Policy on Student Surveys

Document control table

1.	**Prepared by (lead responsibility)**	Dawn Kemp (Head of Education Services)
2.	**Approved by**	Education Committee

Policy development steps

3.	**Legal implications of this policy area.**	N/A
4.	**Consultation for this policy**	Student Surveys Task and Finish Group Doctoral College Research and Ethics Integrity Manager Students' Union
5.	**Related procedures/guidance**	GDPR and Data Governance UoL Policy on Student Module Feedback
6.	**Version history**	V1.0 (approved in principle by ExB on 2.10.23 and Education Committee on 8.3.24) V2.0 Updated 7.8.24 with SSOG ToR (2024/25)
7.	**Monitoring**	Student Surveys Oversight Group.
8.	**Date of issue**	AY 2024/25
9.	**Review date**	Next review October 2025 and then on a 3-4 year review cycle

University of Leicester

STUDENT SURVEYS POLICY

CONTEXT

1.   The student voice is valued and respected at the University of Leicester. All students have regular opportunities to provide feedback on their experience of studying at the University and are encouraged to challenge existing practice as necessary in order to help drive improvement. One of the key mechanisms for obtaining student feedback and insights is the University's student surveys framework. Collectively these surveys provide a core set of data and benchmarks to inform enhancement activity and support monitoring and evaluation.

2.   The University operates a number of student surveys internally as part of our monitoring and evaluation work, as well as externally through national surveys as required.

3.   The Student Surveys Oversight Group holds institutional oversight on behalf of the PVC Education (taught students) and Dean of the Doctoral College (research students) for all University-wide student surveys (both external and internal). **Appendix 1** outlines core institution-wide surveys, their target populations, data collection periods and reporting bodies. A range of internal surveys are also operated by Professional Service departments and academic Schools, including the Student Module Feedback surveys.

4.   Education Services, is responsible for managing the implementation of Student Surveys targeting taught students at the University (UG and PGT); in particular the NSS and the University's Student Academic Experience Survey (SAES), working closely with key stakeholders including the PVC Education and Students' Union. The Doctoral College provides management support for the implementation of Student Surveys for postgraduate research students.

SCOPE OF POLICY

5.   The policy establishes a coordinated approach to student surveys at the University of Leicester and sets out the key principles which should underpin all surveys in which University of Leicester students (both taught and research) are invited to participate.

6.   The surveys covered by this policy are either administered directly by the University or are externally administered surveys in which the University has opted to participate (e.g. NSS).

7.   Surveys falling outside the governance requirements of the policy include:

- Surveys run by the Students' Union. The policy does however promote ongoing partnership working with students and the Students' Union in the co-design, promotion, delivery and follow-up to student surveys.
- Surveys of staff, alumni[1] or applicants.
- Surveys which are run entirely by external organisations (such as market research surveys).

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[1] With the exception of Graduate Outcomes Survey and internal Careers Exit and 12 Month Post-Graduation Survey. Also with the exception of surveys targeting applicants who will become students – they are in scope.

- Research-led surveys which are subject to ethical approval.
- Student Module Feedback Surveys, which are covered by a separate policy.
- In-curriculum large scale student surveys, which have been approved as part of the programme approval process.
- Service feedback surveys targeting a clearly defined user group.

KEY PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING STUDENT SURVEY POLICY

8.   The University's Student Surveys Policy aims to assure the quality and accessibility of the surveys, reduce survey fatigue and ensure appropriate analysis, response and dissemination. All surveys of students initiated by a member of the University community must comply with existing University policy, and the principles and methodologies of survey design and conduct, as set out in the key principles underpinning the policy:

- All students have the opportunity to provide feedback on their learning experience through a range of student surveys.

- Participation in all student surveys is voluntary.

- Surveys have a clear focus or aim, which is communicated to potential respondents.

- Survey design and methodology ensures validity, reliability and accuracy, and supports evidence-based judgements and decisions.

- Where a sampling approach is used, consideration is given to ensuring the representative weighting of groups in the sample.

- Data collected by student surveys is:

  - Designed to contribute to continuous improvement and effective action planning.

