaries

Policy approved by UEC xx
Policy last modified by Learning and Teaching Development Service (LTDS) November 2019.

Intended for use by:
- All academic staff
- Academic Deans
- Boards of Studies
- Degree Programme Director
- DELT/HELT
- Heads of Academic Units
- Heads of Services
- Module Leaders
- Professional Service Staff
- Student Experience Sub-Committee
- Student Reps
- Survey Champions (national surveys)

| Contact (for queries about this document): | ltds@ncl.ac.uk #83978 |
Appendix A: List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BoS</td>
<td>Board of Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continued professional development</td>
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<td>DELT</td>
<td>Director of Excellence in Teaching</td>
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<td>DPD</td>
<td>Degree Programme Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FT</td>
<td>full-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>HELT</td>
<td>Head of Excellence in Teaching</td>
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<td>HESA</td>
<td>Higher Education Statistics Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISB</td>
<td>International Student Barometer</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSS</td>
<td>National Student Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUIS</td>
<td>Newcastle University International Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUL</td>
<td>Newcastle University London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMed</td>
<td>Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>OfS</td>
<td>Office for Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDR</td>
<td>Performance and Development Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>postgraduate</td>
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<tr>
<td>PGT</td>
<td>postgraduate taught</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>Postgraduate Research Experience Survey</td>
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<td>PT</td>
<td>part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTES</td>
<td>Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>SESC</td>
<td>Student Experience Sub-Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC</td>
<td>Student-Staff Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>UG</td>
<td>undergraduate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

**Anonymous/anonymised:** student responses to evaluations will either be anonymous (i.e. the student is not able to be identified) or anonymised (i.e. the system will be able to identify students who have/have not participated but student names will never be attached to individual responses).

**Closing the feedback loop:** the process of letting students know how their responses have been or will be used by the University.

**Confidential:** results will be considered in such a way as to maintain the confidentiality of participant data.

**EvaSys:** EvaSys is a software package used to construct, administer, and analyse module and stage evaluations and the Newcastle Student Survey; see [http://www.evasys.co.uk/](http://www.evasys.co.uk/).

**HECoS:** A new subject coding system - the Higher Education Classification of Subjects - developed to replace the JACS system (see JACS below).

**HESA:** is a charitable company that collects a range of UK-wide data from universities, higher education colleges and other differently funded providers of higher education. Data is provided to UK governments and higher education funding bodies to support their work in regulating and funding higher education providers. In addition, information derived from the data is published as official statistics and in many accessible formats for use by a wide range of organisations and individuals for a variety of purposes, including HE providers, academic researchers, students, prospective students, private companies, professional bodies and the press and media. See [https://www.hesa.ac.uk/](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/).

**i-graduate:** an independent company that administers the ISB, including analysis; see [http://www.i-graduate.org/](http://www.i-graduate.org/) for further information.

**Intercalating:** normally refers to time away from University study for a) medical/dental students to pursue a one-year research degree in a related field and then return to their main degree course, or b) students to gain work experience, or experience in industry on a placement or study abroad (i.e., ‘year abroad’) at a different University.

**Incentive/reward:** any benefit offered to respondents to encourage participation.

**Ipsos MORI:** an independent market research company that administers the NSS, including analysis; see [www.ipsos-mori.com](http://www.ipsos-mori.com) for further information.

**JACS:** Joint Academic Coding System – subject grouping codes used by HESA and UCAS to classify subjects of study. Now replaces by a new subject coding system (see HECoS).

**OfS:** Office for Students which funds and regulates universities and colleges in England. See [https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/).

**Response rate:** the number of eligible students who have answered the survey divided by the number of people in the target population.

**Student feedback:** solicited evaluation by students on any aspect of the student experience.
**Student survey**: includes questionnaires and evaluations where qualitative and/or quantitative data is systematically collected online or in writing, targeting an identified cohort of students.

**Target list**: the list of students to be included in a given survey.

**Target population**: all students eligible to participate in a given survey; this is a direct corollary to the target list.

