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A Guide to Using Student Feedback

DAQ Guide 6 - January 2005



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For help and advice on the information contained within this guide, please contact the Quality Officer (Performance Analysis) in the Department of Academic Quality or visit our website at **www.dmu.ac.uk/quality**.

# Academic Quality Quality Academic Quality Qua

# Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to outline the minimum requirements of the University in collecting and using student feedback and recommendations for ensuring these requirements are met. These guidelines were approved by AQSC in June 2004 and faculties are expected to ensure that suitable mechanisms are in place for operation from 2004-5. These guidelines relate primarily to standard undergraduate modules and programmes. Guidance on alternative mechanisms for other modes and levels of module and programme delivery are available on the Department of Academic Quality intranet site: intranet.dmu.ac.uk/qa. Reference should also be made to DAQ Guide 5 – Module Evaluation.

As quality assurance arrangements have become more formalised, so too have the arrangements for the collection, analysis and use of student feedback. The increase in student numbers has inevitably led to a decrease in the opportunities for informal methods of gathering feedback. Modular schemes have often added to the anonymity of the student experience. These trends have led to the gradual replacement of informal methods of gathering views with more formal mechanisms. The widespread use of student feedback surveys across the HE sector is the most conspicuous evidence of these changes.

HEFCE (October 2003/51) expects the following information to be available in all HEIs:

Information on student satisfaction with their HE experience, covering the views of students on:

- Arrangements for academic and tutorial guidance, support and supervision
- Library services and IT support
- Suitability of accommodation, equipment and facilities for teaching and learning
- Perceptions of the quality of teaching and the range of teaching and learning methods
- Assessment arrangements
- Quality of pastoral support.

#### Section 1: Module Level Feedback

The collection of feedback from students about modules is a major and vital part of the University's quality assurance processes. Feedback at this level should provide rapid and valuable guidance to the module leader on the performance of the module. It is the responsibility of the module leader to gather feedback and ensure that the outcomes are addressed.

There are four minimum requirements that must be fulfilled:

- Collection of module feedback
- · Reporting of feedback to SAB
- Keeping students informed of action/responses to feedback see general guidance section
- Maintaining records see general guidance section.

#### Collection of Module Feedback

SABs should have a method in place to gather student feedback on the module content, delivery, assessment and resources as well as students' self-assessment of their engagement in the learning process. While questionnaires are the preferred method to be used, the wish to encourage new initiatives has resulted in the recommendation of a minimum level of expectation rather than a standardised module questionnaire. Headings should be used under which a variety of questions may be selected by each module leader from a bank of questions. Additionally module leaders may prefer to use their own questions under each heading to address more specific and local issues.

Under the Data Protection Act, certain types of personal information are deemed to be sensitive and as a result explicit agreement has to be obtained before the data can be collected. This includes racial or ethnic origin and physical or mental health. Module questionnaires do not normally request this information. If you need to gather this information you should consult the University Data Co-ordinator for this purpose.

### Questionnaire Layout

The module feedback form in Section 4 is presented to illustrate content and layout.

The following headings should be used on module questionnaires:

- The Module to cover the planning of the module, the overall content, the module guide, the provision of material and the fit with other modules
- **Module Delivery** to cover the communication of the material and the students' participation
- Module Support to cover the response of staff to students' issues, the use of library resources, ICT, Blackboard, academic guidance and the quality of accommodation

- Module Assessment to cover the delivery and presentation of criteria, types of assessments, their timing and the quality of feedback
- **Concluding comments** to cover the value of the module to the students, their overall views, and the link to progression or careers.

It is recommended that a maximum of 24 questions be used to cover these topics. In addition, students should have the opportunity to make free text comments on any aspect of the module. Questions should be selected from the following question banks.

