

# Student Surveys Policy

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy's purpose is to:
- 1.2. Establish a coordinated approach to student surveys and set out the key principles for surveys and student insight at Queen Mary.
- 1.3. Ensure that students are surveyed proportionately, that their feedback is used to enhance the student experience and that survey questions are of sufficient quality to enhance the student experience.
- 1.4. To establish clear principles, approval routes and guidance on existing and new surveys.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy is applicable to: This policy's **scope** is all student surveys. This includes:
  - a) All student-facing surveys for current students regarding education and student experience. This includes the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Education Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey).
  - b) It also includes Queen Mary's internal surveys, including those regarding apprenticeships, incoming and current students, surveys undertaken for student facing activities, including within schools/institutes and professional services.
  - c) Any future student facing surveys.
- 2.2. The policy's scope does not include:
  - a) Student surveys undertaken by the Queen Mary Students' Union (QMSU).
  - b) Staff surveys.
  - c) Alumni surveys.
  - d) External surveys e.g. for public affairs purposes or communications.

- 2.3. Our **definition** of the different types of surveys are:
- a) **Core surveys:** these surveys are undertaken on a cohort-by-cohort basis and are centrally administered. A full list of core surveys can be found **in Appendix A**.
  - b) **Ongoing service surveys:** these surveys are undertaken across a service for example, for service provision within Library Services or for placements students undertake.
  - c) **Ad hoc surveys:** these surveys are ad hoc, local surveys, typically one off, for example, a snap classroom poll on a recent school change.

### 3. Principles

- 3.1. Principle 1: Purpose: The purpose of the survey must be clear and transparent for participants.
- 3.2. Principle 2: Appropriateness: Surveying is the most appropriate way of obtaining the data where alternative student voice mechanisms have been considered. These include:
  - a) Secondary analysis of existing data.
  - b) Consulting with the students' union and student representatives.
  - c) A student focus group.
  - d) On the spot qualitative market research.
  - e) Consulting the Student Voice Committee (SVC).
- 3.3. Principle 3: Ownership. There should be clear ownership of each survey, i.e. a named individual or team for monitoring purposes on uptake.
- 3.4. Principle 4: Promotion. Non-core-surveys surveys must minimise clashing with the promotion of the NSS. Surveys must not be actively promoted to final year undergraduate students during the NSS period. The period of the NSS runs from late January to late April. Any incentives for surveys must be submitted to the Student Insights Group. Surveys must be incentivised ethically and responsibly.
- 3.5. Principle 5: Minimisation: Similar, up-to-date information has been explored and found not to exist. For example, staff have looked at PowerBI dashboards and have consulted the student surveys team or their planning contact on whether similar data exists. Alternatively, comparative data has been found to not exist in a similar discipline or school.
- 3.6. Principle 6: Closing the feedback loop: There is a clear plan regarding how results will be analysed and utilised to improve the student experience.

- 3.7. Principle 7: Publication: A summary of analysis is retained. For ongoing service surveys, these should be shared with the Surveys Insight Group and EQSB for information.
- 3.8. Principle 8: Confidentiality. Surveys should be confidential where there is reportable data. This means that within the given survey platform, if a wellbeing or issue within the scope of the Queen Mary Disciplinary policy is raised, the student's identity can be revealed. A full breakdown of guidance and definition of confidentiality can be found in Appendix B.
- 3.9. Principle 9: Sound methodology. A survey's questions should be robust and measure what is required to meet the purpose of the exercise.

#### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

- 4.1. Surveys within the scope of this policy are the responsibility of the Student Insight Group (SIG), which will report regularly to EQSB. The terms of reference for this group can be found in Appendix D.
- 4.2. New surveys: Any new core or ongoing service survey must be submitted to the Student Insight Group and ultimately approved by the Vice Principal (Education) by the process in Section 5.
- 4.3. Ongoing surveys: Ongoing core and ongoing service surveys will have their questions reviewed annually by the Student Insight Group, particularly for ongoing service surveys where QMUL can change or evolve questions. The SIG will also consider core survey questions annually e.g. additions to the NSS, PTES or PRES, for recommendation to the VP Education.
- 4.4. Analysis: Analysis of core and ongoing surveys is the responsibility of the Strategic Planning Office. Analysis of localised ad hoc surveys is the responsibility of the local team, but insights should be reported at Faculty level and to SIG as appropriate.
- 4.5. Reporting of core surveys to EQSB and other relevant committees is the responsibility of Planning and the EO Education.

