STUDENT FEEDBACK ON COURSES (SFC)

Information for Staff

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE SFC

Enhancing the student experience and satisfaction through addressing issues raised in student feedback is a key strategic objective for the University. The Strategy, Planning and Performance team (SPP) administers Student Feedback on Courses (SFC) to gather student perceptions of their experiences of individual courses. This includes onshore and offshore semester, trimester and seasonal (Summer/Winter) courses.

Since 2009, there has been a steady increase in overall student satisfaction with courses offered at UON. Ongoing feedback from students on their course experiences helps highlight further areas for focus.

IMPROVING SFC RESPONSE RATES

A good response rate to the SFC is vital in ensuring robust analysis of the data, which allows insight into strengths of the course and highlights areas for focus. While SPP promotes SFCs using a number of channels (e.g. digital signage, social media, email etc.), the most effective way to drive response rates is for **staff to actively encourage students** to take part in the survey.

Here are some ways you can help improve SFC response rates:

- **Early notice**: it is a good idea to let your students know early in the term that they may be asked to complete course feedback later in the term. There is no need to over-emphasise this, just let them know that providing feedback from time-to-time is part of what it means to be a university student.

- **Allocate time in class for students to complete their SFC**: the SFC should only take 10 minutes to complete and can be accessed via smartphones, tablets and laptops.

- **Let students know when SFCs are open:** key SFC survey dates are included on page 5 of this document – tell students in class that SFCs are open. Students can access their surveys 3 ways:
    1. by checking their student email account (NUmail) for emails from 'The Student Feedback Team'
    2. by clicking on the orange surveys button in the myUoN student portal (myuon.newcastle.edu.au)
    3. by checking the Surveys window of the Blackboard home page
- **Emphasise the importance and value of student feedback**: Let your students know that you (and the University) value their input and tell your students how you have used feedback on teaching or courses to make changes to improve the student experience.

- **Put an announcement on your course Blackboard page**: under 'My Course Announcements'.

SFC QUESTIONNAIRE

Students are asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following 15 statements using a 5 point scale: *Strongly disagree – 1; Disagree – 2; Uncertain – 3; Agree – 4; Strongly Agree – 5.*

1. SUPPORT: The teaching staff were available to assist me with my learning.
    Note: Teaching staff made themselves available, you knew how to contact them for guidance and you felt encouraged to approach them when you needed help.

2. LEARNING ACTIVITIES: The activities of this course motivated me to learn.
    Note: Consider lectures, tutorials, labs, etc., and the interactions and activities that occur within them; and learning activities conducted outside of formal classes and assessments, such as on-line elements and practicum/placements.

3. TEACHING: The quality of teaching in this course helped me achieve the learning objectives.
    Note: Quality teaching occurs when knowledgeable, organised and enthusiastic teaching staff communicate effectively to, and interact positively with, students. This includes lecturers, tutors, laboratory staff and others who are actively engaged with students learning.

4. EXPECTATIONS: I was clearly informed about the learning objectives of this course.
    Note: Learning objectives are what you would be expected to know, understand or be able to do at the completion of a course.

5. ASSESSMENT: The assessment items were clearly related to the learning objectives.
    Note: Assessments explicitly measured your achievement of the learning objectives. The assessment methods were relevant to the learning objectives.

6. CRITERIA: The criteria for all assessment items were made clear.
    Note: Assessment criteria state in clear and simple language what you are required to do in order to achieve a particular grade.

7. FEEDBACK: I received feedback that was helpful to my learning.
    Note: Feedback includes written or oral comments on learning progress and assessments. Feedback is most useful when it is timely.

8. STRUCTURE: The various components of this course were linked in ways that supported my learning.
    Note: Components means lectures, tutorials, laboratories, online elements, practicum and other forms of learning and instruction. Material is linked where the parts are related and integrated, do not contradict each other, and are consistent.

9. RELEVANCE: I am able to apply my learning from this course to my wider goals.
    Note: Students often learn best when they can see the relevance of a subject or skill they are learning to their wider goals, or other contexts of specific interest to them.

10. ORGANISATION: Overall, this course was well organised.
    Note: Organised means co-ordinated, planned and orderly, and it could refer to the organising of timetables, resources, course outlines, assessment outlines, student support systems or other aspects of a course.

11. RESOURCES: The resources for this course helped me achieve the learning objectives.
    Note: Consider teaching spaces and the equipment available in them, library resources, on-line resources, study materials provided to you such as course outlines and lecture notes.

12. CHALLENGE: This course challenged me in ways that extended my learning.
    Note: Challenge can mean high expectations and degree of difficulty, as well as testing one's values, assumptions and beliefs. Perceptions of challenge can be affected by your previous learning and experiences.

