

## LTC15D102

**Title:** Proposal for Adjustments to Student Surveys  
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### Issue

A proposal of adjustments to the main BIU administered surveys, in light of the new data landscape and changes to the NSS. The sector is currently on the brink of moving into a considerably revised data landscape with a considerable number of developments on the horizon including:

- The possible introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) drawing on a broad range of engagement and teaching metrics.
- The introduction to a new subject mapping framework – Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS). This will affect the subject level reporting across all metrics which are benchmarked against other institutions.
- A revised National Student Survey questionnaire (NSS) with some changed and some new questions.
- A changing approach to data provision to potential students including a move away from the Key Information Set (KIS).
- More frequent submission of statutory data with multiple submissions within a single academic year.

In light of this changing landscape the Business Intelligence Unit are embarking on a number of initiatives to ensure that UEA is ahead of its competitors in its understanding of impact and implementation.

### Recommendations

1. Switch from the UEA Student Experience Survey for 1st and 2nd year students in favour of the U.K. Engagement Survey national survey for undergraduates. As a result conduct a separate services survey for all students.
2. Adopt the proposed action plan to prepare for the changes to the National Student Survey

### Resource Implications

The BIU believe the proposed approach can be managed within current BIU capacity. However, there will be considerable reduction in capacity for running additional ad hoc research in the first cycle as efforts are put into drafting and designing analysis of the new surveys. However, following this normal service would be resumed other than during the summer/autumn of 2017 when additional analysis would be taking place.

### **Risk Implications**

Success in the National Student Survey is a significant aspect of UEA's good reputation for teaching and a fall in our ranking might have significant impact on recruitment. A strategic approach to preparing for, conducting and responding to student surveys is therefore very important to UEA's core business.

### **Equality and Diversity**

All student surveys will continue to include a range of demographic questions to allow findings to be reviewed by relevant sub-groups. Good quality data is important in developing effective equality practice.

### **Timing of decisions**

If the full proposal is to be implemented for academic year 2016/17 then agreement to the general proposal will be needed by June 2016.

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### **Discussion**

#### **Recommendation 1**

Switch from the UEA Student Experience Survey for 1st and 2nd year students in favour of the U.K. Engagement Survey national survey for undergraduates. Details of the survey are below:

**Sample** – All non final year undergraduates

**Frequency** – Annual

**Fieldwork timing** - As with the other strategic spring surveys, the survey is open from early February to mid-June and institutions can choose when to run the survey within that window. We would recommend launching in early February alongside NSS and PTES so that this survey can be promoted as part of an institutional wide campaign for students to have their say. In line with the other surveys we would also recommend keeping this open for the full season in order to have the opportunity to drive up response rates as far as possible.

**Aims** – UKES will provide feedback on how students are engaging with their learning. Working on the assumption that the amount of time and effort students invest in their studies and how students engage with learning is closely linked to their level of academic achievement, UKES is designed to help institutions increase student engagement in activities which promote learning. In addition, there is now the option to include the NSS questions as part of UKES, ensuring that this still works as a potential early warning system, and for institutions to add a small number of their own questions which can be used to look at UEA specific sub groups such as School, participation in PAL etc which are currently included in the SES.

- **Benchmarking** – Partial benchmarking data available (sector quartiles, mission groups and custom groups of institutions but not individual institutions).

More information on the UKES survey can be found here

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/research/surveys/ukes-uk-engagement-survey/take-part-ukes> and the questionnaire for 2016 is attached as an appendix to this note.

Because the current Student experience survey contains additional survey questions on university services, we will need to introduce a **Non-academic experience survey** in the autumn term

**Sample** – All students based on campus

**Frequency** - Once a year

**Fieldwork timing** - We would propose the survey is run from mid-October to end November each year to allow first year students to have experience the University but also still be able to comment on their arrival experience whilst not bringing this too close to the Union survey which launches in mid-December or the launch of the Spring surveys.

**Aims** – Monitor student satisfaction with the non-academic experience Consider name change to UEA Services Survey?) through a series of standard questions and be a place where specific issues can be explored as and when necessary. This would be developed by combining the non-academic elements of the SES/PTES/PRES (incl. Hubs, support services and campus facilities etc) and the ISD survey. It might also be possible to combine this with survey about the Union of Students, subject to consultation.

**Benchmarking** – Partial benchmarking data available (sector quartiles, missions groups and custom groups of institutions but not individual institutions).

