UCL Student Surveys policy

Context

UCL uses a variety of institutional and local surveys to obtain feedback from its students. Whilst some feed into the governance structure, others do not and are used to identify issues within a specific area (e.g. IT provision or satisfaction with a new Library service).

While surveys are an established method of obtaining mass student feedback, in many cases other mechanisms may be able to capture the most relevant student feedback more effectively.

UCL would like to **avoid / eliminate the potential situation** faced by it and other universities where:

- Students suffer 'survey fatigue' i.e. a lack of proportionality and an excess of surveys, and the possibility that the same or similar questions are being asked of the same students more than once, leading to falling response rates;
- Questionnaires are poorly designed, with poorly worded questions, unlikely to produce good quality information;
- Survey results are not shared with the appropriate student or staff audiences;
- There is often insufficient resource available for analysing and responding to the results, particularly open text comment sections;
- Any evidence of feedback to the students about the surveys findings and the subsequent actions ("closing the loop") is patchy.

Before proposing a new survey, staff should consider alternatives such as focus group sessions asking a question on Unitu or consulting Student Academic Representatives. These activities can help staff gather qualitative feedback, which is often more illuminating than responses to a survey.

Current centrally administered institution-wide surveys at UCL

The full list can be found here.

The policy

1. The content and timings of the above surveys are reviewed on an annual basis by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs);
2. No institution-wide surveys should take place at the same time as the NSS, New to UCL Survey, UCL Annual programme surveys (APS) and APS Postgraduate Taught the PTES or the PRES (with the exception of the PTES and PRES which will run concurrently every other year);
3. Any additional surveys above Faculty level (e.g. School level, or institution-wide) may only be run if the following can be demonstrated:

   o There are no alternative ways of obtaining feedback such as focus groups, exit polls from specific events, online interviews with students, online polls via Microsoft Forms;

- o Any new survey is neither duplicating questions from other surveys, nor asking for information which could be gained from other sources e.g. analytics of library borrowing habits;
- o Any information being sought could not be obtained by the addition of questions to existing UCL-wide surveys. Information on how to request this can be found at www.ucl.ac.uk/studentsurveys;
- o Where duplication of questions is identified, those proposing to initiate the surveys aim to consolidate their work, reducing the overall number of surveys and increasing response rates;
- o The organisers of any new survey must have considered:
  - Who it is going to;
  - What questions will be asked;
  - How the responses will be analysed;
  - How the results will be used *and* where they will be shared;
  - How the surveyor will inform the student community of changes implemented in response to the survey's findings.

4. In addition, all such surveys must be registered with the Office of the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) via student.engagement@ucl.ac.uk.

5. Ownership of the policy will sit with the Office of the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs).