WONKHE

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH evasys

Survey feedback for student success

A framework for building effective student survey feedback systems

JUNE 2026

WONKHE · EVASYS

THE REPORT

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None of these issues can be solved individually – student survey feedback requires a systems approach to manage.

Why student survey feedback is worth getting right

In our work on effective student survey practice, we've often found ourselves having similar conversations repeatedly: about student response rates, "survey fatigue" and closing the feedback loop; about staff engagement and the role feedback surveys should play in staff development; and about how exactly to turn feedback data into insight, and insight into enhancement, in a systematic way.

Working through a series of online discussions with a group of sector student survey leaders and practitioners, and informed by insight from students, we came to a clear conclusion: none of these issues can be solved individually. Student survey feedback requires a **systems approach** to manage. That means effective governance, and close attention to "user experience" for both institutional staff and students.

Listening to the student voice is baked into the culture of the UK higher education sector. But in the current moment, institutions want to be confident that resource is going where it will have the most impact.

Student feedback comes in many forms, but surveys remain the most effective and consistent methodological approach for ensuring all students have the opportunity to share relevant information with their institution at meaningful points in their learning journey.

Asking students' opinion of their experience is only one of several possible versions of worthwhile student knowledge. It is often worth asking students about their backgrounds and needs, their learning behaviours and preferences, their beliefs, their future ambitions, and how they are feeling right now.

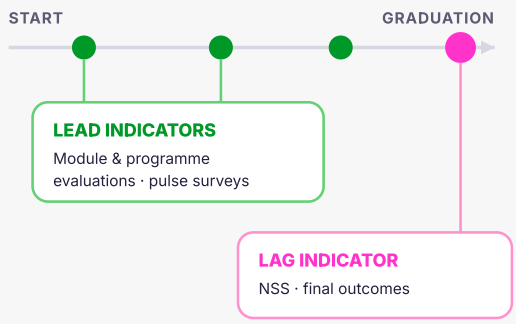
> "National surveys like the NSS are lag indicators of past performance. Internal module and programme evaluations are vital lead indicators – allowing real-time diagnosis and intervention before issues affect final-year outcomes."

Student feedback insight is critical to the enhancement of the student learning experience, and should be a core element of any student success strategy. Feedback opportunities contribute to students' sense of belonging and community, and – executed well – can be an important moment of reflection and meaning-making.

By approaching student surveys as a system – or even a system within a wider student feedback system – it becomes possible to interrogate the pedagogical and data links between institutional survey data and ultimate student success and institutional performance.

We are hugely grateful to the colleagues and students from across the sector who helped develop the framework, tested the reflective tool, and contributed vignettes of their practice to bring it to life.

LEAD & LAG IN ONE SYSTEM



A working system reads early signals in time to act – not just the final score.

Debbie McVitty
Editor, Wonkhe

Helena Lim
Academic lead, evasys

The principles of the student survey feedback framework

Five principles underpin everything that follows. They treat student surveys not as a set of forms, but as a living system that has to be designed, governed and cared for.

1 Student feedback surveys function as a **system**: multiple actors execute elements of it over time, and if one element fails, all the others become less effective.

2

There is **no single optimal design**. When, how and on what topics students are surveyed should fall out of institutional education strategy and student success objectives.

3

Some degree of institutional **oversight and governance** is required to design, coordinate and – ideally – enhance that system.

4

The system must **work for and be meaningful to both students and staff**, attending to the knowledge, needs and experience of each group at the right points. Only then is it widely trusted and used for its intended purpose.

5

It is most effective when **pedagogically coherent** – aligning broad student success objectives (including, but not limited to, NSS) with the focused, contextualised questions worth asking at module, programme or cohort level.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Surveys are a system. Fix the connections between the steps, not just the forms.

→ REFLECTIVE TOOL

Prompts 1–4 test your coordination. If you can only start one place, start there (p.10).

→ IN PRACTICE

Leicester built governance to gain visibility (p.15); Cardiff investigated before redesigning (p.13).