## 5. Process for approval new, ongoing service surveys and ad hoc surveys

5.1. The approval for all surveys are as follows:

<b>Survey type</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Approval needed</b>	<b>Review</b>
Ongoing service survey	All students	Approval must be given by the relevant Dean for Education or Director, countersigned by the VP Education on the advice of the EO Education.	Survey review will take place annually by the Student Insights Group  Checklist must be complete.
Ongoing service survey	All students in a particular faculty or in a particular cohort	Approval must be given by the relevant Dean for Education or Director, countersigned by the VP Education on the advice of the EO Education.	Survey review will take place annually by the Student Insights Group  Checklist must be complete.
Ad hoc survey targeted at a student demographic	All students who identify in a particular demographic e.g. care students.	Approval must be given by the relevant Dean for Education, countersigned by the EO Education and the Head of Widening Participation.	Survey review will take place annually by the Student Insights Group.  Checklist must be complete.
Ad hoc survey within a particular school/institute	All students who are part of a particular school/institute, or a cohort	Approval must be given by the relevant Director of Education and Head of School/Director of Institute, countersigned by the EO Education	The number of ad hoc surveys within particular schools/institutes will be reported to the Student Insights Group quarterly.  Checklist must be complete.
Ad hoc follow up evaluations from activities	Students who have taken part in a particular extra-curricular activity e.g. utilised a service, been to an event.	Approval to be given locally.	N/A  Checklist not required.
Pulse surveys e.g. Mentimeter	Students who are feeding back on a particular classroom experience or exercise.	N/A	N/A  Checklist not required.

5.2. Some student facing surveys may require ethical approval as part of research involving human participants. If this is the case, a student survey should first gain ethical approval at Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee (QMERC)

before being sent to the Student Insights Group for information. If a survey has gained relevant ethical approval and is part of funded research, the Student Insights Group is unlikely to require further checks as part of this policy except where a particular risk is identified to student participants, or there is a clash with the core surveys of this policy.

## **6. Process for logging surveys**

- 6.1. All survey titles and links to any analysis should be logged in the SIG SharePoint. This includes all core surveys; and all ongoing service surveys. This logging should include:
  - a) Survey timeframe
  - b) Whether relevant approval has been granted.
  - c) Survey questions.
  - d) Survey analysis.
- 6.2. This is to maintain a log of existing surveys and to be able to set out appropriate approvals required on an annual basis.

## **7. Platforms**

- 7.1. Queen Mary holds an evasys+ licence which applies to the whole organisation. As far as possible, ongoing service surveys should be designed within evasys+.
- 7.2. Local surveys should also seek to utilise evasys+. Regarding local evaluations, there are a number of platforms, including Mentimeter. Information from Mentimeter is not required to be stored within the SIG SharePoint.

## **8. Survey Incentives**

- 8.1. Survey incentives are commonly used to boost participation rates. These can include:
  - a) Donations to a charity for high performing schools.
  - b) Vouchers for completion of a survey.
  - c) Graduation packages.
  - d) Coffee vouchers.
- 8.2. Any incentives for core or ongoing service surveys should be approved on an annual basis by the Student Insights Group.
- 8.3. In terms of ethical and responsible use of incentives for survey completion, staff must not:
  - a) Offer incentives for large surveys that are not approved by SIG.
  - b) Pressure or require students to complete surveys within the classroom or outside of it.

- c) Indicate any survey is compulsory.
- d) Advise students to respond to a survey in a particular way.
- e) Taking students through a survey, for example, by standing closely by them when they are completing a survey.
- f) Link any survey to league tables, job prospects or the value of a students' degree.

## **9. Review**

- 9.1. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years.
- 9.2. Minor updates to this policy that do not affect the rules, principles or intent of this policy may be approved by Executive Officer (Education) on behalf of Surveys Insights Group.

