**Programme Self-Evaluation: Questions and Answers**

1. ***What is the best way of gathering feedback from students****?*

There are many different options for gathering feedback from students such as focus groups, questionnaires and open forum meetings. An important principle is to be clear about what the purpose of seeking feedback is, i.e what is likely to be known as a result. Additionally considerations of how the feedback will be used, as well as the resources (time/people) available to gather the feedback should inform the choice of approach. For example if the goal of gathering feedback is to:

* **Gather information** on existing strengths and areas for development across a programme, then using current students’ perspectives of overall experience gathered through a few broad and open questions may be a good choice. The questions can be designed, to ask what students liked best about their programme, and what students would like to change about their programme. The data could be gathered through a short questionnaire, or by inviting students to write their responses anonymously using cards or paper which are attached to a physical board which is divided into sections with the questions clearly displayed. Responses can be analysed to identify themes which could then be discussed by the Programme Team as part of the self-evaluation process.
* **Understand students overall experience** of the programme over a period of time, and to use this information to appraise the operation of the programme, it may be valuable to collect feedback from graduates of the programme as well as current students. The data could be gathered through focus groups to enable fuller accounts and richer data of the experience. Focus Groups with: a selection of students from First Year to Final Year and a further group of graduates could provide a rich a varied set of perspectives.
* **Understand in detail** the students’ programme learning experience in terms of the quality of teaching, the content of the programme, the learning resources and support available to them a detailed programme questionnaire survey will be useful. This can have combination of closed and open questions, which will allow the Programme Team to measure students’ perceptions on key programme items.
* **Understand teaching and learning** at unit level in detail, a detailed questionnaire level which can be used across all units could be used. The questionnaire could include specific questions to test students’ perceptions and experience of the purpose of the unit, the content, the teaching approach, the assessment approach. Through a combination of closed and open questions, individual teachers can measure students’ perceptions on key aspects of the unit. From a Programme Team perspective a standard unit questionnaire which can be applied across all units, with the option for individual teachers to add optional questions relevant to their unit provides a balance between standardisation and flexibility.

1. ***How can students be encouraged to provide feedback?***

Its important for students to know that their feedback is valued and will lead to action, thus it is important to clarify with your students why you are seeking feedback and what it will be used for. Using anonymous feedback has the advantage of reassuring students that they can express their views honestly, however it is important to emphasise that the terms of anonymity include the principles of dignity and respect. Therefore students should be encouraged to be constructive and honest in their feedback, to use a respectful tone and not to identify staff by name in their feedback. Finally the best encouragement is always to tell students what actions have or will be taken to respond to their feedback?

1. **What if there is only limited time to collect and analyse data for the programme evaluation?**

The purpose of programme self-evaluation is to reflect and analyse, using available evidence, how well a programme is operating in terms of its intended educational outcomes, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, the content, the staff engaged in the programme and the overall management of the programme. [[1]](#footnote-1) Each Progamme Team needs to make a pragmatic assessment of what data is to hand that can be used to support the self- evaluation. Where certain forms of data are not available readily, the Programme Team will need to take a decision about collection based on available resources and time.

If it is not possible to collect / or identify a particular data set to evaluate an aspect of the programme, it will still be important to have a reflective discussion about that programme aspect to identify what the issues are. The discussion might also identify and make a commitment to collection of relevant data to support ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the programme as part of the Action Plan arising from the Programme Self-Evaluation. While structured data ( graduation rates/ employment rates/ student grades) supports the analysis and reflection process, informal data is also very important. Consider what informal data might be available that could also be incorporated into the self-evaluation, indicatively such data could include internal dialogues amongst staff about the programme and / or teaching discussions and /or annual planning for the programme (these are indicative).

1. Please see separate resource on Programme Self-Evaluation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)