User experience as a principle of how the system works

A survey system is only as good as the experience it creates – for the students asked to give feedback, and the staff asked to act on it. Five things make that experience a good one.

01

Clarity of purpose

Knowing what this survey is for, and why it is being asked now.

02

Sight of process

Seeing the path from collection to analysis, action and feedback.

03

Sense of agency

Believing that giving feedback can genuinely change something.

04

Support to use

Having the knowledge and skills to take part, or to act, well.

05

Safety & safeguards

Trusting that feedback is handled fairly, for everyone involved.

SEE THESE IN PRACTICE

These dimensions come alive in the vignettes. On **staff engagement**, see York's work on bias and the module-vs-lecturer question (p.18) and Saïd Business School's shift to developmental conversations (p.17). On **student engagement** and closing the loop, see Cardiff (p.13) and the Open University's real-time feedback (p.23).

The value of deploying survey tools within the system

A sophisticated survey system needs more than digital forms; it needs a structured platform to remove administrative friction. The institutional benefits are concrete:

- **Real-time response.** Automating data processing so insight is available when it can still be acted on.
- **Managing fatigue.** A centralised system that gives oversight of what is being asked, of whom, and when.
- **Beyond walls of text.** Dashboards that allow demographic and course-level splits, not undigested comment dumps.
- **From crunching to dialogue.** Shifting staff effort away from processing data and towards pedagogical conversation with students.

04 · THE FRAMEWORK

The framework

Three levels of maturity for a student survey feedback system – from getting coordinated, to aligning with strategy, to keeping the whole thing alive.

01 **Institutional coordination**
Distinct surveys, doing distinct jobs, understood by all.

02 **Strategic alignment**
Survey data connected to student success objectives.

03 **System enhancement**
An active conversation that keeps the system honest.

The student survey feedback framework

Read down for the **three levels** of system maturity; read across for the **three groups** whose experience the system has to work for. Each cell describes what "good" looks like.

	GOVERNANCE	STAFF ENGAGEMENT	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
1 Institutional coordination	We know what we're asking students, when and why – and have defined good practice in survey design, execution and follow-up at a high level.	Staff understand the core institutional approach and rationale for surveying students, and discuss findings with students as appropriate.	Students know why they're asked to complete any survey, expect to be told what changed as a result, and are represented in survey governance.
2 Strategic alignment	We are confident our survey practice aligns with our student success objectives and enhancement work – and we use evidence to demonstrate it.	Staff use survey data to systematically enhance modules, programmes and experience, supported to evidence how – in partnership with students.	Students grasp the link between their own efforts, experiences and environment, and can offer constructive comment to improve it.
3 System enhancement	We run a rolling programme of analysis to check the system is working as intended, making changes and refreshments where required.	Staff reflect on how well feedback systems work in their context, feed in ideas to improve them, and pilot new approaches when needed.	Students understand why feedback is collected, and will comment on their experience of being asked – and what helps them engage.

HOW TO READ THE THREE LENSES

Governance

Who designs, coordinates and oversees the system – and keeps it aligned to strategy.

Staff engagement

Who turns survey data into pedagogical action, in partnership with students.

Student engagement

Who the system must make sense to, serve, and be trusted by.

? The framework is deliberately not a scorecard - it is a shared language for asking "where are we, and where do we want to be?" The reflective tool turns it into questions.

About the framework

The three levels are cumulative rather than sequential – most institutions are working on all three at once. Each comes with its own characteristic challenges.