  - Timely and relevant.

  - Based on a streamlined approach in which every question has a purpose.

  - Based on consistent questions, as appropriate, to ensure that progress can be tracked and evaluated.

  - Collected through a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions.

  - Designed to enable internal and external benchmarking.

  - Analysed and considered in partnership with students, wherever possible.

  - Handled in accordance with GDPR legislation and data governance.

- Actions in response to surveys are reported to students within a timely manner to close the feedback loop.

- Staff have a right to access student survey data where it pertains to their role / School in order to support reflection and enhancement.

- Data gathered through student surveys is held confidentially in accordance with the requirements of GDPR. Due care is taken to ensure that the data analysis and reporting does not enable the identification of individual students' responses.

- Accessibility requirements are taken into account when designing and distributing surveys to ensure they can be completed by respondents with varying hearing, movement, sight and cognitive abilities.
- Surveys will be co-created with students whenever possible.

STUDENT SURVEY FRAMEWORK

9.   The University of Leicester Student Survey Framework provides a range of opportunities for students to provide feedback on their experience of studying at the University. It comprises:

Core Surveys (Institution-wide)
Core surveys are centrally administered and occur annually or on a recurring basis (see **Appendix 1**). They include both sector-wide external surveys (such as the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)) and internal surveys (such as the Post Arrival Survey and the Student Academic Experience Survey (SAES)). A calendar of core surveys is approved annually by the Student Survey Oversight Group.

Non-Core Surveys
Typically one-off in nature and focussed on a particular issue/topic or specific academic or professional services area.

Pulse Surveys
Pulse Surveys enable students to give immediate feedback on their experience, across a range of areas as required. Can be one-off in nature or recurring as required.

GOVERNANCE

10.   The Student Surveys Oversight Group holds institutional oversight on behalf of the PVC Education (taught students) and the Dean of the Doctoral College (research students) for all University-wide student surveys (both external and internal) [**See Appendix 2 for Terms of Reference**]. The aim of the Student Surveys Oversight Group is to provide a consistent and coordinated approach across the University to surveying students (both taught and research), in accordance with the University's Student Surveys Policy. This includes:
- Approving an annual Student Survey Calendar.
- Managing the student survey approval process. This includes requests for additional institutional or large scale student surveys not already approved as part of the annual Student Survey Calendar and which fall within the scope of the policy.
- Reviewing annually the effectiveness of the Student Surveys Policy and the surveys approved as part of the annual Student Survey Calendar.

11.   Proposals for additional institutional or large scale student surveys, which do not form part of the core survey list, require prior approval from the Student Surveys Oversight Group. A "large scale" survey is defined as a survey targeted at 250 students or more or an entire year group (excluding Student Module Feedback Surveys). Additional surveys will only be considered if they are aligned with the University's strategic objectives and meet the criteria of the Review Framework for Student Surveys.[2] To protect the University's core institutional

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[2] Under development. For introduction in AY 2024/25.

surveys, large scale surveys of students initiated by members of the University community must be approved by the Student Surveys Oversight Group on behalf of the PVC Education or Dean of the Doctoral College before students are contacted about the survey. This includes where an external organisation is contracted to survey UoL students.

12.   Although internal market research/insight surveys of applicants are not covered by the policy, surveys targeting applicants who will become students are in scope and will therefore require prior approval from the Student Surveys Oversight Group if large scale.

13.   The Student Surveys Oversight Group will review the effectiveness of student surveys annually as part of its institutional oversight role, making recommendations to Education Committee and Doctoral College as required. Survey effectiveness will be considered in relation to:

- Student response rates included in institutional performance indicators.
- Feedback from staff on the timeliness and usability of reporting and data sets, in accordance with agreed reporting schedules.
- Feedback from students and the Students' Union particularly on their awareness of surveys, survey design and accessibility, and institutional and programme responses to their outcomes.
- The closing of the feedback loop to students.

COORDINATION AND PROMOTION OF SURVEYS

14.   No institution-wide surveys should take place at the same time as the NSS and internal Student Academic Experience Survey (normally January – April).

