Student feedback and Students perception: what are we doing with their information?

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Why ‘Surveys’?
Why ‘Surveys’?

- Students' perceptions of their experiences at university
- Snapshot of university performance (from students’ point of view)
- Statistical (reliable?) data / evidence
- Periodical view of progression of students’ experiences
- Accountability?
Why ‘Surveys’?...

It is usually convenient because...

• Allows departments to limit questions to certain objectives, allowing for more efficient analysis

• Several surveys can be comparatively analysed to detect themes (triangulation)

• Results can be easily summarised
Why ‘Surveys’?...

• Results can be compared with open-ended responses and/or interviews to detect themes

• Can be used with direct assessments of student learning to comparatively analyse for themes (surveys are not considered methods of direct assessment of student learning)
According to HEFCE

On the NSS,

‘The National Student Survey (NSS) gathers opinions on the quality of students' courses. The purpose of this is to contribute to public accountability and help inform the choices of prospective students.’

HEFCE website
But... what is a Survey?

- A survey is a method of measurement by which respondents offer their **opinions** in respect to specific questions.

- Answers are usually **limited** to certain questions and are measured on a specific scale.

- Surveys can also contain **open-ended** questions that **lead to qualitative analysis**, which can then lead to a comparison with closed-ended responses.
Type of Surveys: aimed to...

1. Student Surveys
2. Alumni Surveys
3. Employer Surveys
4. Performance Surveys
5. Field Experience Surveys
6. Internship/Placement Surveys
7. others…
What do they cover?

- The teaching and/or research on programmes
- Academic support
- Organisation & management

- Learning resources
- Assessment & feedback
- Personal development
- Overall satisfaction
- Student Union
UoB most common students’ surveys

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### Who and when

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Eligible</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NSS</strong></td>
<td>All final year students (including HND, FD, but not top-ups)</td>
<td>14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Jan to 30&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Apr</td>
<td>Led and run externally</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Student Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td>(14/01 – 28/02 for prizes)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PTES</strong></td>
<td>All postgraduate taught students (including overseas and partners)</td>
<td>18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Feb to mid April</td>
<td>Led by HEA but run by UoB using Bristol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PRES</strong></td>
<td>All postgraduate research students</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; of March to 31&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; May</td>
<td>Led by HEA but run by UoB using Bristol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Research Student Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>USSS</strong></td>
<td>All students not included in NSS (including overseas but not CPDs)</td>
<td>18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; of March to Mid May</td>
<td>UoB led &amp; run using Bristol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Univ. Student Satisfaction Survey</td>
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<td>(before exam boards)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MES</strong></td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>Every trimester/semester</td>
<td>UoB led &amp; run using Bristol template*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Module evaluation survey</strong></td>
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Type of study & what do we do with the data

- Is not ‘longitudinal’ (like the DHLE survey)
- It’s more a type of ‘cross-sectional study’
- It allows *Factor analysis* (i.e. NSS = six factors) and *Multilevel modelling approaches*
- Trend analyses and time series analysis
Challenges to overcome

Survey ‘fatigue’ phenomenon

Time and staff to deal with large amounts of unprocessed data

Staff’s perception that surveys are being used primarily for summative (and possibly) punitive purposes and/or for invalid comparisons across different programs

Lack of clarity about how best to improve the situation once an enhancement priority is identified

Lack of engagement with improvement efforts

A potential failure to put the use of such tools into perspective, to determine what they are and are not good for (what students can and can’t tell us)
So, what can we do with the collected data?

- It is often helpful to use several different sources of information (surveys and other assessments) so that common themes can be detected from different sources.

- Triangulation means that these themes are detected from different sources (preferably detected in faculty meetings).
Examples of possible triangulations (1)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

Postgraduate Taught Experience (USSS)

Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)

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Examples of possible triangulations (2)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

Postgraduate Taught Experience (PTES)

Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)
Examples of possible triangulations (3)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

National Student Survey (NSS)

Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)
Examples of possible triangulations (4)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

Staff Self-Reflection

Student Assessment/achievement
Examples of possible triangulations (5)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

Student Assessment/achievement

Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)
Creating meaning and closing the ‘loop’

- **Ideally**, subject groups play a role in designing surveys (when possible), reviewing their use, analysing data, and producing findings.

- **Important note**: Survey findings can only be useful in assessment if they lead to help our understanding of how students' perceptions of their experiences at university are to be interpreted.

- **Important also**: Any assessment can only be useful if it leads to documented action that leads to enhancement of student learning and experience.
Conclusion

Interpreting the results of student evaluation questionnaires as ratings of satisfaction are unlikely to result in major improvements for the students.

Instead we should use the results to help our understanding of how students' perceptions of their experiences at university are to be interpreted in relation to their previous experiences, dispositions and learning activities so that changes in policy and practice can be based on reliable evidence.

This is likely to be much more productive in improving those experiences - as well as students' overall satisfaction rating.
‘The most accepted criterion for measuring good teaching is the amount of student learning that occurs. There are consistently high correlations between students’ ratings of the “amount learned” in the course and their overall ratings of the teacher and the course’.

Theall and Franklin, 2001
We often are asked how we process our research.

First, we check all of the results.

Second, we throw away the ones we don’t like.

Third, we tabulate the remainder.

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Main references

HEFCE website (accessed 03.06.2013)

Prof. Terry Doyle’s Blog http://learnercenteredteaching.wordpress.com/articles-and-books/evaluating-teacher-effectiveness-%E2%80%94research-summary/ (accessed 03.06.2013)


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Many Thanks!