## Appendix A: Core surveys

### Core Surveys

Survey title	Frequency	Dates	Coverage	Responsible	Approvals required	Reporting
National Student Survey (NSS)	Annual	January-March/April	All final year undergraduates	EO Education Surveys Team  Analysis from Planning	Any annual question changes i.e. additions of optional bank to be made by SIG annually and approved by EQSB.	To EQSB
Sexual Misconduct Survey (SMS)	Every two years	January-March/April	All final year undergraduates	Student Experience Directorate, implemented by EO Education/Surveys Team  Analysis from Planning	Questions set by OfS. GDPR email/comms and opt out information to be approved by Director of Student Experience.	To EQSB

<b>Survey title</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Coverage</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Approvals required</b>	<b>Reporting</b>
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)	Annual	March-June	All postgraduate taught students	EO Education Surveys Team Analysis from Planning	Any annual question changes to be made by SIG annually and approved by EQSB.	To EQSB
Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)	Every two years	March-May			Any annual additions to be made by SIG annually and approved by EQSB.	To EQSB
Module Experience Surveys	Twice per year	December March	All undergraduate and postgraduate students	EO Education Surveys Team Analysis from Planning	Any annual additions to be made by SIG annually and approved by EQSB.	To EQSB
Arrivals Survey	Annual	September/October	All new registering students	Student Experience Directorate, implemented by EO Education/Surveys Team	All questions should be approved by SIG on an annual basis to ensure	To EQSB

<b>Survey title</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Coverage</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Approvals required</b>	<b>Reporting</b>
				Analysis from Planning	alignment with broader institutional approach.	

## Appendix B: Guidance on Confidential Surveys

Confidential surveys are defined as surveys whereby a student's identity is withheld from the survey owner but other demographic data from student records, held by Queen Mary, could be used as part of the survey analysis. For the avoidance of doubt, students asked to complete confidential surveys are assigned a unique identifier and no other personal or demographic data is accessible by the survey owner. Demographic data will only be accessed and shared by the Data Processor for the purposes of identifying trends that can help Queen Mary provide a better experience to students. Queen Mary will not normally identify a student from responses to a confidential survey. Personal data will only be accessed by the Data Processor in the two exceptions outlined below:

1. Comment/comments received suggest that the respondent may be at risk of harm to themselves or to others.

The scope for this exception is further defined in the [Queen Mary Safeguarding Policy](#).

2. Comment/comments received potentially meet threshold for investigation under the [Student Discipline Policy](#).

In both exceptions there is a defined process, set out below, for consent to be granted for a student to be identified. In the event that a comment or comments could fall under both exceptions the first process will normally take place before the second is initiated. In such an event the second process will still need to be concluded for a student to be identified for an investigation under the Student Discipline Policy. The Advice and Counselling Service will not share a student's identity more widely than required.

1. *Comments received suggest that the respondent may be at risk of harm to themselves or to others*
  - i. Comment received by survey owner.
  - ii. Comment and module code are escalated by email to the Student Surveys Team as soon as is possible.
  - iii. Student Surveys Team will contact the co-Heads of the Advice and Counselling Service with the specific comment and the student's ID number only.
  - iv. The Advice and Counselling Service will contact to student to offer support.
2. Comments received potentially meets threshold for investigation under the [Student Discipline Policy](#).
  - i. Comment received by survey owner.
  - ii. Comment reviewed by survey owner's line manager.
  - iii. Escalated to VP Education Team (vp-edu@qmul.ac.uk).

- iv. VP Education team share with a panel of VP Education (or deputy), relevant Faculty Dean for Education (or deputy), QMSU President (or their nominated Sabbatical Officer) for authorisation that the student can be identified. The panel will make a decision, with this representation, on whether to reveal a student name for disciplinary processes. The decision reached has to be unanimous.
- v. Once authorisation is received, Student Surveys team are asked to provide identity of student.
- vi. Student's ID number only is passed on to ACCO.
- vii. ACCO will then normally follow the process outlined in the Student Discipline Policy. Members of the panel who took the decision to reveal a student's identity may not sit as a member of a panel under the Student Discipline Policy should one be required.

## Appendix C: New Surveys Check List

For any new survey, this checklist should be completed and submitted to SIG.