13. OUTCOMES: My knowledge and skills have developed as a result of studying this course.
    Note: You are satisfied with the level of development of your knowledge and skills as a result of studying this course. You believe the course has met its learning objectives.

14. SELF EVALUATION: I made a consistent effort to succeed in this course.
    Note: You willingly prepared for and followed-up on the learning experiences offered in this course.

15. SATISFACTION: Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of this course.

Students also have the opportunity to provide comments regarding their course experience in a number of open-ended questions.

KEY 2019 SFC DATES

2019 Term	Survey opens	Survey closes	Quantitative Reports Available
Semester 1	Monday 20 May	Sunday 30 June	**5 July**
Semester 2	Monday 21 October	Sunday 1 December	**6 December**
Trimester 1	Monday 15 April	Sunday 12 May	**17 May**
Trimester 2	Monday 29 July	Sunday 25 August	**30 August**
Trimester 3	Monday 11 November	Sunday 8 December	**13 December**
Trimester 1 (Sing)	Monday 25 March	Sunday 28 April	**3 May**
Trimester 2 (Sing)	Monday 22 July	Sunday 25 August	**30 August**
Trimester 3 (Sing)	Monday 18 November	Sunday 22 December	**27 December**
Summer School	Monday 21 January	Sunday 10 February	**15 February**
Summer Compressed	Monday 4 February	Sunday 17 February	**22 February**
Summer Late	Monday 11 February	Sunday 24 February	**1 March**
Winter	Monday 22 July	Sunday 4 August	**9 August**

Qualitative Reports will be made available on the fully graded date of term (if processed). Processing times vary due to the variable volume of comments received.

NOTE: DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

REPORTING

QUANTITATIVE REPORTS

Quantitative reports are produced by SPP generally within 5 working days of the survey closing. Reports for individual courses can be found on the:

- University website (http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/university-surveys/student-feedback-on-courses/)
- Course Assessment Return (CAR) online service (https://dotnet.newcastle.edu.au/car/)
- Faculty Quality Assurance folders on X drive (X:\Faculty_QA\Faculties)

Course Coordinators are notified when these reports become available to access.

QUALITATIVE/COMMENT REPORTS

Comment reports with more than 5 respondents for each course, are emailed to Course Coordinators and placed in Faculty Quality Assurance folders. Access to the comments is restricted to selected faculty staff.

Each faculty sets their own access policy, however generally the Heads of School, Assistant Deans of Teaching and Learning, Program Convenors, School Executive Officers, Quality Assurance Officers or other staff with responsibility for quality assurance (as approved by the Head of School) should have access. Academic staff should use these channels to access SFC comment reports.

ARRANGING ACCESS

To arrange access to CAR:

Please contact IT. **Use this form:**
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/89090/adverse_circumstances_car_access.pdf

To arrange access to the Faculty Quality Assurance folder (on the X drive) submit a request through the IT ServiceUON portal at https://uonau.service-now.com/itservices

COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

Communicating results of student surveys back to staff and students, deciding on actions to take and reporting back on outcomes are important parts of the feedback cycle. This section presents guidelines for communicating with staff and students around these areas.

1. OVERVIEW

i. It is important that student feedback is presented to staff as a developmental tool for them to improve the programs and courses they coordinate and teach.

ii. The positive aspects of the survey should be emphasised; the negative aspects should be presented as opportunities for improvement.

iii. For feedback to be effective it needs to be responded to in a timely way, with the development of appropriate actions, and the closure of communication loops with all those involved, as soon as practical.

iv. Heads of Schools and/or Program Convenors are able to request a meeting with Strategy, Planning and Performance staff to discuss the raw student comments for a course, on providing an appropriate rationale and on the condition that student confidentiality is maintained.

v. All survey data, and mechanisms to feedback summary results to staff and students must be handled discreetly and sensitively whilst ensuring any issues raised are appropriately addressed.

2. REPORTING TO STAFF

i. Prepare a departmental and/or discipline-/subject-specific summary of the key themes of the survey for sharing with teaching staff to be delivered initially at a staff meeting rather than by email.

ii. Prepare faculty wide summaries identifying recurring themes. Use this to encourage faculty-wide discussion and collaboration and, where appropriate, to enable an integrated and holistic approach to addressing issues and sharing exemplary practices.

iii. Celebrate those courses that have rated highly and note the positive aspects most commented on by students.

iv. Limit distribution of detailed course-specific information to those who need to see it, particularly where sensitive issues have been raised in a course.

v. Where there are genuine issues that need addressing, organise a discreet conversation with the appropriate staff first before any course-specific comments are distributed. This will enable you to talk through issues in a calm and safe manner and assess their validity before proceeding.

vi. Should a significant issue have arisen and if appropriate, consider adjusting or rephrasing comments that might cause offense, anxiety or controversy, without undermining the meaning/intention of the comment.

vii. If a valid issue arises from the evaluations, put in place an action plan to ensure that the issue is resolved prior to the next delivery of that course.

