

LTC15D050

Title: *Report on Student Participation Rates in Online Module Evaluation*
Author: Dr Adam Longcroft
Date: 21 November 2015
Circulation: LTC – 2 December 2015
Agenda: LTC15A002
Version: Final
Status: Open

Issue

A report from the Academic Director for Taught Programmes (ADTP) on student participation rates in online module evaluation in 2013/14, and 2014/15. Student evaluation of modules is, essentially, about facilitating change and enhancement – students need to be sure that their evaluation/feedback will result in changes, and Universities need to have robust systems in place for ‘closing the loop’ – i.e. demonstrating that change or enhancement has, in fact, been achieved.

Recommendation

LTC members are asked to consider the recommendation set-out in the report.

Resource Implications

The report itself has no inherent resource implications, but if LTC decides that the University should explore an institution-wide solution such as those offered by various commercial companies (e.g. Electric Paper) the latter would need to be subject to proper scoping and cost analysis.

Risk Implications

There are risks that stem from not making satisfactory progress in engaging our students in module evaluation. There has been some progress in participation rates between 2013/14 and 2014/15, but it is insufficient and the pace on increase is too slow. LTC needs to be sensitive to the fact that Schools who employ hard copy evaluations (with higher levels of participation) may not wish to abandon their practices since they are more successful. They will need to be thoroughly convinced that any online system that the University adopts to replace the existing SITS-based system is shown to be more effective.

Equality and Diversity

There are no equality or diversity implications associated with the update.

Timing of decisions

LTC needs to consider the risks associated with existing low levels of participation, and consider which strategies it believes will be most successful in addressing this in future. If LTC decides that the University should explore and investigate ‘off-the-shelf’ solutions provided by commercial companies (e.g. EvaSys system provided by Electric Paper), these investigations will take some time and will be unlikely to affect 2015/16.

LTC may wish to focus on strategies likely to impact on short-term (2015/16) and those on the longer term (2016/17 and beyond).

Further Information

Contact: Dr Adam Longcroft e mail: a.longcroft@uea.ac.uk

Student Participation in Module Evaluation in 2013/14 and 2014/15. Considering effective strategies for 2015/16.

Introduction

It is important that student engagement – as reflected in student input into quality enhancement – is maximised, in accordance with the requirements of Chapter B5 of the UK Quality Code. A key aspect of student engagement in quality enhancement is student participation in module evaluation.

At UEA, we use a variety of methods to access student feedback on modules:

- 1) In most schools an online module evaluation is employed – this is supported by LTS. Data for 2013/14 and 2014/15 is attached. **See Appendices 1 & 2.**
- 2) In some modules MOs employ ‘clickers’ to gain feedback from students. This can be highly effective in ensuring high levels of participation, but means that little or no ‘qualitative’ comments are captured.
- 3) In some Schools MOs still often employ hard copy evaluations (e.g. PSY, LDC). A recent report received from LDC shows that of 48 modules delivered in 2014/15, 27 (56%) have higher than 60% participation rates. Even on modules with 120 students, return rates of 65% have been achieved.

A paper on module evaluation participation rates was considered by TPPG in March 2015, but this only included data for autumn term 2014/15. The current paper contains a full set of participation data for 2013/14 as a whole, and both semesters in 2014/15. The latter includes information relating to participation in HSC. This data was considered at TPPG on 18 Nov 2015.

Participation rates

The picture is essentially a rather disappointing one.

- Schools using hard copy evaluations frequently achieve a significantly higher participation rate (often more than 60%) than those employing online evaluations.
- Participation rates in online evaluation over 50% are extremely rare – only 1 school achieved this level in the autumn of 2014/15.
- No school achieved an online participation rate higher than 55%.
- In the majority of schools, online participation rates are significantly stronger in the autumn semester.
- Online participation rates in relation to spring semester modules is rarely higher than 35%.
- Online participation rates in Year-long modules are relatively low.
- The majority of schools are still operating in the range 20-40%.
- In reality we should be expecting all students to engage with module evaluation, and thus should expect participation rates of 100%.
- Given the importance of module feedback, it is difficult to view anything less than 70% participation as a ‘success’, regardless of the size of the module cohort.

Conclusions?

- 1) We have a long way to go to achieve an ‘acceptable’ level of participation in online module evaluation across all schools.
- 2) Whilst some progress in online evaluation has been made since 2013/14, this is not sufficient or fast enough.
- 3) The University needs to consider options and strategies that are likely to be effective in driving-up participation rates during 2015/16.

Strategies for the future?