01 Institutional coordination

In a functioning system, different surveys serve distinct and complementary purposes at different points in the journey, and in different learning contexts. Students and staff need to understand the rationale for *when* to survey, and the path from collection to analysis, action and feedback. Each group needs interventions to support engagement – best designed with users themselves, but good-practice examples help move it forward.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Defining staff roles
- Closing the feedback loop with students
- Institutional guardrails on surveys

02 Strategic alignment

The student learning experience – teaching, curriculum, environment, support, students' own engagement and context – is made of many elements, and students hold relevant knowledge on all of them. The job of a survey system is to realise that knowledge as data where it can be applied. Understanding the relationship between survey data and student success objectives (typically including, but not limited to, NSS) creates a focal point for deciding what matters most in the system.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Building & visualising evidence models
- Supporting staff and students to use the data

03 System enhancement

A system with many moving parts and accountabilities can grow stale if it isn't monitored; an active conversation about what is and isn't working sustains engagement, allows troubleshooting and keeps momentum. As new cohorts arrive, strategy evolves and curricula are refreshed, it helps to keep a light-touch sense of whether the system is still delivering what it was set up to do.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Sustaining momentum in the feedback cycle
- Avoiding "mission drift" as systems bed in

FROM THE FIELD · THE THREE LEVELS IN PRACTICE

"We didn't have visibility of what we – or others – were asking students."

COORDINATION · LEICESTER, P.15

"We word statements about the module, not the teacher."

ALIGNMENT · YORK, P.18

"Feedback framed as growth, not judgment."

ENHANCEMENT · SAÏD, OXFORD, P.17

→ Test your own system against all three levels on the reflective worksheet, p.10.

A reflective tool for your survey feedback system

The focus here is your student survey *system* – however you define it and its various elements. There is no expectation that you will agree with everything: some elements may not matter to you, or may not be worth the effort it would take to make them true.

Testers told us the exercise is most useful as a way to **frame discussion** among the groups responsible for managing survey systems – generating insight and ideas that can inform plans for further development. For each statement, consider your answer... and why.

Agree | Working on it | Plan to in future | Too difficult | Not relevant

COORDINATION – WHAT, WHEN & WHY

1	We have defined the core elements of our survey system: when it comes to things that really matter, we know what we're asking students, when, and why.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
2	We have defined what good practice looks like for us in survey design, execution and follow-up – for both staff and students.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
3	We are confident our module- or sub-cohort-level questions align with our core student success objectives *and* broader national survey performance objectives.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○

ALIGNMENT – DATA INTO ENHANCEMENT

4	Our system works as an "early warning" tool to identify and fix critical issues before they affect final-year student outcomes (for example, via a survey platform with real-time reporting, to surface issues at module level before they affect final year outcomes).	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
5	We have a pedagogic rationale for how survey and feedback data sits within our enhancement model and processes.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
6	We can point to good examples of survey feedback showing up in enhancement activity for modules/units, courses/programmes and the broader student experience.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
7	We have a data model linking elements of the learning experience at different points in the journey to ultimate outcomes (e.g. NSS, completion/award).	○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Agree | Working on it | Plan to in future | Too difficult | Not relevant

EXPERIENCE & ENHANCEMENT – STAFF & STUDENTS

8	The systems we use to capture, process and visualise survey data are appropriately secure, fast and user-friendly.*	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
9	We have sight of the **staff** experience of the survey system, and know which parts work well and which do not.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
10	Our staff understand and are confident to carry out their responsibilities in relation to student feedback.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
11	We have sight of the **student** experience – especially the closing of the feedback loop – and know which parts work well and which do not.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
12	We're confident students understand the role and purpose of giving feedback, and how to do it constructively at the appropriate level.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
13	Students are involved in survey governance, in interrogating feedback data, and in working with staff on enhancement as appropriate.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○

* Dedicated survey platforms can support this – automating data processing, enabling demographic splits and reducing administrative burden on staff.

WHERE YOU AGREE, OR ARE WORKING ON IT

Note *what makes that element work well*. It may help you articulate emerging practice, or identify what you want to protect as the system grows.

WHERE IT'S TOO DIFFICULT, OR NOT RELEVANT

Ask *"what would need to be true?"* to make this relevant or actionable. It might not be a priority now – but it could be something to return to.

06 · VIGNETTES OF PRACTICE

Vignettes of practice

Eleven survey leaders and practitioners on what they are trying, what is working, and what they are still figuring out.

