

# Student Voice Policy



## Introduction

**Student Voice** is a significant aspect of education. A high quality education experience is dependent on students having their voice heard. In order to embed students as partners in their education, there need to be a variety of opportunities for all students to give feedback on their experience at the University of Wolverhampton. This Policy recognises that student views about their experience at the University are an essential part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement framework.

Engaging students and ensuring they are represented at various levels within the institution are key drivers for delivering Student Voice at the University of Wolverhampton.

Through enacting this policy, the University expects to meet and demonstrably exceed the indicators of sound practice established in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education<sup>1</sup> whereby: *“Higher Education providers actively engage students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience”*.

The policy encompasses all our students' irrespective of their course, level of study, mode of study and location although, the application of specific elements of the policy may differ depending on student characteristics and circumstances.

## Student Voice principles

The primary purposes of student feedback are to:

- Enhance and improve all aspects of the student experience
- Enhance and improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment

At the University of Wolverhampton the student voice informs all planning and decision-making, at both strategic and operational levels. The University of Wolverhampton and Wolverhampton Students' Union work in partnership to develop and promote this policy, and to monitor its effectiveness.

The student voice complements and feeds into the University's quality processes.

**Our principles are aligned with the statement in the QAA Quality Code that:**

“It is widely accepted throughout the sector that the views of all students, both individually and collectively, should inform activities undertaken by providers. This should, in turn, inform quality processes and practice with the purpose of ongoing improvement of the student experience, for current and future cohorts.”

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<sup>1</sup> UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance Student Engagement 2018

## Listening and Responding to the Student Voice

The main channels that we use for listening and responding to Student Voice are:

- Student surveys
- Student representation
- Student participation in quality assurance and enhancement

## Student Surveys

Student feedback should be systematically and confidentially collected from students on all University of Wolverhampton-delivered taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

**Student surveys** are therefore a key element in seeking feedback from students and obtaining information to improve services and the student experience.

The University of Wolverhampton will participate in all relevant sector-wide surveys and review its participation in line with sector developments. These include the National Student Survey (NSS); Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES); the UK student experience survey (UKES); and the Graduate Outcomes survey (GOS). We will also participate in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).

Ipsos Mori carries out the NSS, a satisfaction survey for all final year undergraduate students, and Advance HE provides the PTES, PRES and UKES satisfaction surveys which are used for surveying postgraduate taught, postgraduate research and undergraduate students (excluding final year students') respectively. HESA manages the delivery of the GOS, 15 months after students complete their studies to understand their career destinations and progression. Graduate Voice is a key feature of this survey.

In addition, 'pulse' surveys of student opinion will be carried out to assess student views, e.g. during key strategic projects; to evaluate the impact of policy implementation. The timing of 'pulse' surveys will be overseen by the Student Voice working group.

While using surveys as a means of collecting feedback we will:

- inform students' of the purpose of the survey
- guard students' against survey fatigue avoiding unnecessary surveys and giving careful consideration to the timings of the survey,
- ensure the methods used should not disadvantage any student from participating and providing their feedback on the matter of the survey,
- abide by the provisions of GDPR maintaining data security and confidentiality,
- commit to maintaining anonymity of all respondents unless required by law or where there are genuine concerns for student welfare in line with our statutory obligations,
- and ensure the benefits of surveying must outweigh the costs.

Results from surveys will be analysed and recommendations for change made based on the findings (see Appendix 1 for more details on the process). Some of the findings may prompt further research to gain more of an understanding of how students feel about particular issues resulting in 'pulse surveys' as described above.

## Student Representation

**Student representation** is encouraged across all levels of the institution as a fundamental part of hearing and acting upon the student voice at the University. The University's student representation system provides multiple opportunities for the student voice to be heard. The Students' Union (SU) facilitates the student voice through Course Representatives, School Representatives, and SU Elected Officers "Student Reps".

By talking and listening to students, Student Reps will gather collective views to present to the University and the SU, without making assumptions about student opinion and/or experience. The representative processes will define the view of the student community.

Student Reps feedback directly to University staff on all issues relating to the student experience typically through membership of appropriate committees, working groups and provision of accurate feedback.

As well as communicating student views to the University, Student Reps, in conjunction with the SU and University, should close the feedback loop by communicating information and actions committed in response to feedback through efficient communication channels, such as through social media, student emails, and the SU and University websites.

The student representation system functions through various structures and systems, including Course Committees, School Councils, campaigns, quality assurance and periodic reviews. For postgraduate research students, elected representatives sit on the faculty research committee.

The specific roles and responsibilities for Student Reps, University staff and methods for election /recruitment of Student Reps are provided in the SU Guidance Document.

Guidance on specific roles and responsibilities for postgraduate research student representatives, and methods of election/recruitment, is provided by the Doctoral College.

## Student participation in quality assurance and enhancement

We are committed to ensuring that students and their representatives are actively engaged in our quality assurance and enhancement activity, and that the collective student voice helps to inform and enhance all aspects of course design, delivery and review. A pool of trained student representatives has been developed which can be drawn upon for activity such as programme approval panels and periodic reviews.

Student feedback can be pivotal in helping us to understanding what works well on our programmes, and what requires enhancement. We therefore work with our students where we are looking to enhance our programmes, and on any 'material' changes to the delivery of the provision. We also ensure that where we've made a change to our delivery, we flag this for the next cohort.

Our review panels, including those for review with our collaborative partners, include a student representative on the review panel, and always include a meeting with students on the programmes being reviewed so we can understand the student experience first-hand, and reflect what works well – or what needs improvement – in the review outcomes.

All of our programmes undertake continuous monitoring which considers student outcomes, and our programme teams will share progress with their actions with student representatives during the academic year.

## Student Panels

**Student panels** may be formed to be a broadly demographically representative sample of the student population for research focussed on certain specific areas of student experience, whilst insulating the wider student population from ad-hoc insight activity in an effort to prevent survey fatigue.

By signing up for the Student Panel, generally recruited by the Students' Union, however could also be organised by an academic or service department, a student is agreeing to be contacted in order to complete a defined task by an agreed timescale. These tasks can range from filling out a short survey to attending a focus group. In return for their time, any student that participates in panel may be compensated for their time through vouchers.

# Appendix 1

## Student Voice Planning and Review Cycle

