University of **Reading**

Guidance note on seeking approval to run a student survey

1. This guidance note sets out the process for approval to run a survey to seek feedback from students. This process is intended to ensure that any new surveys are designed for maximum impact and will lead to enhancement of teaching and learning, the student experience and external reputation.

2. Surveys enable students to share their thoughts and concerns about the University's provision and the student experience. They empower students to engage with the academic community and to share responsibility for enhancement, and can lead to real change.

3. The separate *Policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning* articulates University processes in relation to mid-module evaluation, module evaluation and programme evaluation. The *Student Academic Representation Policy* provides further information on the role of student representatives across the University's institutional structures and committees.

4. Where surveys are carried out as part of pedagogic research as well as to drive enhancement, processes for research ethics approval should be followed in addition to following this guidance.

Section A: Background
Applicability of this guidance note

5. For the purpose of this guidance note, a survey is defined as "a systematic collection and analysis of data from across the University, undertaken specifically for the benefit of **students and/or** the University and conducted to analyse a defined and finite group of students (for instance, all undergraduates), **the results of** which seek to show trends **and are required for a purpose**".

6. The process described in this guidance note and in Appendix 1 covers permissions for surveys sent to students across more than one School. For surveys carried out only within a School, or within a single module cohort (which may include some students from different Schools), permission should be sought from the School Director of Teaching and Learning (SDTL) instead. When granting permission for within-School or within-module internal surveys, SDTLs should be mindful of the need to avoid clashes with surveys run by the University that are of strategic importance (for example, internal surveys should not be sent to final year undergraduates at a similar time to the launch date of

the National Student Survey, or for three weeks afterwards). Data produced at the School level should be shared with the appropriate Teaching and Learning Dean (TLD) and used in the STEAP process if relevant, as well as a summary of the main results being made available to appropriate committees and cohorts of students, to close the feedback loop.

7. Before deciding to run an internal survey, Schools should check that existing surveys do not already provide sufficient data to address the issues under investigation, and should consider whether alternative methods for obtaining feedback from students would be appropriate (such as those outlined in the *Policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning*). When sending the survey to students, Schools must make clear the purpose of the survey, how the data will be used, and how results/outcomes will be reported to students (e.g. via Student Staff Partnership Groups). Where students are required to send surveys to their peers (e.g. as part of a project or module assessment), the supervisor or module convenor must notify the SDTL, to ensure that other surveys can be timed to avoid clashes and survey fatigue.

8. As noted above, the processes in relation to mid-module, module and programme evaluation are addressed in the separate *Policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning* and the guidelines specified within this document do not apply to the operation of these types of student evaluations.

9. Surveys in the University can be divided into distinct categories. These are:
    a. surveys that do not impact on current students (i.e. admissions surveys and Graduate Outcomes);
    b. compulsory external surveys (National Student Survey - NSS);
    c. external surveys over which we have no control (e.g. Times Higher Education Experience Survey - THESES, Universities Partnership Programme – UPP, and Higher Education Policy Institute - HEPI);
    d. optional external surveys (e.g. UK Engagement Survey - UKES, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey - PTES, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey - PRES);
    e. internal surveys (e.g. Reading Student Survey - RSS);
    f. ad hoc surveys (e.g. Careers, Welcome Week);
    g. RUSU surveys.

10. This process relates purely to new surveys such as those listed in e-g, although the principles of reporting and feedback should ideally be the same throughout. It is hoped that RUSU will voluntarily use these guidelines for their surveys, particularly regarding items 12 and 13 below.

Principles of this guidance note

11. It is at the discretion of the University whether a survey involving students in more than one School is run. This decision begins with completion of a new student survey request form (Appendix 1).

12. Normally, any proposed new survey will be submitted for scrutiny and it is expected that permission is sought well in advance of the date of the proposed survey to allow it to be submitted to the relevant body.

13. Any new survey must meet some of the following criteria, preferably (a) and at least one

other:
   a. The objectives of the survey cannot be fulfilled through reference to existing survey outcomes, planned surveys, other available data, or through other means (e.g. focus groups)

   b. The survey is required to meet institutional strategic objectives
   c. The survey is responding to student feedback, and will inform enhancement of our teaching activity or other services.

   d. The survey is required for external compliance
   e. The survey will provide data enabling useful benchmarking with other institutions and/or impact on the University's external reputation through league tables or other measures
   f. Participation in the survey will support sector-wide initiatives to which the University wishes to contribute

14. Notwithstanding meeting criteria stated above, new surveys must be considered in the light of existing survey timings (Appendix 2) to avoid overloading students and reducing response rates in surveys that meet institutional strategic objectives. This is of particular importance during the Spring Term when the National Student Survey (NSS) must take priority.

15. A summary of the main results and findings from any student survey should be shared with the appropriate committee as soon as is practical to do so. It is expected that this will include a breakdown of response rates, headline analysis of the results and planned action to be taken to ensure that the feedback loop has been closed. Details of who is responsible for collating this report, acting on feedback and sharing data should be agreed prior to the approval of a new survey.

16. It is essential that any survey data collected is used to meet the objectives of the survey outlined in the application form (see Section B below). If the form specifies a feedback session to the students, or dissemination of data via e.g. Student Staff Partnership Groups, Blackboard or the Student Experience Hub, it is expected that this will occur within a reasonable time period post-analysis to enable changes to be instigated.