Some strategies known to be effective in increasing student participation in online module evaluation. These include:

- Robust consideration of module evaluation data and QE actions in SSLCs and effective 'closing of feedback loop'.
- Building-in module evaluation into taught sessions (e.g. allowing 10 mins in final session for students to complete online process using smart devices).
- Hard copy evaluation.
- Evaluation using 'Clickers' and online voting software (e.g. TurningPoint).
- Incentives – e.g. schools contribute a small sum to charity (or to cost of end of year student 'Ball') for each module where participation is above 80%.

However, LTC may also wish to consider whether more radical solutions should be investigated. Those that might repay closer investigation include:

- Adopt a 'single' online solution, possibly by buying an 'off-the-shelf' solution such as that provided by *Electric Paper Ltd*. See **Appendix 3**. These actually allow both paper-based and online delivery of evaluation. Testimonials from HEIs indicate that data analysis is much easier to manage and report to course directors and module organisers.
- Empowering school student representatives to 'lead' the online module evaluation process, and to feedback key outcomes to students via BB. Giving students 'ownership' of the process may help to increase student engagement in evaluation.

LTC Members are asked to:

Consider the options set-out above and to suggest others that might be effective in rapidly increasing participation rates in 2015/16 and beyond.

Dr Adam Longcroft, ADTP, 21 Nov 2015

Appendix 1

Student participation rates for Module Evaluation (By School) for 2013/14 (Both semesters combined)

2. 2013/14 Data

2013/14 SEM 1 and 2

| School | Participation Rate | Total Students | Total Responses |
|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| AMS | 34.8% | 1386 | 483 |
| ART | 42.6% | 734 | 313 |
| BIO | 27.4% | 3850 | 1053 |
| CHE | 26.9% | 2442 | 658 |
| CMP | 33.3% | 2409 | 801 |
| DEV | 38.6% | 2030 | 784 |
| ECO | 34.8% | 3134 | 1091 |
| EDU | 39.1% | 138 | 54 |
| ENG | 44.9% | 127 | 57 |
| ENV | 37.0% | 3009 | 1113 |
| FTM | 36.7% | 1556 | 571 |
| HIS | 36.1% | 2599 | 939 |
| HUM | 23.5% | 430 | 101 |
| LAW | 29.2% | 3751 | 1094 |
| LCS | 38.9% | 2036 | 792 |
| MED | 43.6% | 117 | 51 |
| MTH | 24.3% | 1886 | 459 |
| MUS | 21.4% | 173 | 37 |
| NAT | 40.0% | 15 | 6 |
| NBS | 28.9% | 12305 | 3553 |
| NSC | 51.1% | 2709 | 1383 |
| PHA | 40.6% | 2579 | 1047 |
| PHI | 31.4% | 684 | 215 |
| PSI | 37.0% | 2825 | 1044 |
| RSC | 50.2% | 315 | 158 |
| SCI | 44.4% | 36 | 16 |
| Total | 33.5% | 53275 | 17873 |

Appendix 2

Student participation rates for Module Evaluation (By School) for 2014/15

- a) autumn semester only,
- b) spring semester only, and
- c) for the whole academic year
- d) for HSC for whole year 2014/15, divided by term (1, 2 & 3)

**Table showing Student participation in Module Evaluation by School
2014-15 Data at 20 May 2015**

| 2014-15 SEM 1 ONLY (a) | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| SCHOOL | Participation Rate | Total Students | Total Responses |
| AMA | 38.4% | 1631 | 626 |
| BIO | 30.1% | 1514 | 455 |
| CHE | 23.2% | 591 | 137 |
| CMP | 36.5% | 1033 | 377 |
| DEV | 44.1% | 780 | 344 |
| ECO | 36.7% | 1018 | 374 |
| EDU | 51.5% | 171 | 88 |
| ENG | 50.0% | 26 | 13 |
| ENV | 38.4% | 1294 | 497 |
| HIS | 41.1% | 1079 | 443 |
| HSC | 47.5% | 1502 | 714 |
| HUM | 34.7% | 173 | 60 |
| LAW | 29.1% | 1585 | 462 |
| MED | 38.4% | 73 | 28 |
| MTH | 27.5% | 433 | 119 |
| NAT | 50.0% | 22 | 11 |
| NBS | 37.3% | 1770 | 661 |
| PHA | 14.5% | 76 | 11 |
| PPL | 38.7% | 2546 | 986 |
| Total | 37.0% | 17317 | 6406 |