### **Rationale for recommendation 1**

Whilst the SES does include some **engagement questions** this would broaden the insight and tracking available to UEA on this area of increasing interest. The UKES survey is directly referenced in the **TEF Green Paper** as a possible measure so this would allow UEA to get ahead of the game in understanding its strengths and weaknesses in this area and potentially aid in driving any needed change. The SES's aim to help predict possible NSS ups and downs has never been fully met. Differences in the ways different years respond has made it very difficult to use the data to predict/project forward. UKES would have the added advantage of providing **partial benchmark data** (sector quartiles, mission groups and custom groups of institutions but not individual institutions) which would make it a far more effective tool for spotting of issues. Due to increasing demand for additional areas of exploration around both the academic and non-academic experience, the SES survey has become extremely long and this approach of splitting into two/three surveys would hopefully aid with **reducing drop out** whilst still providing the University with full insight. The SES **response rate** has always been lower than the higher profile national surveys (19% in 2015). It is possible that this is partially due to lower awareness of the survey among academic colleagues due to its internal nature. Launching UKES with strong communication across the institution would give us the opportunity to increase this engagement and potentially response rates.

### **Recommendation 2**

Set up a small working group to better understand the impact of the changes to the National Student Survey and make appropriate preparations, including student communications, closing the feedback loop and supporting the continued focus on student engagement. This should include BIU and internal communications lead from ARM, a representative from LTS and ADLTE to look at improving internal communications with students. The group will liaise with the Union of Students to establish a consistent message.

No changes are likely to the sample, frequency, timing or promotion of the NSS. A comparison of the existing and new questions is in appendix 2, below is a summary:

Addition of questions regarding:

#### **Academic challenge and reflective learning**

- My course has challenged me to achieve my best work
- My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth
- My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics
- My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt

### **Learning community and collaborative learning**

- I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course
- I feel part of a community of staff and students

### **Student voice (aka student representation)**

- I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course
- Staff value students' views and opinions about the course
- It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on

Tweaks of the following existing questions

### **Learning resources** – some shift in emphasis to digital resources

- The library resources (e.g. books, online services) have supported my learning well
- The University/College's IT resources and facilities have supported my learning well.
- I have been able to access subject specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software) when I needed to

**Assessment and feedback** – slight shift in emphasis from comments being “detailed” to helpful and from return being “prompt” to “timely”

The new and changes questions have been used in the current Student Experience Survey questionnaire so results for these will be brought to a future LTC for discussion on pot.

### **Rationale for recommendation 2**

Our understanding of the impact of the question changes is at an early stage, but from the current SES we can see that we need to improve the feedback loops on SSLCs, as well as give better information to students about how we engage with the student voice at UEA. The working group would enable some focused and practical thinking about how to prepare for the new questions, especially in the area of student voice.

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## **Attachments**

### **Appendix 1**

The situation to date with student surveys at UEA including 2015/16 academic year

### **Appendix 2**

Comparison of survey questions (attached separately as a spreadsheet)

## Appendix 1

### The situation to date with student surveys at UEA including 2015/16 academic year

The main strategic student surveys at UEA are run by the Business Intelligence Unit (BIU) in the Spring term (launching between Feb and March):

#### **Student Experience Survey (SES)**

- **Sample** - Non-final year UG students
- **Frequency** – Annual
- **Fieldwork timing** – Feb - March
- **Aims** – Combined aims of tracking NSS questions and gathering satisfaction data on broader non-academic student experience. Currently includes two engagement questions.
- **Benchmarking** – Internal only

#### **National Student Survey (NSS)**

- **Sample** - Final year UG students
- **Frequency** – Annual
- **Fieldwork timing** – Feb - May
- **Aims** – Monitoring of student satisfaction with academic experience of course to drive internal improvement. National survey feeding several UK league tables and providing key marketing messages.
- **Benchmarking** – Full benchmarking against other institutions possible.

#### **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**

- **Sample** - Final year PGT students
- **Frequency** – Annual
- **Fieldwork timing** – Feb - June
- **Aims** – Monitoring of student satisfaction with academic experience of course and some elements of non academic experience to drive internal improvement. Data can be used for marketing purposes.
- **Benchmarking** – Partial benchmarking data available (sector quartiles, mission groups and custom groups of institutions but not individual institutions).

#### **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)**

- **Sample** – All PGR students
- **Frequency** – Every other year
- **Fieldwork timing** – March - June
- **Aims** – Monitoring of student satisfaction with experience of being a research student at UEA to drive internal improvement. Data can be used for marketing purposes.
- **Benchmarking** – Partial benchmarking data available (sector quartiles, mission groups and custom groups of institutions but not individual institutions).