Cardiff
· Low response rates

Leicester
· Survey governance

Saïd, Oxford
· Improvement, not compliance

York
· Boosting NSS engagement

Lancashire
· Student voice framework

Open University
· Response rates

Bath
· Questioning assumptions

Harper Adams
· A voice ecosystem

York
· Module or lecturer?

UCL
· Coherent survey governance

Queen's Belfast
· Beyond teaching evals

Getting to the bottom of low survey response rates

Elgan Hughes & Chloe Rideout
Student Engagement Manager & Student Voice Manager · University of Cardiff

21.3%
Autumn End-of-Module Enhancement response rate – up from **12.6%** the previous year.

59%
of surveyed students didn't know Module Leader summary reports existed at all.

Our challenge was low and inconsistent response rates across the institution: overall End-of-Module Enhancement (EME) response dropped to 12.6 per cent last year. That creates a frustrating cycle – low rates limit how representative the data is, which makes staff hesitant to trust or act on it, while students feel their feedback is going into a void, which depresses rates further.

Rather than make assumptions, we investigated the student journey by surveying our Cardiff 100 – a diverse student panel – to find out what truly motivates or deters them. To support staff, we launched a Business Intelligence dashboard that makes it far easier to track positivity scores, compare modules and spot long-term trends.

> "Survey fatigue is barely a factor. The real deterrents are poor timing and a lack of transparency."

This is very much unfinished work, but we are seeing movement: Autumn EME response rose to 21.3 per cent. Crucially, the Cardiff 100 feedback completely reframed the problem for us. We learned that fatigue is barely the issue – timing and transparency are.

Going forward, we are shifting our focus to actively closing the feedback loop. We plan to test shorter, module-specific questions, adjust survey timings, and show students in our reminders exactly how staff are using their data.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

Ask your students *why* before you redesign the survey. Cardiff's fix was visibility, not brevity – and it moved the numbers.

Evaluating the unit survey system made us question our assumptions

Nathalia Gjersoe
Associate Dean (Education) · University of Bath

For more than a decade, our Online Unit Evaluations (OUEs) sat at the centre of teaching quality assurance and staff performance. Introduced in 2010, the system was deliberately designed to work at scale: a short, consistent set of core questions enabled central monitoring across departments and faculties, while still letting unit convenors add questions for their context. Roles, timelines and the Code of Practice were clear, and OUE data became mandatory within curriculum review, probation and progression.

Initially it worked extremely well. Response rates regularly sat between 60 and 70 per cent, and OUEs served several purposes at once – professional development for convenors, a feedback mechanism for students, monitoring of teaching quality, and input to quality assurance and promotion.

Over time, response rates declined sharply – to the point where data in some units became almost unusable.

Staff engagement in promoting evaluations diminished, students questioned the value of repeating feedback, and concerns about bias in anonymous feedback – particularly its disproportionate impact on women and minority staff – raised real ethical questions about mandatory use in progression.

A long-running working group undertook extensive engagement: co-creating student-facing materials with the SU, clarifying responsibilities, streamlining administration and building templates to reduce workload. Despite this, response rates did not significantly improve.

The university has now decided to remove the mandatory use of OUE scores in progression from next year. That creates space to rethink the relationship between feedback, enhancement and accountability – including whether more responsive mid-semester "stop–start–continue" approaches, which seem to generate stronger engagement, should become more central. Rather than asking one system to meet such breadth of needs, we may need to think more creatively about what is captured at unit level, and what genuinely needs to be shared beyond the teaching team.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

Process and promotion fixes won't save a system students have stopped believing in. Sometimes the honest move is to stop asking one tool to do everything.

Visible, streamlined and synergised – establishing governance of student surveys

Dawn Kemp
Head of Education Services · University of Leicester

The Student Surveys Oversight Group (SSOG) was established in 2022–23 to deliver a strategically aligned, consistent and coordinated approach to surveying students, both taught and research. Although student voice and partnership were already embedded in our work, we recognised we didn't have sufficient visibility of what we – or others – were asking students, the purpose and timing of those surveys, or how effectively the data was used to drive enhancement.

