The National Student Survey and Enhancing Assessment and Feedback

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HEA Surveys Team

• National PG surveys:
  - PTES (annual)
  - PRES (bi-annual)

• Further analysis of NSS
  - by discipline, nation, demographics

• Events and consultancy
  - on using survey data for enhancement
National Student Survey

• Measures satisfaction, providing a possible starting point for further investigation and enhancement
• Undertaken annually since 2005 and will be reviewed in 2013-14
• Possibility of new ‘PGT NSS’
• New Student Union question this year – more opportunities for partnership working on NSS?
• 8 items from the NSS included in new ‘Key Information Sets’ from September
• ‘Widget’ on course home page

Early mock-up of 3-item course page KIS 'widget'
National Student Survey in the KIS

1. Staff are good at explaining things
2. Staff have made the subject interesting
7. Feedback on my work has been prompt
9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand
10. I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies
16. The library resources are good enough for my needs
17. I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to
22. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my course

Using NSS data

Benchmarking
- Large discipline effects at national level: comparing subjects within an institution problematic (though look for good practice)
- Benchmarking within subject across institutions better, but:
  - student profile effect (and expectations) – focus on comparator institutions
  - small numbers can make comparisons unreliable and differences insignificant
- HEA Discipline Reports
% Agree with Q.22 (overall satisfaction) in 2011 for ‘Other Subjects Allied to Medicine’ by institution, showing 95% confidence intervals.
Further investigation

• Focus groups with groups of students (and staff), exploring:
  - reasons behind perceptions of feedback
  - interpretation of questions
  - strength of feeling
  - student expectations
  - possible solutions
• Free text comments in NSS
• Triangulate with internal survey data

Partnership approaches

• Involve SU in choice of optional questions and promotion of NSS
• Distribution of NSS data to SU and course reps
• Discussion of issues and possible solutions at student consultative committees
• Communication of results and actions
• Student-led further investigation
• Student-led workshops and conferences on NSS key themes
### Student Views on Good Quality Feedback

- Verbal, face-to-face feedback is particularly useful
- Feedback should be detailed and specific
- Comments should be clear and legible
- Constructive feedback is helpful, including advice on how work may be improved
- Advice and encouragement needs to be given on how to use feedback
- Comments on student work (not on a separate sheet) assist in identifying and understanding where they went wrong

### Student Views on Poor Quality Feedback

- Feedback can be too general (e.g. ‘good work’) and brief, giving little idea of what is right and wrong and how to improve
- Vague annotations are unhelpful (e.g. underlining and ringing sections of text without explanation)
- Illegible handwriting
- For exams, often the grade is given without explanation
- Overly negative comments, which can sometimes be derogatory and insulting
- Inconsistencies between tutors as to what makes a good piece of work
Boosting satisfaction with feedback

Turnaround times
- Where institutions have a policy, 3 or 4 weeks seems typical
- Make sure any policy is communicated
- Ensure students understand marking and moderation process
- Marks don’t have to be final before giving feedback
- Online feedback and adaptive release of grades can speed-up feedback

Boosting satisfaction with feedback

Publish feedback and grades online
- Easy, prompt, private access for students at time of own choosing
- Build up a bank of feedback – allows students to refer back, monitor progress (and see volume of feedback received over programme)
- Can reduce the admin burden for staff
- Requires feedback entering on (or spoken into) PC
- Oral feedback – MP3 files. Video?
Adaptive release of marks?

- Release written feedback ahead of mark
- Boosts engagement with feedback – even possible to make mark release conditional on submitting self reflection (SHU)
- Allows time for moderating mark
- Not clear if it boosts ‘satisfaction’ – process needs explaining and ideally students involved in decision to do this
- Not always suitable for multiple short answers

Involving students in the process

- Elective feedback – allow students to specify what they want feedback on
- Peer feedback – time effective, boosts engagement and understanding of feedback and criteria
- Involve students in negotiating assessment criteria
- Facilitate peer groups to reflect on feedback
- Importance of dialogue between staff and students on assessment
- Ensure students know how to use feedback
Boosting satisfaction with feedback

Feed-forward

• Formative feedback
• Comments on drafts (as an alternative to?) comments on summative work
• Sequenced summative assessments
• Not just formative assessment – can feed-forward based on the experience of previous cohorts

• More generally, is the balance between formative and summative assessment appropriate?

Discussion

1. How do you currently use NSS data to inform enhancement?
2. How could you ‘drill-down’ into issues raised by the survey and make decisions on enhancing feedback?
3. Are student and staff expectations about feedback reasonable and how can they be influenced?
4. How is formative assessment and feedback used in your area and can this be improved?
5. What scope do you have to make use of technology to enhance feedback?
Resources

- University of Edinburgh ‘Enhancing Feedback’ site: http://www.enhancingfeedback.ed.ac.uk/
- ‘Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment’ project: http://www.testa.ac.uk/
- HEA Feedback resources: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/assessment/feedback-resources
- Sheffield Hallam University project on feedback and technology: http://tinyurl.com/tfaproject

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