
The First Year and Second Year Experience Surveys

BACKGROUND

In 2006, the University took a decision to introduce first and second year surveys which would complement the National Student Survey (NSS), which is a national survey of all final year students. The inaugural First Year Experience Survey (FYE) was conducted in 2007 and the first Second Year Experience Survey (SYE) in 2008. Initially the main aim of the FYE was about gathering data on how students made the transition to university and the SYE focused on issues of importance in second year once the initial highs and lows of first year were behind them and they were more settled academically and socially. By 2009, both surveys had yielded important results which were influencing aspects of the student experience as diverse as academic support and careers guidance. With this significant dataset to draw on, there was scope to change the focus of the questionnaires. Therefore, since 2010 both the FYE and the SYE questionnaires have replicated the NSS, chiefly on the grounds that it provides good coverage of the most important aspects of the student experience.

COVERAGE OF THE SURVEY: THE TARGET LIST

The FYE is completed by all first year (Level 1) students in Queen's and the SYE is completed by all second year (Level 2) students.

All full-time and part-time undergraduate students in their first and second years of study are eligible, with the following main exceptions:

- students on programmes that do not lead to undergraduate qualifications or credits;
- students on a course lasting one year or one FTE or less.

The list of students to be included in the FYE and SYE each year, is provided by QGIS. Inaccuracies in the data may result in students being wrongly included in or excluded from the target lists. To ensure that the target lists are as accurate as possible, the Student Survey Team make them available to the DEs within each School for checking and verification. Schools can identify students that are missing, or those they believe should be excluded, these students are then added or removed from the final target lists as appropriate.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SURVEY

The DASA Student Survey Team conduct the survey on behalf of all the Schools and Faculties within Queen's. The target lists are supplied by QGIS and all contact with the students is carried out by the Student Survey Team. In order to achieve our target 50% response rate, a variety of methods are used to contact students. Initially students are sent an email inviting them to complete the questionnaire online. Those students that do not respond are then sent subsequent email reminders. If students still do not respond, they are then contacted by telephone. Survey data becomes more reliable and robust as the response rate increases; therefore, a number of measures are taken within Queen's to maximise student response. Academic staff are urged to encourage their first and second year students to take part, however, they *must not* attempt to influence students' survey responses.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire used in the FYE and SYE has 29 core questions grouped under nine headings:

- Teaching
- Learning opportunities

- Assessment and feedback
- Academic support
- Organisation and management
- Learning resources
- Learning community
- Student voice
- Overall satisfaction

There is also an open-ended question which allows respondents to highlight any particularly positive or negative aspects of their student experience.

In addition to the core questions, the FYE and SYE also include a small number of bespoke questions about other aspects of the student experience. These questions are selected on an annual basis and reflect the University's priorities, concerns and/or particular areas of interest.

PUBLICATION OF THE RESULTS

The FYE and SYE results are made available to staff via the Student Survey Results section of the DASA SharePoint site (<http://go.qub.ac.uk/StudentSurveys>).

RESPONDING TO THE RESULTS

Within the University, the FYE and SYE are established as key performance indicators and are increasingly taken into account in shaping University policy (for example, on assessment and feedback). The results are distributed to Directors of Education and heads of units in academic support areas. A report on the results is considered by the University Operating Board (UOB) and the Education Committee, and these committees will, in due course, receive reports on the action taken by Schools and units in response to the survey results.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about the FYE and SYE is available from the DASA SharePoint site: <http://go.qub.ac.uk/StudentSurveys>