#### The Module

- The module was well planned
- At the start of the module I received a clear module guide
- The module content was up-to-date
- The module had good quality teaching material
- The module fits well with the course and other modules
- I feel I am learning what I need to know

#### **Module Delivery**

- I was able to keep up with the pace of work
- Material was communicated clearly
- The module was conveyed with enthusiasm
- The delivery stimulated me to think further
- Staff encouraged participation in the sessions

#### **Module Support**

- There are opportunities for students to raise issues
- Staff respond well to issues/problems raised by students
- There was good library support for the module
- I found the recommended text book useful
- · Appropriate information technology support was provided
- Material provided on the module website/Blackboard was useful
- The rooms used for teaching were suitable
- The academic guidance offered is useful

#### **Module Assessment**

- Assessment criteria were clearly described and understood
- Appropriate types of assessment were used to assess the module
- Sufficient help was provided as I prepared for assessment
- There was sufficient time to prepare assignments
- There was sufficient time to prepare for examinations
- I found the feedback provided helpful

#### **Concluding Comments**

- The module was challenging
- This was an interesting/worthwhile module
- I would recommend this module to other students
- The module is relevant to my career aspirations
- I have engaged in the learning process

# Section 1: Module Level Feedback

# Response Scales

Scales are commonly used to record students' opinions of the module. This makes data easier to code and quantify. The following are examples of a variety of scales which may be used.

- How much of the material was new to you?
   [0-20%] [21-40%] [41-60%] [61-80%] [81-100%]
   (Faculty of Applied Sciences Module Questionnaire)
- The module was easy to understand.

[Strongly agree]

[Agree]

[Neutral]

[Disagree]

[Strongly disagree]

(Faculty of Applied Sciences Module Questionnaire)

- Did the module successfully fulfil its aims and objectives?
   (5 is positive, 1 is negative) [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
   (Media Studies Module Appraisal Questionnaire)
- The lectures were informative.

[Nearly all the time]

[Most of the time]

[About half the time]

[Some of the time]

(Political/American/International Relations Module Appraisal Questionnaire)

How well did the staff communicate about the subject?
 [Very well] [Well] [Satisfactorily] [Poorly]
 (English Student Module Evaluation)

# Reporting of Feedback to the SAB

There should be a procedure in place for the analysis and reporting of this feedback to the SAB. The section on student feedback within the module evaluation form provides a format for achieving this, as follows:

- How is student feedback gathered for this module? If feedback is gathered through a questionnaire, indicate the proportion of students responding
- Summary of main issues arising from student feedback
- Comments on student feedback.

The responsibility for module delivery and the analysis of student feedback should be separated wherever possible in order to demonstrate to students that the evaluation is independent. A summary of student feedback and actions taken should be included in annual module evaluation forms. For further guidance on module evaluations, you should refer to DAQ Guide 5 – Module Evaluation.

# **Section 2: Programme Level Feedback**

Feedback on individual modules does not provide a full picture of the student experience. The implementation of Curriculum 2004 provides an opportunity to consider the student experience on the basis of the programme rather than just individual modules. This move accords with the expectations of the HEFCE circular on gathering information about the quality of the students' overall experience and could align with national data being collected through the National Student Survey.

The following minimum requirements must be fulfilled:

- FACs' responsibilities to manage and monitor
- · Pre-SAB meetings with student representatives
- Keeping students informed of action/responses to feedback see general guidance section
- Maintaining records see general guidance section.

### FACs' Responsibilities to Manage and Monitor

FACs should ensure that there are effective mechanisms in place to gather programme level feedback from students and to publicise the outcomes; FACs should report back to AQSC annually on the outcomes of these programme level reviews.

# Pre-SAB Meetings with Student Representatives

Since 2002/3, Academic Board has required all SABs to hold meetings with students prior to each management SAB meeting. These meetings may take the form of a Staff/Student Consultative Committee (SSCC). The purpose is to give students an opportunity to raise issues which may not be of sufficient weight to warrant SAB time but which can be quickly resolved and have a significant impact on student satisfaction. The process also reinforces the role of the student representatives at the SAB by enabling them to raise issues which have been debated at a more informal gathering.