The **ISD survey** runs every other autumn (October/November) with all students (and staff) specifically tracking expectation and experience of IT and the Library (with internal only benchmarking). Addition ad hoc qualitative and quantitative projects are run across the year to look at areas of specific interest.

Note that 2016 questionnaires are currently in field.		2017 questionnaires are current best prediction. Consultation and testing still underway. Revised surveys not finalised until late 2016.	
NSS 2016	SES 2016	Notes on proposed changes	UKES 2017* (Non final year students)
<b>Teaching</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	One question removed	<b>Teaching</b>
Staff are good at explaining things.	Staff are good at explaining things.		Staff are good at explaining things.
Staff have made the subject interesting.	Staff have made the subject interesting.		Staff have made the subject interesting.
Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.	Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.		Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.
The course is intellectually stimulating.	The course is intellectually stimulating.		The course is intellectually stimulating.
<b>Assessment and feedback</b>	<b>Assessment and feedback</b>	Some change to wording and two questions removed	<b>Assessment and feedback</b>
The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.	The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.		The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.
Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.	Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.		Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.
Feedback on my work has been prompt.	Feedback on my work has been prompt.		Feedback on my work has been prompt.
I have received detailed comments on my work.	I have received detailed comments on my work.		I have received detailed comments on my work.
Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.	Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.		Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.
	Additional UEA questions regarding volume and quality of oral and written feedback		
<b>Academic support</b>	<b>Academic support</b>	No change	<b>Academic support</b>
I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies.	I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies.		I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies.
I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.	I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.		I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.
Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices.	Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices.		Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices.
<b>Organisation and management</b>	<b>Organisation and management</b>	No change	<b>Organisation and management</b>
The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned.	The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned.		The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned.
The course is well organised and is running smoothly.	The course is well organised and is running smoothly.		The course is well organised and is running smoothly.
Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively.	Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively.		Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively.
<b>Learning resources</b>	<b>Learning resources</b>	Slight adjustment to wording	<b>Learning resources</b>
The library resources and services are good enough for my needs.	The library resources (e.g. books, online services) have supported my learning well		The library resources (e.g. books, online services) have supported my learning well
I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to.	The University/College's IT resources and facilities have supported my learning well.		The University/College's IT resources and facilities have supported my learning well.
I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities, or rooms when I needed to.	I have been able to access subject specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software) when I needed to		I have been able to access subject specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software) when I needed to
<b>Personal development</b>	<b>Personal development</b>	Section removed	<b>Personal development</b>
The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.	The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.		The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.
My communication skills have improved.	My communication skills have improved.		My communication skills have improved.
As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.	As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.		As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.
<b>Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.</b>	<b>Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.</b>	No change	<b>Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.</b>
I am satisfied with the Students' Union (Association or Guild) at my institution'		Question removed	I am satisfied with the Students' Union (Association or Guild) at my institution'
	<b>Academic challenge, and integrative learning</b>	Section added	<b>Academic challenge, and integrative learning</b>
	My course has challenged me to achieve my best work		My course has challenged me to achieve my best work
	My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth		My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth
	My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics		My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics
	My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt		My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt
	<b>The student voice</b>	Section added	<b>The student voice</b>
	I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course		I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course
	Staff value students' views and opinions about the course		Staff value students' views and opinions about the course
	It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on		It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on
	<b>The learning community and collaborative learning</b>	Section added	<b>The learning community and collaborative learning</b>
	I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course		I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course
	I feel part of a community of staff and students		I feel part of a community of staff and students
			<b>Critical thinking</b>
			Applying facts, theories or methods (for example to practical problems or new situations)
			Analysing ideas or theories in depth
			Evaluating or judging a point of view, decision or information source
			Forming a new understanding from various pieces of information
			<b>Learning with others</b>
			Worked with other students on course projects or assignments
			Explained course material to one or more students
			Asked another student to help you understand course material
			Prepared for exams or assessments by discussing or working through course material with other students
			<b>Interacting with staff</b>
			Asked questions in taught sessions or contributed to discussions about course material in other ways
			Discussed your academic performance and/or feedback with teaching staff
			Talked about your career plans with teaching staff or advisors
			Discussed ideas from your course with teaching staff outside taught sessions, including by email/online
			Worked with teaching staff on activities other than coursework
			Made significant changes to your work based on feedback
			<b>Reflecting and connecting</b>
			Combined ideas from different modules when completing assignments
			Connected your learning to real-world problems or issues
			Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
			Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective
			Changed the way you thought about a concept or issue as a result of what you learned