This could be developed in consultation with Strategy, Planning and Performance, and in liaison with other relevant support sections, as appropriate.

3. REPORTING TO STUDENTS

i. It is important that the feedback loop is closed by communicating with students about their feedback and how it will be used to inform revisions to a program/course in a timely manner.

ii. The closing of the feedback loop needs to occur in ways that ensures the safety of any student who contributed to the survey.

iii. The feedback to students needs to emphasise the positive aspects as much as the negative aspects of any student evaluations.

iv. Faculty-wide forums could be held with students and staff on an annual basis, for the PVC or others to comment to students on any faculty-wide actions/innovations that have arisen as part of this feedback

v. Program-wide feedback sessions could be held with students and staff on a semester basis to feedback on actions arisen as a result of students' feedback, as well as other developments within the program.

vi. Student representatives should receive summaries of actions to give them the opportunity to feedback to the student groups.

vii. Posters could be distributed through a school and/or faculty bullet-pointing how the faculty/school is responding to student feedback, as well as other developments within the program. These could also be placed on Blackboard.

viii. In preparing the course outline for the next offering, record a summary of student feedback and a brief report on the actions taken in response.

ix. Email those students who were enrolled in a course a summary of what changes have been implemented as a result of their feedback.

x. Student focus groups may be held and or other means employed where additional/clarifying information would be useful and/or is required.

xi. Students should not be challenged, either as groups or individuals, regarding the content and nature of their feedback.

4. REPORTING BACK ON OUTCOMES

i. Provide response to Strategy, Planning and Performance for the purposes of developing a scope of university responses. This will enable opportunities for cross faculty dialogue and collaboration, and the sharing of practices and resources.

ii. Consult with Strategy, Planning and Performance as to the effectiveness or otherwise of the actions implemented.

SFC CONTACTS

For SFC related enquiries, please contact:

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Lloyd Blaxland	Project Officer	02 492 15860	lloyd.blaxland@newcastle.edu.au
Meagan Morrissey	Project Officer	02 498 54046	meagan.morrissey@newcastle.edu.au

Alternatively, please email surveys@newcastle.edu.au

APPENDIX: UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE SURVEY GUIDELINES

CONTEXT/OVERVIEW

The the University of Newcastle (UON) conducts surveys in order to gather data on the learning, social, research and administrative environments of the University, as well particular cohorts such as international, commencing or graduating students. Surveys are central to the UON's quality assurance processes.

These guidelines apply to surveys involving staff, students, or other parties undertaken for University purposes. It includes surveys taken for external compliance purposes, such as the QILT surveys.

These guidelines do not apply to

- Surveys conducted by academic staff for the purposes of academic research, where the survey is limited in scope[1,2].
- Surveys conducted for internal quality assurance by individual academic staff with students enrolled in their courses.
- Basic and or informal feedback surveys of limited scope[2].

GUIDELINES

1.1. UON will regularly survey its community to assess, inform and improve its practices.

1.2. Data related to surveys will be managed in compliance with privacy and other legislation.

1.3. Surveys will adhere to established principles of good survey design.

1.4. The frequency and requirements of surveys will be monitored to ensure that the University community is not over-surveyed when reliable data is already known to exist.

1.5. A Survey Register will be kept to monitor and manage surveys.

1.6. Strategy, Planning and Performance must be consulted before undertaking a survey so that the appropriate approvals can be sought. Applications are assessed in terms of:

- the value and relevance of information to be obtained
- the extent to which the target population has already been surveyed
- the size and scope of the survey
- the design and management of the survey
- how the survey relates to previous or planned surveys in terms of its objectives and timing.

1.7. The University will respond appropriately and in a timely and transparent manner to issues raised regarding the University's performance that have been raised within a survey.

1.8. Survey outcomes and resulting University responses shall be reported back to stakeholders in a transparent and timely fashion, unless otherwise determined for reasons of confidentiality, commercial-in-confidence, or other reasons as directed by the DVC(A).

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[1] Appropriate approvals must have been given to access the student population.
[2] Refer guideline 2.6

1.9. All data derived from surveys conducted by the University will remain the property of the University of Newcastle and can only be used in accordance with terms agreed to by the DVC(A).

DEFINITIONS

In the context of this document:

Survey: means a method of collecting information for analysis, obtained through oral (including focus groups), written or online questioning, or a combination of these.

University community: means current and past students, graduates, and current employees of the University.

ESSENTIAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Policy Suite for Program and Course Management
- Privacy Guidelines
- Rules Governing Awards and Programs

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)
- Freedom of Information Act 1989 (NSW)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)