SSOG provides institutional oversight for all large-scale student surveys, underpinned by clearly articulated governance. Reporting via a sub-committee to Education Committee, its remit covers survey governance, policy and operational framework; the annual survey calendar; partnership working with the SU; and compliance, including GDPR and data governance.

We chose to focus on surveys of 250+ students or an entire year group – those with the greatest reach and impact.

Agreeing the scope was a challenge; mapping made clear that overseeing the survey landscape in full would be impossible. Although research-led surveys needing ethical approval are out of scope, we inserted a question into the research management system asking staff to flag any large-scale survey and consult the policy – giving SSOG far greater visibility and a chance to limit clashes with strategic surveys such as the NSS.

Since SSOG was established, we have streamlined the number of large-scale surveys students face and strengthened partnership with the SU so that voice mechanisms work synergistically, without duplication. Building on the annual calendar, we are now developing a visual student voice map across the lifecycle to identify gaps and further opportunities – and to help students and staff understand why any given survey is being run, and how their feedback will be used.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

You can't coordinate what you can't see. Governance here is the route to visibility – not bureaucracy for its own sake.

Building a student voice and surveys ecosystem to enhance our institution

Emily McIntosh & Lydia Arnold

Chief Student Officer & Associate PVC (Learning, Teaching & Digital) · Harper Adams University

The Student Voice and Surveys Ecosystem Group (SVSEG), launching in the new academic year, is designed to bring coherence, coordination and impact to all student feedback activity across the Harper Adams community. It establishes a whole-system approach to student voice, recognising that surveys, representation structures and partnership activity are most effective when they are aligned, purposeful and connected to action.

At its core, the work is about ensuring student feedback meaningfully informs enhancement. Rather than relying on isolated surveys or retrospective evaluation, the ecosystem integrates multiple inputs – national surveys, pulse surveys, course feedback and representative forums – into a single framework.

It represents a shift from collecting feedback to embedding student voice as a central driver of enhancement.

This lets the university identify patterns earlier in the journey and respond proactively, supporting an "early intervention" model that improves outcomes before problems escalate. A key focus is reducing fragmentation and survey fatigue: by coordinating timing, design and purpose, the group ensures students are not overburdened while improving response rates and data quality – and supports a clearer narrative for students about why feedback is collected and how it is used.

The ecosystem strengthens the link between insight and action. Feedback is synthesised across sources and translated into thematic, evidence-informed action plans at module, programme and institutional levels. Progress is tracked and outcomes communicated transparently, closing the feedback loop and building trust. Ultimately, by combining data, partnership and coordinated governance, the work enhances the student experience and contributes to improved outcomes such as satisfaction, continuation and achievement.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

Coordination beats addition. The win isn't another survey – it's making the ones you already run point the same way.

Student surveys as continuous improvement, not compliance

Janette Nhangaba

Director of Student Services · Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

We recognised that Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) surveys were limited as indicators of teaching quality. Response rates varied significantly across modules, faculty often experienced surveys as reductive performance measures, and the data was difficult to interpret without wider context. At the same time, students were telling us – through surveys, listening lunches, complaints data and consultative committees – that they wanted clearer evidence their views led to change.

In response, we redesigned the SET process as part of a broader Quality Enhancement Framework focused on continuous improvement rather than compliance. Surveys were shortened to no more than ten questions to reduce fatigue, and we introduced dashboarding so results could be viewed across cohorts, modules, demographic groups and years – helping us spot trends rather than react to isolated scores.

Each instructor now receives a personalised analysis – framed as pedagogical growth, not judgment.

Most importantly, we shifted the feedback loop towards developmental conversations with faculty. Rather than framing feedback as judgment, the process focuses on pedagogical growth, inclusive teaching and learner engagement, with workshops, observations, coaching and peer-supported development. The response has been notably positive: colleagues increasingly see SET as a constructive mechanism for reflection and innovation, encouraging experimentation with active learning, assessment redesign and inclusive facilitation.