NSS 2016	SES 2016	Notes on proposed changes	NSS 2017* (Final year students)	UKES 2017* (Non final year students)
	<p>Note that 2016 questionnaires are currently in field.</p>		<p>2017 questionnaires are current best prediction. Consultation and testing still underway. Revised surveys not finalised until late 2016.</p>	<p>Connected ideas from your course to your prior experience and knowledge</p> <p><b>Course challenge</b></p> <p>During the current academic year, how much has your course emphasised taking responsibility for your own learning?</p> <p>During the current academic year, how much has your course challenged you to do your best work?</p> <p><b>Engagement with research and inquiry</b></p> <p>Learning about methods of research and analysis in your subject</p> <p>Learning about the outcomes of current research in your subject</p> <p>Formulating and exploring your own questions, problems or scenarios</p> <p>Doing research (for example working on your own research project or working on a research project with staff)</p> <p><b>Staff-student partnerships</b></p> <p>Contributing to a joint community of staff and students</p> <p>Working with staff to make improvements to your course</p> <p>Working with staff to evaluate teaching and assessment practices</p> <p><b>Skills development</b></p> <p>Writing clearly and effectively</p> <p>Speaking clearly and effectively</p> <p>Thinking critically and analytically</p> <p>Analysing numerical and statistical information</p> <p>Acquiring employability skills (eg skills to help you get a job such as CV writing or career planning)</p> <p>Becoming an independent learner</p> <p>Being innovative and creative</p> <p>Working effectively with others</p> <p>Developing or clarifying personal values or ethics</p> <p>Understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, nationality, etc.)</p> <p>Exploring complex real-world problems</p> <p>Being an informed and active citizen</p> <p><b>How you spend your time</b></p> <p>Time spent in taught sessions</p> <p>Time spent in independent study</p> <p>Participating in extra-curricular or co-curricular activities</p> <p>Working for pay</p> <p>Doing volunteer work</p> <p>Providing care for dependants (children, parents, etc.)</p> <p>Commuting to campus (driving, walking, etc.)</p>
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	<p><b>UEA Specific Questions</b></p> <p><b>Arrivals</b></p> <p>I had adequate information before I arrived to help me settle in.</p> <p>I was satisfied with the procedures for online registration.</p> <p>I was satisfied with the procedures for the face to face registration.</p> <p>I found the post-arrival registration events helpful in familiarising me with university life.</p> <p>I was satisfied with procedures for payment of my fees and charges.</p> <p>My induction prepared me adequately for what to expect from my course and University in general.</p> <p>I was satisfied with the breadth and depth of material covered in the General Student Handbook.</p> <p>I was satisfied with the breadth and depth of material covered on the New Student Website.</p> <p><b>Hubs</b></p> <p>I found the process of coursework submission clear and easy to follow.</p> <p>I have a good understanding of how I can expect my marked work to be returned.</p> <p>I have a good understanding of when I can expect my marked work to be returned.</p> <p>I have found the staff in my Hub knowledgeable.</p> <p>I have found the staff in my Hub helpful.</p> <p>I have found the staff in my Hub friendly and approachable.</p> <p>My queries/ problems were dealt with in a timely manner.</p> <p><b>Support Services</b></p> <p>Disability Advisers</p> <p>Dyslexia and Specific Learning Disabilities (SpLD) Tutors</p> <p>International Students Advisory Team</p> <p>Learning Enhancement Tutors</p> <p>Student Finance Team</p> <p>Mental Health Advisers</p> <p>University Counselling Service</p> <p>Senior Residents</p> <p>Accommodation Office</p> <p>Drop-in general advice from the Dean of Students' Office</p> <p>Careers Central</p> <p>Academic advisor</p> <p><b>Non-Academic Elements</b></p> <p>The appearance of the campus</p> <p>Sports facilities on campus</p> <p>UEA accommodation</p> <p>Faith facilities</p> <p>Catering on campus</p> <p>Safety and security</p> <p>The Shop</p> <p>Opportunities for socialising</p> <p>Lecture Theatres/ Seminar rooms</p> <p>Laboratories</p>	<p>Proposal to run a Services Evaluation survey to cover these questions will be taken to Directors of Service.</p>		