| 2014-15 SEM 2 ONLY (b) | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| SCHOOL | Participation Rate | Total Students | Total Responses |
| AMA | 31.4% | 1658 | 521 |
| BIO | 20.3% | 1475 | 300 |
| CHE | 18.9% | 556 | 105 |
| CMP | 27.2% | 957 | 260 |
| DEV | 32.1% | 1196 | 384 |
| ECO | 32.7% | 953 | 312 |
| EDU | 44.7% | 132 | 59 |
| ENG | 27.0% | 37 | 10 |
| ENV | 33.8% | 1294 | 438 |
| HIS | 29.9% | 976 | 292 |
| HSC | 42.4% | 139 | 59 |
| HUM | 20.8% | 259 | 54 |
| LAW | 25.3% | 1342 | 339 |
| MED | 34.4% | 64 | 22 |
| MTH | 19.6% | 341 | 67 |

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| NAT | 0.0% | 2 | 0 |
| NBS | 37.5% | 1872 | 702 |
| PHA | 53.3% | 15 | 8 |
| PPL | 30.3% | 2137 | 647 |
| Total | 29.7% | 15405 | 4579 |

2014-15 YEAR (c)

| SCHOOL | Participation Rate | Total Students | Total Responses |
|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| AMA | 50.0% | 28 | 14 |
| BIO | 23.4% | 809 | 189 |
| CHE | 22.3% | 884 | 197 |
| CMP | 25.7% | 509 | 131 |
| DEV | 33.3% | 66 | 22 |
| ECO | 19.7% | 822 | 162 |
| EDU | 42.4% | 139 | 59 |
| ENG | 37.7% | 69 | 26 |
| ENV | 30.6% | 353 | 108 |
| HIS | 43.1% | 334 | 144 |
| HSC | 55.3% | 255 | 141 |
| HUM | 19.5% | 128 | 25 |
| LAW | 21.0% | 452 | 95 |
| MTH | 14.5% | 974 | 141 |
| NAT | 28.6% | 28 | 8 |
| NBS | 23.5% | 5532 | 1301 |
| PHA | 35.9% | 1720 | 618 |
| PPL | 46.6% | 279 | 130 |
| Total | 26.2% | 13381 | 3511 |

**2014-15 OTHER
(d)**

| SCHOOL | Period Slot | Participation Rate | Total Students | Total Responses |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| HSC | T1 | 34.1% | 331 | 113 |
| HSC | T2 | 32.4% | 222 | 72 |
| HSC | T3 | 12.5% | 8 | 1 |
| Total | | 33.2% | 561 | 186 |

Appendix 3

Information on EvaSys – a dedicated system of module and course evaluation that is used elsewhere within the UK higher education system (it is an *Electric Paper* product)

See:

<http://www.evasys.co.uk/start.html>

Testimonials from UK HEIs:

"Newcastle University has always had an embedded culture of evaluation and feedback. We looked at what was needed and what was scalable across an institution of our size and that brought us to EvaSys. Before we adopted the EvaSys system, each faculty had different processes and would send out surveys at different times across the academic year."

Dr Richard Harrison, Head of Learning and Technical Development, Newcastle University

"We have been really impressed with how easy it is use EvaSys survey automation software and how supportive the team were through the implementation process. We have received positive feedback from department heads and the students and the instant reports it gives us are helping us to make informed decisions about our courses and services much more quickly."

Mark Ellul, Director of Planning, University of Roehampton

"To be able to load all the module data in the system and create the surveys is a very simple process. It only takes a couple of hours to get all that data in the system and the surveys created ready for either online surveys or for printing. You can have the whole thing up and running in a day."

David Mackland, Web Services Team Leader, University of Abertay

"EvaSys has improved our course evaluation by giving us a data set that we can work with which is quickly available. Everything is in one place. It's much easier to share the information."

David Pike, Deputy Head of Learning Technology, University of Bedfordshire

"EvaSys was selected after an extensive tendering exercise because it offered the most flexibility yet dedicated system for our needs. It's a clear winner in our eyes."

Mike Page, Head of ARD Systems and Business Processes, London School of Economics

"Before we used EvaSys everyone did their own thing. We didn't have any consistent mechanisms for module evaluation or programme evaluations."

Julie Irwin, Principal Lecturer for Student Experience & Quality Enhancement,
Buckinghamshire New University

"The feedback from the schools was that the reports were generated by EvaSys are rapid, informative and clearly presented."

Emma Wynne, Assistant Academic Registrar, Queen Mary University of London

"We wanted to improve the timeliness and accuracy of survey results and to encourage higher response rates. EvaSys is empowering us to achieve our goals."

Mike Page, Head of ARD Systems and Business Processes, London School of Economics