We are also learning about governance: surveys are not governed for their own sake, but because they connect to enhancement, staff development and student success. A challenge remains in making effective use of the high volume of informal feedback, which can dilute engagement with formal mechanisms and reinforce siloed action planning. The work is still evolving, but it is helping us build a more reflective, responsive and developmental culture.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

Change what feedback is *for* and you change how people treat it. Development beats measurement for engagement.

Are students feeding back about the module, or the lecturer?

Steve King
Associate PVC (Education & Students) · University of York

157 → 10
individually-phrased legacy questions, mapped down to **ten core themes**.

3 sets
standard question sets: placement, dissertation, and all other taught modules.

Introducing a university-wide module evaluation system (Evasys) let York confront an important issue: implicit bias in student responses. It has been known for some time – e.g. Daskalopolou (2024), Heffernan (2022) – that responses can be affected by a lecturer's gender, race or accent, and the change prompted real debate about whether we should ask students about the lecturer, or about the module and their learning on it.

Previously, each department ran its own system, questions, timing and technology – from Qualtrics and Mentimeter to Google Forms and Post-it notes. We standardised to just three question sets, collecting all prior questions to inform them (157 individually-phrased questions, mapped across ten core themes).

We word statements about the module, not the teacher: "the module was interesting", not "the lecturer made it interesting".

To reduce bias based on a lecturer's characteristics, we worded all statements about the module. We also made surveys confidential rather than anonymous – allowing de-anonymisation where there are concerns for student safety or comments are abusive – produced a student guide to giving professional feedback, and ran a campus comms campaign.

Linked to this, we are reconsidering promotion criteria. Citing module-survey scores as evidence of teaching excellence looks questionable given the bias evidence: are some staff advantaged by more favourable feedback? We are exploring evidencing excellence through *changes made* as a result of feedback, rather than the feedback itself. Open questions remain – single-staff modules, the value early-career staff place on developmental comments, and whether to allow departmental questions in future.

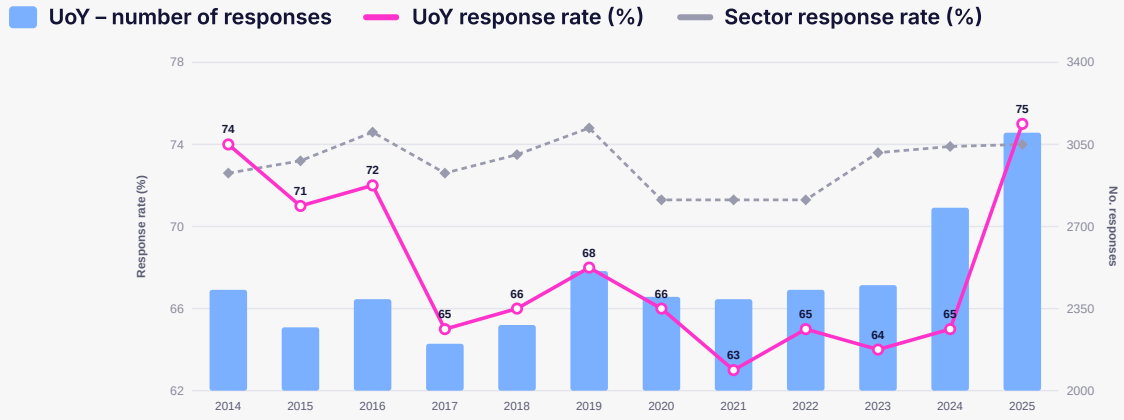
WHAT THIS TEACHES

How you word a question is an equity decision. Measure the thing you can fairly act on.

Increasing engagement with the National Student Survey

David Barrett
Associate Dean (Education & Students), Faculty of Sciences · University of York

University of York NSS response rate over time, compared to sector



For presentational reasons, the percentage axis does not start at zero.