**Threshold**: specified number of respondents needed for a given survey in order to publish results.

**You Said, We Listened process**: a formal means of closing the feedback loop, where students can easily access information regarding whether their issues have been addressed or whether the issue is still in the process of being resolved.
# Appendix C: Endorsed Survey Summaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Name</th>
<th>Target Population Parameters</th>
<th>Purpose/Use</th>
<th>Survey Provider</th>
<th>Fieldwork</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Student Barometer (ISB)²</td>
<td>All part-time (PT) and full-time (FT) EU and international undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) students at Newcastle main campus and Newcastle University London (NUL) students, including study abroad and exchange students. It excludes Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed), Newcastle University International Singapore (NUIS) students, all eLearners regardless of whether they are UK-based, and INTO pre-sessional English course students.</td>
<td>To make informed decisions to enhance the international student experience and drive successful recruitment and marketing strategies.</td>
<td>i-graduate</td>
<td>October-November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Student Survey (NSS)²</td>
<td>All PT and FT UK, EU, and international UG students in their final year of study at Newcastle main campus and NUL, including eLearning students based in the UK. Non-UK based eLearning students should be excluded as well as incoming and exchange students. HESA generates the initial NSS target lists created from the return made by the University for the preceding year, Academic Units have a short window of time to adjust the list in late September/ early October.</td>
<td>To contribute to public accountability, help inform the choices of prospective students and provide data that allows informed decisions to be made to enhance the UG student experience.</td>
<td>Ipsos MORI</td>
<td>February - April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle Student Survey²</td>
<td>All PT and FT UK, EU, and international UG students in their final year of study at NUMed or NUIS, or registered as a non-UK based eLearning student.</td>
<td>Same as for the NSS.</td>
<td>EvaSys, Electric Paper, Ltd.</td>
<td>same as the NSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)²</td>
<td>All PT and FT UK, EU, and international postgraduate research (PGR) students (including e.g., IPhDs, DocClinPsych, EngDs) at all campuses (e.g., Newcastle main campus, NUMed, NUIS, and NUL).</td>
<td>To make informed decisions to enhance the PGR student experience and drive recruitment and marketing strategies.</td>
<td>Advance HE</td>
<td>March – May (biennially)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)²</td>
<td>Most PT and all FT UK, EU, and international postgraduate taught (PGT) students studying a programme of at least 60 credits, the greater part of which is at M level at all campuses (Newcastle main campus, NUMed, NUIS, and NUL), including eLearning, study abroad, and exchange students. All first year PT students are excluded, except when they are on a PGT programme that is one year PT only (e.g., PG Certificates). Also</td>
<td>To make informed decisions to enhance the PGT student experience and drive recruitment and marketing strategies.</td>
<td>Advance HE</td>
<td>April – June (annually)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Name</td>
<td>Target Population Parameters</td>
<td>Purpose/Use</td>
<td>Survey Provider</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module Evaluation (exemption)</td>
<td>PT and FT UK, EU, and international UG and PGT students on specified taught modules delivered at Newcastle main campus, NUMed, NUIS, NUL, or through eLearning.</td>
<td>To make informed decisions to enhance the taught student experience and the quality of taught provision.</td>
<td>EvaSys, Electric Paper, Ltd.</td>
<td>Only for new modules or to support accreditation; to be confirmed by the academic unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Evaluation</td>
<td>All PT and FT UK, EU, and international UG and PGT students, except intercalating and final stage, at Newcastle main campus, NUMed, NUIS, NUL, or through eLearning.</td>
<td>To make informed decisions to enhance the UG postgraduate research student experience.</td>
<td>EvaSys, Electric Paper, Ltd.</td>
<td>Every semester; to be confirmed by the academic unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Module Evaluation</td>
<td>All modules delivered at Newcastle main campus, NUMed, NUIS, NUL, or through eLearning.</td>
<td>To make informed decisions to enhance the module and therefore student experience while it is still running.</td>
<td>Module leaders</td>
<td>Each time a module is delivered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. anonymised quotes may be used from these surveys to support the stated purpose/use of a given survey.
2. all results will be aggregated by a range of categories (i.e., programme, subject area, School, Faculty, University), where 10 students respond and 50% of the reporting category respondents participate; otherwise, results will be reported at the next higher level of aggregation.
3. aggregation will occur at the module level, where qualitative feedback is provided to a limited number of individuals according to Table 1.
4. aggregation will occur at the programme level, where qualitative feedback is anonymised.