# Collection of Programme Feedback

Faculties may wish to collect programme feedback using a questionnaire based directly on the National Student Survey. This questionnaire, as well as suggested variations of questions for use in the University and at Associate Colleges, can be found in Section 3 of this guide.

At programme level, techniques other than a formal questionnaire can also provide effective sources of information, such as:

- · Class or tutorial discussions
- Focus groups
- Informal chats
- Student diaries
- Suggestion boxes
- SSCC meetings
- · Discussion forums within Blackboard courses.

Brennan & Williams (2004) provide details of these and other methods.

#### Information to be Collected

It is recommended that the following headings and sub-headings, as used by the National Student Survey, should be used:

- The Teaching on my Course
- Organisation and Management
- Feedback on my Submitted Work
- The Assessment on my Course
- Personal Development (including PDP)
- Workload
- Support and Advice
- Learning Resources
- Other Comments.

See page 11 in Section 4 for full list.

#### **Section 3: General Guidance**

# **Timing**

Response to student feedback needs to be timely. With the introduction of Curriculum 2004 it is important to gather and analyse student feedback early in the academic session, as well as at the end of the session. This will enable any changes (for example extra tutorials, adjustments to the curriculum, or changes in assessment methods) to be put in place as soon as possible.

The National Student Survey will operate for final year students from 2005 and this will be delivered at the beginning of term two. Although this is outside the control of the University it is important to try to avoid any clash of timing of this method of feedback. Results from this survey are likely to be available in the June following its delivery.

For standard undergraduate modules and programmes it is recommended that faculties should agree the timing of the completion of student feedback questionnaires as follows:

**Module feedback:** Last two weeks of term one

Last two weeks of term two

Programme feedback

(for years other than final):Start of term twoProgramme feedback for final year:End of term two

It is also important to provide prompt feedback to student groups so that they appreciate the benefits that can be derived from engaging in the evaluation process. Dates for the dissemination of the outcomes of feedback should normally be within four weeks of its delivery. The timing also needs to take into account the purpose and uses of the feedback. It might be expected that any serious problems would already have been dealt with through informal feedback or in Staff/Student Consultative Committee meetings.

# Action Taken and Keeping Students Informed of Outcomes

It is a requirement that student feedback is actively considered and that action taken is recorded and circulated. Minutes from SAB or SSCC meetings should include an action plan. Actions that are designed to have a significant impact on programme development are recorded in the programme journal. Feedback of results/issues raised should be built into the feedback process with the opportunity for student representatives to report back to the students they represent. Minutes should be circulated to all student representatives and made available to all students through whichever means is most appropriate (eg notice-boards, Student Advice Centres or Blackboard). Decisions should be recorded accurately and the effects of actions monitored and reviewed. The SAB/Programme Board chair must ensure that

feedback is correctly channelled to representatives of central services, such as the Library, careers and ISAS. The FAC is responsible for reporting any generic issues affecting several programmes. These will be identified through the SAB annual report. SAB chairs need to ensure that tutors are properly responsive to feedback from students. When action is not taken in response to student feedback, the reason should be made known and conveyed to the students affected.

Students should be promptly informed about the results of feedback and the actions taken in response to it. Consideration should be given to the following mechanisms:

- Giving student representatives the opportunity to report back issues to the students they represent in teaching time
- Presenting the main findings of feedback questionnaires to the student group for discussion
- Printing and publicising results and actions of previous feedback in module handbooks or through Blackboard
- Going through the pre-SAB meeting with students by publishing information on notice-boards or by email or the Internet.

Feedback should be made available to subsequent cohorts of students where appropriate, for example by recording in module handbooks any improvements made as a result of feedback from previous groups of students.