The NSS lets final-year undergraduates feed back on teaching, assessment and student voice. Maximising response rates matters: it makes feedback more representative and allows greater granularity in reporting (there is also a weak, non-causal link between response rates and positivity – Burgess 2018; Proud & Volpe 2026).

Since 2017, York saw response rates run well below the sector average. In early 2025 an NSS steering group formed to push institutional initiatives on engagement and positivity. It focused first on response rates, building an institution-wide communication strategy and enhanced reporting that informed department-level activity.

A step-change in 2025: up roughly 10 percentage points – above the sector average for the first time in a decade.

This year, we introduced an enhanced comms strategy, worked closely with the SU, and shared best practice with NSS leads across the institution. Departments ran awareness sessions and offered protected time for completion in class.

Provisional 2026 data suggests we have held those gains – and students completed earlier: departments reached a 50 per cent response rate ("days to threshold") on average **nine days earlier** than in 2025. The key question now is whether earlier completion brings higher positivity. We'll know more on **8 July**.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

Response rate is a system output, not a comms campaign. The lift came from many owners doing aligned things at once.

How survey governance gives us a more coherent view of student feedback

Parama Chaudhury & Karen Barnard

Pro-Vice Provost (Education) & Director, HEDS Institute · University College London

At UCL we are working towards a more coherent, institution-wide approach to student surveys – bringing together design, operational delivery and data use so that module-level feedback can be meaningfully linked to programme-level insights. The goal is twofold: to better predict NSS results, and to create an earlier-warning system that enables timely, local action while still supporting institutional enhancement.

UCL has an established setup: annual programme surveys alongside module evaluations, within-term module feedback and real-time "closing the loop", plus other central and local surveys. Each generated valuable insight, but the lack of coordination led to overlapping timelines, survey fatigue and fragmented data. At scale, governance was the core challenge – how to create coherence and shared standards while still allowing the right instruments, and how to link feedback across levels.

Governance as coordination rather than control.

We established the Student Surveys Oversight Group (SSOG) to provide strategic and operational oversight of core taught surveys: setting principles for design and use, aligning surveys across the lifecycle, improving coordination and response rates, and strengthening "closing the loop". It brings together survey providers, data and insight teams, student representatives and faculty voices – central coordination meeting distributed expertise – not to replace local practice but to set expectations and build a common framework for how data is used.

An early priority has been mapping the landscape and aligning module-level feedback with programme and institution-wide datasets. It has improved visibility, reduced duplication, and begun to shift conversations from "running surveys" to "using insights". But it is also messy: central governance can convene the system, not fully standardise practice across diverse disciplines. What works is shared ownership; what remains hard is turning aligned data into consistently actionable insight at scale.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

Coherence comes from convening the system, not standardising it – and the prize is linking module feedback to programme-level insight.

Rebuilding and extending our Student Voice Framework

Rhys Brindle
Lead Student Achievement Officer · University of Lancashire

Although the University of Lancashire had a strong foundation of student voice activity, by 2025–26 it wasn't always experienced as a joined-up system. Schools and student-facing services worked to varying interpretations, with limited alignment between local practice and institutional insight. The challenge was to bring coherence without losing the flexibility and partnership ethos – in a refined Student Voice Framework (SVF) for 2026–27.

We ran an institution-wide review with schools, the students' union and professional services to translate strategic intent into usable practice. We redesigned the key principles and positioning, strengthened responsibilities, enhanced the student voice platform (Unitu), updated representation and co-creation models, and strengthened monitoring, evaluation and review.

The readiness checklist pulls the operational considerations into one workable document.

The review introduced a school readiness checklist as an operational appendix, enabling structured planning with school voice leads and one-page local student voice models – giving both local ownership and a consistent institutional view. We also mapped an annual cycle of activity across six interconnected "swim lanes", from data collection through to governance and communication, now an appendix within the SVF.

These revisions improved the connectivity between insight, action and oversight. Schools responded positively to the readiness checklist as it pulls the operational considerations into one workable document. Working with the Wonkhe and evasys group and the reflective tools highlighted further opportunities – reviewing survey alignment, reconsidering module evaluation design, and a new project on the lived experience of postgraduate students.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

Strategy lands when it ships with operational artefacts – checklists and one-page models that schools will actually use.

