

# STUDENT VOICE POLICY

<b>Date approved:</b>	05/12/2014	<b>Date policy will take effect:</b>	05/12/2014	<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	05/12/2017
<b>Approving Authority:</b>	Academic Council				
<b>Responsible School/Unit:</b>	Registrar, Teaching and Learning Sub-Committee				
<b>Consultation undertaken:</b>	Academic Council				
<b>Supporting documents, procedures &amp; forms of this policy:</b>					
<b>Reference(s)</b>					
<b>Audience:</b>	Public – accessible to anyone				
<b>Category:</b>	Student-Certred Learning, Teaching and Learning				

## 1 Version Control and Change History

<b>Version Control</b>	<b>Date Effective</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Amendment(s)</b>
1	05/12/2014	Academic Council (AC:DOC:140:09:01)	Adopted

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## 2 Purpose of Policy

1. To set out expectations for the Institute's approach to learning from and responding to the student voice. The policy establishes key principles for gathering student opinion on their experience of academic life and the wider service offering and for responding to the student voice<sup>1</sup>.

## 3 Application & Scope

1. Academic staff in Schools and Departments, Student Services, administration offices with responsibility for student surveys or other methods of gathering student opinion and for taking action in response to student feedback.
2. The policy applies to opinion gathered from all categories of student.

## 4 Introduction

1. The Institute recognises that student views regarding their student experience at DkIT are an essential part of the quality enhancement cycle.
2. The Institute has a clear commitment to excellence in learning and teaching and enhancing the student experience through student-centred evaluation and feedback practices.
3. To ensure that the Institute maintains a high quality student experience it is essential that all students have an opportunity throughout their study to reflect on and evaluate their experience of academic life and the wider service offering.
4. To this end the Institute engages with its students through a variety of mechanisms with a view to learning from and responding to the student voice from students individually, collectively or through their representatives.

## 5 Policy Principles

The following key principles underpin the Institute's approach to learning from and responding to the student voice, and sets out clear expectations in this regard.

1. The primary purpose of gathering student opinion is to assure the quality of learning and teaching and student services, and to enhance the student experience.

Any other purpose is secondary to the primary purpose of quality assurance and enhancement. Students must be informed and give their consent to the use of their comments and opinions for purposes other than quality assurance and enhancement (e.g. for marketing, research etc.).

2. Multiple sources of information will be used, including formal and informal mechanisms

A number of opportunities are available to students to provide opinions and evaluation of their student experience including internal/external and formal/informal mechanisms. Formal student evaluation mechanisms include end-of-module evaluation surveys (QA1) and programme evaluation surveys (QA3)), the

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<sup>1</sup> This policy is formed by the Learning from and Responding to the Student Voice policy from the University of Edinburgh

first-year experience survey and Student Services survey. Informal mechanisms include mid-module reviews that may be undertaken by lecturer(s) at a module level. Other sources of student opinion and evaluation are departmental Student Representative Forums, among others.

External sources include the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE).

Insights will be drawn from multiple sources and must not rely on a single source. Where relevant, the analysis of data should allow for benchmarking (e.g. against previous years, other internal survey data or external sectoral data). In addition, interpretation of data must take into account the influence of contextual factors which may include evaluations by staff and external examiners.

3. Student surveying must be conducted in accordance with the DkIT Research Ethics principles. However ethical approval is not required if the data is being gathered solely for internal quality enhancement purposes, such as programme evaluation.

Integrity of student evaluation and opinion mechanisms is paramount. Data integrity must be maintained by developing systematic approaches to collection and management at all levels within the Institute.

Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents must be ensured. The reporting process must not identify any individual student respondent unless their permission is explicitly sought and granted. Attention should be taken if sample sizes are very small to avoid inadvertently revealing an individual student. Students must be informed of the uses that may be made of the data, including the level of aggregation used in analysis and reporting of results and the possible use of anonymised quotes.

The specific purpose of the survey should be clearly defined to the student before data collection commences.

Due care and attention must be taken with regards to the use of surveying during examination periods and prior to assessment deadlines to avoid undue stress and to ensure students have the opportunity to participate outside of these periods.

4. The methods used to survey the student opinion should not disadvantage any student from participating.

The methods used should provide equal opportunity for all students to voice their opinions and feedback on their experience. Methods used must take account of the mode of study (on-campus, part-time, online) and use plain English. Where a cohort of students is sampled (rather than a census), efforts must be made to ensure that those students not in the sample have an opportunity to provide feedback at another time by the same means or at the same time by other means.

5. The benefits of surveying student opinion must outweigh the costs.

The design and implementation of surveys should safeguard against 'questionnaire fatigue' by avoiding over-surveying students. Alternative methods of gathering student opinion should also be considered to determine whether a survey is the most appropriate method of gathering student opinion. The benefits derived from the surveys should not be outweighed by the burden of participation, for students, Schools and Services.

6. Feedback gathered from students must be responded to on a timescale appropriate to student needs.

The department or service unit responsible for issuing the survey or gathering student opinion has an obligation to analyse and report the issues arising from the survey and respond in a timely manner. Feedback to students should be overseen by an appropriate committee. Student survey results may be aggregated at different levels (programme, subject area, School, Service). The appropriate level of aggregation for reporting of student survey results depends on the specific purpose(s) of the particular instrument used.

Some mechanisms for gathering student opinion (such as Student Representative Forums) provide more immediate opportunities for response and action and the issues arising from such discussions will be reported in different ways (e.g. via minutes).

Issues arising from feedback received may be addressed at various levels within the Institute. Key trends, areas for enhancement and development, and key responses, form a major element of quality enhancement reports from the Institute (e.g. Institutional Review reports), Schools (e.g. programme board reports, programmatic review reports) and Support Services.

7. Action(s) taken in response to feedback from students must be communicated to students (i.e. closing the feedback loop).

Students will be informed of the general trends arising from the surveys and the changes made as a result. This serves to build student awareness of, and constructive engagement with, student opinion mechanisms.

Numerous strategies can be used to communicate actions arising from feedback received including (not exhaustive):

- Verbal report from lecturer(s).
- Verbal report from student representative.
- Information posted on noticeboard(s).
- Report to student-related committees (e.g. Student Representative Forums).
- Emailing results to target students.
- Student newsletters.
- Posting on the Institute's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- Overview of improvements in programme prospectus/programme handbook.
- Summary of key results and actions on leaflets and flyers.
- Formal/informal meetings with student representatives.
- Summary of implemented changes being read out at the beginning of the academic year.

## **6 Roles and Responsibilities**

1. The department or service unit responsible for issuing the survey or gathering student opinion has an obligation to analyse and report the issues arising from the survey and respond in a timely manner.