#### Administration

It is beneficial to inform students in advance that a questionnaire will be distributed so that they can reflect on their experience before completing the feedback. Their purpose and use should be fully explained and students should see that their feedback is useful and welcomed.

The purposes of student feedback should be clear to all involved. Brennan & Williams (2004) recommend that students should be made aware of the following:

- They will not suffer for their feedback
- They are being listened to
- The process is being taken seriously
- Something will be done because of it
- They are actively involved as partners in the process.

Faculties should have methods in place for ensuring that module evaluation forms and programme level feedback contains open and honest summaries of student feedback, and that all appropriate issues raised by students have resulted in action for enhancement. This will ensure that the process of gathering student feedback is sufficiently robust and genuinely self-evaluative.

Some universities use administrative staff rather than teaching staff to administer questionnaires. Alternatively a student led system may be used where completed questionnaires are collected by students and sealed in an envelope before sending to a central point in the faculty for processing. In one faculty, student representatives collect student feedback forms and submit them to the Student Advice Centre, which collates the data and sends a summary to both the course and module leader. Responses are required if support is below specified levels. Faculties should agree the most appropriate mechanism to ensure consistency and reliability.

ISAS has an optical mark reader which can enable the reading and analysis of large numbers of questionnaires, using forms which are specially printed.

The Question Mark Perception (QMP) software suite has been used successfully within DMU for online questionnaires, as well as for assessments. If QMP questionnaires are launched from the Managed Learning Environment (MLE), they can be pre-populated with accurate information about a student's programme, faculty, mode of study, location and demographic information. For further information, go to the ISAS Intranet site, select "Services for staff", and follow the link.

Programme feedback from students on joint programmes should be collected by the faculty which has management responsibility for the programme. This places a responsibility on the faculty for making available the SSCC minutes and SAB annual report to those other SABs that offer relevant joint courses.

Where a programme, or module, is delivered at several locations, the same method of collecting feedback should be used at each location to allow comparisons to be drawn. This will inevitably mean that some colleges could administer a variety of feedback forms where they deal with more than one faculty.

#### Response Rates

The response rate should be taken into consideration when reflecting on student feedback. Where the invitation to feedback applies to all students, Brennan & Williams (2004) suggest a 60% response rate should be aimed for with responses below 30% being treated with caution. Mid programme questionnaires may achieve low response rates. In-class completion is usually associated with good response rates. Where questionnaires are administered in class, efforts should also be made to obtain feedback from students who are not present.

#### Anonymity of Student Response

Students should be reassured that the Faculty will ensure anonymity. Brennan & Williams quote the following extracts as examples of statements of purpose:

"We ask these questions for no other reason than to establish whether the institute is serving the needs and is representative of the community as a whole." (Bolton Institute)

"The personal identifier allows us to analyse data by group characteristics, which provides a much better picture about how well courses are received by particular groups of students. Your comments will never become part of your student record or used in a way that identifies you." (Open University)

### Maintaining Records

Records of these actions should be maintained by SABs and Faculties. The SAB secretary should be responsible for sending a record of each SSCC/pre-SAB meeting to Student Services so that recurring issues can be collated.

### Student Representation

Where student representatives are involved in the process of gathering feedback, their role and importance needs to be supported by all staff. The benefits of involving student representatives include:

- Direct student input into decision making
- Interactive communication rather than pre-set questions
- Personal development of those students who fill the role.

#### Reference

Brennan & Williams (2004), **Collecting and Using Student Feedback**, Learning and Teaching Support Network, York. This is available at: **www.heacademy.ac.uk/** 

# **Section 4: Questionnaire Templates**

### Illustration of Module Feedback Questionnaire

#### Part 1

#### Introduction

The Faculty of -----is keen to maintain its dialogue with students and the high level of teaching quality. We welcome your comments on the module you have just completed.

The questionnaire should take about ten minutes to complete. It will provide us with detailed feedback about the module that we will use in planning and refining the module next year. There is a space on the reverse of the form for additional comments. Please be as objective as possible.