15.   The University will work in partnership with the Students' Union to promote student participation in surveys and to ensure that the results are used pro-actively to improve the experience of students.

16.   Every survey needs a clearly identified "survey owner" with primary responsibility and accountability (in liaison with Education Services or Doctoral College as appropriate), for:

- coordinating and organising the survey, ensuring sample populations are identified and accuracy checked, and that the survey is appropriately setup and available to students as required;
- ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of data collection periods and timescales for availability of results, providing information and resources to support survey promotion to students;
- coordinating central communications in partnership with Marketing and Communications, ensuring consistent messaging as to the purpose, use and outcome of surveys to encourage student participation.

17.   Although approved incentives may be used to promote participation (see 18 below), no action should be taken to influence a student's response to a survey. Incentives should take into account the University's Financial Regulations and any external guidance and/or requirements as necessary, including the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

SURVEY INCENTIVES

18.   Incentives for survey promotion, for either core or non-core surveys, must be approved by the Student Surveys Oversight Group.

SURVEY RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

19.   Timely analysis and reporting of survey results is a central element of delivering surveys. For core surveys, the reporting and institutional analysis will be conducted centrally. Schools and professional services divisions will have access to the data, in order to develop action plans and responses.

20.   For non-core surveys, survey owners should ensure that data is handled in accordance with GDPR legislation and data governance and that ethical approval is secured as appropriate.

21.   Results from both core and non-core surveys will be shared as appropriate with students and staff and the progress and impact of actions tracked and reported. The feedback loop should be closed with both the current and next year student survey population.

22.   Module/programme Leaders are expected to discuss the outcomes of surveys with (taught) students and the module/programme team to identify actions, initiatives and changes in response to student feedback. Where no actions are taken in response to surveys this should be clearly communicated and explained to students. Identified actions should be clear, time specific and allocated to appropriate member(s) of staff to implement and report on.

23.   Doctoral College/PGR Tutors are expected to discuss the outcomes of surveys with their PGR students to identify actions, initiatives and changes in response to student feedback. Where no actions are taken in response to surveys this should be clearly communicated and explained to students. Identified actions should be clear, time specific and allocated to appropriate member(s) of staff to implement and report on.

24.   Survey data in relation to taught students should be utilised within Module Review and Annual Programme Review to monitor impacts of enhancements and inform subsequent actions.

25.   Survey data in relation to research students should be utilised within the PGR governance structure through the PGR Sub-Committee to monitor impacts of enhancements and inform subsequent actions.

(Version 7.8.24)

Appendix 1: Operation of University of Leicester Student Core Surveys

Survey	Focus	Internal / External	Owner	Frequency	Target Population	Data Collection Period	Availability of Results	Dissemination	Managed by
Post Arrival Survey	Understand students' experiences at the start of the academic year, in order to improve the welcome offered to all taught students.	Internal	PVC Education Education Committee	Annual	All taught students	November (For Jan starters?)	Dec/Jan	Data Insights Briefing	Education Services
Student Academic Experience Survey (SAES)	Student experience survey, broadly aligned to the NSS	Internal	PVC Education Education Committee	Annual	Taught UG and PGT students (except those taking NSS in the current year or on year abroad)	early March	May/June	SAES Data Briefing (Schools/Education Committee) Annual Programme Review	Education Services
Student Module Feedback	Student feedback on their modules (mid- and end-module)	Internal	PVC Education Education Committee	Annual	All taught students	Sem 1 & 2	After end of each module	Summary report of end-module feedback is made available to each module convenor	Business Intelligence & Reporting

Career Readiness Survey	Understand students' preparedness for their careers at each stage of study to inform careers and employability support.	Internal	Director of Careers and Employability	Annual	All taught students	Registration	October	Careers and Employability datasets/School briefings	Careers and Employability
Careers Exit Survey	Gain insight on graduate outcomes, secured roles & graduates still looking to secure high skilled outcomes.	Internal	Director of Careers & Employability and Alumni	Annual	All graduating students	Graduation and completion of studies	July/August	Careers and Employability School reporting/Targeted interventions	Careers and Employability and Alumni
12 Month Post Graduation Survey	Sense check outcomes and data quality in preparation for Graduate Outcomes Survey.	Internal	Director of Careers & Employability and Alumni	Annual	Graduates 9-12 months post-graduation	March	April/May	Careers & Employability directly targeting graduate with relevant info to impact GOS. Early GOS mapping & predictions. School & College planning.	Careers and Employability and Alumni