Principle	Evidence Required	Response	Contact of owner
Principle 1: Purpose	A paragraph outlining the purpose of the survey. This should include what type of survey is taking place. This should outline if the survey is a core, service level or ad hoc survey.	Please insert text here	
Principle 2: Ownership	A named individual and team should be submitted to SIG.  It should be clear who will be the Data Controller, and who will be able to process student data.	Please insert text here	
Principle 3: Promotion	The particular cohort for a survey should be identified e.g. third year of a particular school. The plan and opportunities for promoting the survey is clearly laid out, including when the survey will be promoted and how, at high level.	Please insert text here	

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Evidence Required</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Contact of owner</b>
Principle 4: Minimisation	Evidence submitted regarding which PowerBI dashboards and other datasets have been considered and how this survey differs from them.	Please insert text here	
Principle 5: Closing the feedback loop	There should be a clear timeline and mechanism for students to have the results of any survey, and to understand what is being done to improve their experience as a result of it.	Please insert text here	
Principle 6: Publication	A summary and data is sent to Planning to be published.	Please insert text here	
Principle 7: Appropriateness	Clear evidence is submitted which demonstrates that other mechanisms e.g. use of existing student engagement mechanisms are not sufficient for the purpose of the information gathering.  All survey questions should be submitted.	Please insert text here	
Principle 8: Confidentiality	If comments are enabled, it is possible to reveal the identity of students	Please insert text here	

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Evidence Required</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Contact of owner</b>
	where there is a welfare or disciplinary concern.		
Principle 9: Sound methodology	All questions should be submitted to the SIG of new surveys	Please insert a list of all questions and scales here	

## **Appendix D: Student Insights Group (SIG) Terms of Reference**

### **Purpose**

1. To provide a consistent and co-ordinated approach across the University to surveying students in accordance with Queen Mary's Student Surveys Policy.

### **Principles**

2. Oversee the implementation of the Student Survey Policy.
3. Identify which national surveys the University will take part in each year (e.g. NSS, PRES, PTES, any new pilot sector survey).
4. To maintain and update a calendar to monitor and report on the impact of surveys undertaken each academic year.
5. Report to and advise the Vice-Principal (Education) and the Education Senior Leadership Team on survey activity at the university.
6. Receive, and approve, any new survey request checklists.
7. Receive, and approve, questions and scales for any particular survey.
8. Oversee central survey campaigns e.g. the promotion of the NSS, module experience, PRES and PTES.
9. To maintain a log of survey questions and analysis.

### **Membership**

- Executive Officer (Education) (Chair)
- Head of Student Life
- Service Operations Manager, Careers
- Head of Widening Participation
- Student Experience Project Manager
- Education Implementation Lead
- Senior Communications Officer – Internal Comms
- Educational Excellence Lead
- Student Surveys Manager
- Faculty Education Managers
- Deputy Head of Academic Quality and Standards
- Head of Degree Apprenticeships

- Head of Corporate Communications
- A nominee from the students' union
- A nominee from Strategic Planning Office

**Reports to**

This group will report to the Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB).

**Secretariat**

TBC

**Frequency of meetings**

The group will meet on a bi-monthly basis.

## Policy Information and Document Control

<b>Policy title</b>	Student Surveys Policy
<b>Version number</b>	V2
<b>Related policies and procedures</b>	N/A
<b>Superseded policies</b>	Student Survey policy, October 2022
<b>Approval level</b>	Education Quality and Standards Board
<b>Approval date</b>	April 2025
<b>Effective date</b>	September 2025
<b>Next review due</b>	Summer 2028
<b>Policy owner</b>	Ben Hunt, Executive Officer (Education)
<b>Policy contact</b>	Vice-Principal Education team, <a href="mailto:vp-edu@qmul.ac.uk">vp-edu@qmul.ac.uk</a>

## Version Control

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reason for updates/Summary of key changes</b>
<b>V.2.0</b>	01/04/2025	<p>After this policy was submitted to the Policy Scrutiny Group (PSG), the following changes were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 8 on survey incentives was added.</li> <li>• An introductory paragraph was removed and the purpose and the scope of the policy was clarified.</li> <li>• Terms of reference (Appendix D) guidance on the Student Insights Group was added.</li> </ul>