The questionnaire does not require your name. The analysis of results and supplementary comments from the Module Leader will be presented at the Subject Authority Board. Your student representatives are members of this Board. Feedback from this questionnaire will be made available to you.

The questionnaire is anonymous and the data collected will only be used for the purpose of this survey.

#### Instructions for use in an OMR format:

PLEASE DO NOT FOLD

Mark boxes boldly, like this: Do NOT tick, cross or circle

Programme of study

Mode of study full-time

part-time

Module title Module code

#### Part 2

#### Rubric for students:

If you wish to make any comments relating to any of the questions below, please use the 'other comments' section of this form.

Series of questions taken from the question bank or devised by the Module Leader under the headings listed on page 11.

#### Part 3

Free form comments from students:

Please list three major strengths and weaknesses of the module

The three major strengths of the module were:

The three major improvements I would recommend are:

Please use the space below to include any comments that you wish to make regarding this module.

Other Comments:

Thank you for your co-operation

# Headings used in the National Student Survey (2004) for Programme Feedback

These headings and sub-headings are recommended for use in DMU programme feedback guestionnaires:

#### 1. The teaching on my course

Staff are good at explaining things.

Staff have made the subject interesting.

Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.

The course is intellectually stimulating.

Teaching staff have made an effort to understand our difficulties.

#### 2. Organisation and management

Deadlines in the course are well spread out.

The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned.

Any changes in the course or teaching have always been communicated effectively.

The course is well organised and is running smoothly.

#### 3. Feedback on my submitted work

Feedback on my work has been prompt.

I have received detailed comments on my work.

Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.

#### 4. The assessment on my course

The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.

Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.

Assessments have tested what we were supposed to learn.

#### 5. Personal development

The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.

My communication skills have improved.

As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.

Through the course I have learnt to manage my work effectively.

### 6. Workload

The overall workload is too heavy.

The background workload suggested (for example reading lists and practice tasks) has been unrealistic.

I have had enough time to understand what I have to learn.

#### 7. Support and advice

I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies.

I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.

Good advice was available when I needed to make choices in my studies.

#### 8. Learning resources

The library resources are good enough for my needs.

I have always been able to access general IT resources when required.

When required, there is sufficient access to specialised equipment, facilities or rooms.

#### 9. Other

Good careers advice and information is available.

The elements of the course fit together well.

I can see how my studies will help me with my career.

I have enjoyed this course.

I can see myself working in this subject area.

The course is organised in ways that enable me to fit in my other commitments.

It has been difficult to answer many of the questions because of the variability of my experience.

# National Student Survey Programme Questionnaire

Section 1.01 Instructions Please use a ball-point pen to complete the questionnaire. Do not use a fountain or felt tip pen as the ink may be
visible on the other side of the page. The questionnaire will be read by a computer scanner, so please fill it in as follows. Place a 'X' in the
appropriate box, keeping within the boundary, for example: X. If you make a mistake and cross the wrong box, please block out your answer and
then cross the correct box. For example: X

For each statement, show the extent of your agreement or disagreement by putting a cross in the **one** box which best reflects your current view about your perceptions of **the course as a whole.** 

- 5 Means that you definitely agree
- 4 Means that you mostly agree
- **3** Means that you neither agree nor disagree, cannot give a definite answer, or that the question is not applicable
- 2 Means that you mostly disagree
- 1 Means that you definitely disagree

1.	The teaching on my course Staff are good at explaining things. Staff have made the subject interesting. Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching. The course is intellectually stimulating. Teaching staff have made an effort to understand our difficulties.	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	3	2 	1 	
2.	Organisation and management  Deadlines in the course are well spread out.  The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned.  Any changes in the course or teaching have always been communicated effectively.  The course is well organised and is running smoothly.						
3.	Feedback on my submitted work Feedback on my work has been prompt. I have received detailed comments on my work. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.						
4.	The assessment on my course  The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.  Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.  Assessments have tested what we were supposed to learn.						
5.	Personal development  The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.  My communication skills have improved.  As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.  Through the course I have learnt to manage my work effectively.						
6.	Workload The overall workload is too heavy. The background workload suggested (for example reading lists and practice tasks) has been unrealistic. I have had enough time to understand what I have to learn.						