National Student Survey (NSS)	Survey of final-year student experience.	External (OfS/Ipsos MORI) Compulsory Nationally benchmarked	PVC Education Education Committee	Annual	Graduating UG Students	February to end of April	July/August	Reporting schedule NSS Data Packs/Dashboard Annual Programme Review	Education Services
Graduate Outcomes Survey	Insight into career destinations and development.	External (HESA) Compulsory Nationally benchmarked	PVC Education Education Committee	Annual	Graduating UG Students (15 months after end of studies)	August to following July	May/June	Data Insights Briefing	Careers and Employability
Postgraduate Teaching Experience Survey (PTES)	Quality of PGT experience	External (Advance HE) Optional Nationally benchmarked	PVC Education Education Committee	Annual	PGT	April to June	August	Data Insights Briefing	Education Services
Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)	Quality of PGR experience	External (Advance HE) Optional Nationally benchmarked	Dean of Doctoral College	Every two years	PGR/Research Masters	March to May	July	PGR Sub-Committee, DPVC Research & Enterprise Channels, PGR Tutor Forum & PGR Reps Forum	Doctoral College

What Uni	Student reviews of University and course experience. Informs annual awards.	External (WhatUni)	Director of Communications and Engagement	Annual	All taught students	Autumn-Spring (Visit campus Autumn/Winter to avoid NSS	May	Tbc	External Relations (tbc)
International Student Barometer	Quality of international student experience	External Optional (Tribal i-graduate)	Tbc	Every two years	International students	November	March-June	i-graduate dashboard	i-graduate Account Manager/ Business Intelligence & Reporting
Sustainability Survey	The central survey for the sector for insights into Education for Sustainable Development and Sustainability Skills at universities	External Optional (Students Organising for Sustainability)	Director of Health and Safety	Annual	All taught students	November	March	Data Insight, Briefings, evidence of student voice on sustainability	Health, Safety and Sustainability

STUDENT SURVEYS OVERSIGHT GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP (2024/25)

1.   Purpose

1.1.   To provide a consistent and co-ordinated approach across the University to surveying students (both taught and research), in accordance with the University's Student Surveys Policy.

2.   Principles

2.1   Oversee the implementation of the University's Student Surveys Policy and Framework.

2.2   To identify which national surveys the University will take part in each academic year (e.g. NSS, PRES etc.).

2.3   To maintain and update a calendar to monitor and report on the impact of surveys undertaken each academic year.

2.4   Report to and advise the Registrar and Secretary and the PVC Education/Dean of Doctoral College of survey activity at the University.

2.5   Explore and advocate innovative ways to collect data using new methods such as social media and mobile apps with the intention to further and improve knowledge gain.

2.6   Ensure that results from surveys are used to improve the student or staff experience and request action plans with consequential updates on actions from areas to provide assurance and transparency.

3.   Membership

3.1   The membership of the group will be:

- Academic Registrar (interim chair)
- Head of Education Services
- Head of Doctoral College
- Chair, Learning Environment Sub Committee
- Digital Services representative
- Senior Education Leadership Team (SELT) representative
- Student and Education EDI Manager, Education Services
- Head of Business Intelligence and Reporting
- Internal Communications Manager (Students), ERD
- Education Officer, Students' Union
- Head of Marketing and Insight, ERD
- Data Insight Manager, Students' Union
- Data and Evaluation Analyst, Education Services, (Secretary)
- Others to be invited as agenda dictates

4.   Reports to

4.1 The group will report to the Learning Environment Sub-Committee.

5.   Secretariat

5.1   Education Services.

6.   Frequency of meetings

6.1   The group will meet a minimum three times per year.