17. Depending on the aims and scope of the survey, a final report should be sent on to the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) or one of its sub-committees (e.g. Committee on Student Experience and Development (CoSED) or the Sub-Committee on the Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (DELT)). This is essential if the survey is aimed at students across the University.

18. Any key matters arising from a University-wide survey should be discussed at the UBTLSE annual meeting at the start of the Autumn Term when key matters arising out of other surveys are discussed.

Section B: How to apply to run a survey

19. Any member of staff in a School/Department or professional services wishing to undertake a student survey should follow the procedure outlined below.

20. Read this guidance note to ensure the type of survey you are planning is subject to the procedure outlined in this document.

21. If permission is required, complete the attached 'New survey request form' and return it to [Marketing, Communication & Engagement](#) (MCE) who will advise, in consultation with the Chair of UBTLSE, if the survey will be passed on to UBTLSE or one of its sub-committees

for approval (this can be by Chair's action). Please note that permission should be sought at least 2 months prior to the survey running to ensure that mechanisms are in place for advertising to students.

22. Ensure that you have already agreed who would analyse your data and disseminate results.

23. MCE will consult with the Planning & Strategy Office (PSO), Data Protection Officer (IMPS) and any other relevant stakeholders, and if approved, depending on the nature of the request, will submit the form to UBTLSE or one of its sub-committees with a cover sheet to include a summary of stakeholder feedback and a recommendation.

24. UBTLSE or one of its sub-committees will communicate a decision to the applicant within one week of the meeting taking place (or by Chair's action) – this will usually be either approval for the survey (with recommended next steps) or a request to make revisions to the proposal.

25. MCE and PSO (if undertaking the analysis) should be copied in to any decision.

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date	Effective from
1	AGS	Yearly	UBTL	15/05/2018	2018/19
2	AGS	Yearly	UBTLSE	16/03/2021	wie

Appendix 1 – New survey request form

The following information is required for a survey which requires UBTLSE approval to take place.

Please complete all sections below and return the form to [Marketing, Communication & Engagement](#) (MCE).

Full name	
Job title	
School/Department/Function	
Email address	
Name of the survey	
Please briefly outline the objectives of the survey	
Intended target audience (eg UG/PGT/PGR etc)	
Tick each box that applies to this proposed survey	☐The survey is required to meet institutional strategic objectives ☐The survey is responding to student feedback, and will inform enhancement of our teaching activity or other services. ☐The survey is required for external compliance ☐The survey will provide data enabling useful benchmarking with other institutions and/or impact on the University's external reputation through league tables or other measures
Proposed survey dates	
Will the survey be managed internally or externally? If external, please provide details	
What platform will be used to host the survey (eg Online Surveys or Survey Monkey)	
Estimated time to complete the survey (eg 15 minutes)	

How will the survey be promoted to students?	
REPORTING	
Who will collate and analyse the survey results?	
How will the results be reported to students to close the feedback loop and by whom?	
How will results be used to meet the objectives identified above and by what mechanism e.g. data for specified report, etc?	
Date by which report of the survey will be sent to the appropriate committee	

Appendix 2 - Existing student surveys

The following table summarises a typical year of University-level student surveys:

Name of survey	Internal / external	Target audience	Primary purpose	Timing	Lead contact	Questions / previous results	Reports to:
Welcome Week survey	Internal	New UG,PGT and PGR students	To gather feedback from new students on their Welcome Week experience	October	Kate Booth (Student Services)	Contact Kate Booth	CoSED
UPP Accommodation Survey (1 of 2)	Internal	Students living in Halls	To gather feedback on Halls arrival and moving in experience	October	Deborah Briscoe (ACMO)	Contact Deborah Briscoe	CoSED
National Student Survey (NSS)	External (Ipsos MORI)	UG finalists	To gather feedback from UG finalists on their experience of studying at UoR. The results of which feed into domestic league tables.	January to April	Jennifer Rich (MCE)	Core questionnaire published online. Previous results available on PSO website.	UBTLSE

UK Engagement Survey (UKES)	External (HEA)	UG non-finalists	To gather feedback from UG non-finalists on their experience of academic life at UoR	January to April	Jennifer Rich (MCE)	Contact PSO (planningandstrategy@reading.ac.uk) for a copy of the questionnaire. Previous results available on [PSO website](#).	UBTLSE
UPP Accommodation Survey (2 of 2)	Internal	Students living in Halls	To gather feedback on students' experiences of living in Halls	March	Deborah Briscoe (ACMO)	Contact Deborah Briscoe	CoSED
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)	External (HEA)	PGT students	To gather feedback from PGT students on their experience of studying at UoR	May to June	Jennifer Rich (MCE)	Contact PSO (planningandstrategy@reading.ac.uk) for a copy of the questionnaire. Previous results available on [PSO website](#).	UBTLSE

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey	External (HEA)	PGR students	To gather feedback from PGR students on their experience of studying at UoR	TBC – every other year	Elena Bedisti (Graduate School)	Contact Elena Bedisti	UBTLSE
International Student Barometer (ISB)	External (i-Graduate)	All new international students (UG, PFT and PGT)	To seek specific feedback about topics related to international student experience – pre-arrival, Welcome Week, and first few weeks of term	Autumn (ad-hoc – not currently annual)	Global Recruitment & Admissions	Contact Global Recruitment & Admissions	UBTLSE
Travel survey	Internal	All UG, PGT and PGR students	To evaluate student modes of transport and attitudes	TBC – every other year	Sustainability Services	Contact Sustainability Services	TBC