For each statement, show the extent of your agreement or disagreement by putting a cross in the one box which best reflects your current view about your perceptions of the course as a whole.

- 5 Means that you definitely agree
- 4 Means that you mostly agree
- **3** Means that you neither agree nor disagree, cannot give a definite answer, or that the question is not applicable
- 2 Means that you mostly disagree
- 1 Means that you definitely disagree

7.	Support and advice I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies. I have been able to contact staff when I needed to. Good advice was available when I needed to make choices in	my studies.	5 	<b>4</b>	3 	<b>2</b>	1 	
8.	Learning resources The library resources are good enough for my needs. I have always been able to access general IT resources when When required, there is sufficient access to specialised equipment							
9.	Other Good careers advice and information is available. The elements of the course fit together well. I can see how my studies will help me with my career. I have enjoyed this course. I can see myself working in this subject area. The course is organised in ways that enable me to fit in my ot It has been difficult to answer many of the questions because of my experience.  Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.							
11								
Looking back on the experience, are there any particularly good or bad aspects of the course you would like to draw to our attention? (Please use the appropriate space/s below.)  Good  Bad								

# Programme Questionnaire Adaptations for Years One and Two

Questionnaires may follow the format of the National Student Survey with the following adaptations for data-set 9:

#### Year One

- The modules of the course fit well together
- I am enjoying this course
- The course is organised in ways that enable me to fit in my other commitments
- I am aware of the help available to me through my personal tutor
- I am aware of who my course representative is
- I am aware of the help available to me through Student Services (eg counselling, careers, welfare)
- I have been able to make the transition to HE study
- I feel prepared for level two work

#### **Year Two**

- The modules of the course fit well together
- I felt prepared for level two work
- I am enjoying this course
- The course is organised in ways that enable me to fit in my other commitments
- My personal tutor is able to help me with any issues that I may have
- I am aware of who my course representative is
- Where available, I was aware of the opportunities to go on work experience
- I am aware of the help available to me through Student Services (eg counselling, careers, welfare)
- I can see how my studies will help me with my career
- I feel prepared for level three work

# Programme Questionnaire Adaptations for Associate Colleges

Suggested adaptations of questions from the National Student Survey for DMU students studying at Associate Colleges.

#### Section 7

- My college has given me sufficient advice and support with my studies
- I have been able to contact college staff when I needed to

#### Section 8

- Library services and resources at my college meet my needs
- It is important for me to use DMU library services and resources
- Library services and resources available from DMU meet my needs
- I have always been able to access general IT resources at my college when required

#### Section 9

#### Year One

- The modules of the course fit together well
- I am enjoying this course
- The course is organised in ways that enable me to fit in my other commitments
- I am aware of the help available to me through my personal tutor
- I am aware of who my course representative is
- I am aware of the help available to me through Student Services at my college (eg counselling, careers, welfare)
- I have been able to make the transition to HE study
- I am satisfied with the level of involvement with De Montfort University
- I feel prepared for level two work

#### **Year Two**

- The modules of the course fit well together
- I am enjoying this course
- The course is organised in ways that enable me to fit in my other commitments
- I am aware of the help available to me through my personal tutor
- I am aware of who my course representative is
- There were opportunities to go on work experience if I wanted to
- I am aware of the help available to me through Student Services at my college (eg counselling, careers, welfare)
- I am satisfied with the level of involvement with De Montfort University
- · I can see how my studies will help me with my career
- I feel prepared for level three work