Why we're moving on from teaching evaluation surveys

Duncan Berryman
Student Surveys Officer · Queen's University Belfast

In December 2024 the university decided to discontinue the routine use of teaching evaluation surveys for every member of staff across every module – part of a wider review of how student feedback is gathered and used to enhance learning and teaching.

Several factors drove it. Students faced increasing fatigue, sometimes three or more surveys per module, including for individual visiting lecturers. Response rates for teaching evaluations were consistently low, limiting representativeness. Unlike module evaluations, the data couldn't be transferred automatically, adding administrative burden. And leaders recognised the growing evidence of bias in student evaluations, particularly for female, international and ethnic-minority staff.

Rather than relying on survey metrics, the aim is purposeful, proportionate feedback that leads to enhancement.

The change has been well received, especially for reducing workload on students and staff. Some schools continue targeted teaching evaluations where there is a clear local or professional need – allowing flexibility while avoiding a "one size fits all" approach.

The university is now exploring a longer-term replacement that is developmental, evidence-informed and aligned to recognition frameworks such as Advance HE Fellowship – centred on peer observation, professional dialogue and student partnership. Rather than relying on survey metrics, the aim is to help colleagues reflect on and enhance their teaching: feedback that is purposeful, proportionate and more likely to lead to real enhancement.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

Sometimes the enhancement move is to stop surveying – and replace blunt metrics with developmental dialogue.

Tackling low response rates with a student research panel

Rachel Garnham

Senior Manager, Office of the PVC (Students) · The Open University

Open University students are hugely diverse – all ages and backgrounds, studying for a single module or for decades. OU study fits into busy lives, so a module survey doesn't always reach the top of the to-do list, and response rates have been flagging.

Our sector-leading student research project panel reviews all research seeking feedback from students. It includes student representatives and ensures students receive only a limited number of approaches per year – supporting researchers, through scrutiny and constructive feedback, to design projects that are well-made and worthwhile.

Real-time feedback embedded in the VLE generates much higher response rates – students immediately get something back.

But what else could we do? A diverse student body needs a multifaceted response. Over the past year we streamlined and personalised survey communications, split-testing new subject lines; placed greater emphasis on what happens to feedback, with new staff guidance on communicating impact; and began piloting incentives.

We also standardised what we mean by "real-time student feedback". Embedded in the module VLE, it generates much higher response rates than traditional surveys, signposts relevant content and lets module teams intervene – so students immediately get something back. Rates are still lower than we'd like, so we are redesigning our feedback framework: moving away from email towards meeting students in their spaces, with timely responses central. Module evaluation remains core, as modules remain the building block of OU study.

WHAT THIS TEACHES

Meet students where they are: in-context, real-time feedback beats email surveys for both response and action.

WONKHE | evasys

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Closing the loop

Building a feedback framework for student success.

WATCH THE WEBINAR BACK

Closing the loop, on demand

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Recorded 16 June 2026

ABOUT WONKHE

Wonkhe is the home of higher education policy, people and ideas – bringing the sector together to make higher education better through analysis, debate and events.

ABOUT EVASYS

evasys is an evaluation and feedback platform helping institutions gather, analyse and act on student and staff feedback at scale – turning survey data into enhancement.

GETTING THE SYSTEM RIGHT

The framework described here is achievable with the right infrastructure behind it. A dedicated survey platform removes the administrative friction that prevents systems from functioning as intended – automating data flows, enabling demographic and course-level analysis, and freeing staff to focus on the pedagogical conversations that actually drive enhancement. The institutions featured in this report are at different points on that journey. What they share is a recognition that student feedback is too important to leave to improvised tools and manual processes. Getting the system right – governed, coherent and trusted – is the foundation for everything else.

With thanks to all the institutions and students who took part in the working group and shared their practice.

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