

Guidance for discussions with academic staff on student module evaluation

This guidance offers some ideas on how Heads of Department (HoD) (or their nominees) can structure conversations resulting from student module evaluations with academic staff. Given that the University has introduced a new system for managing student evaluations, it was felt that some pointers would be appropriate. It should be noted that it is *not* the expectation that a meeting will take place, unless there are urgent issues. However, given that this is a new system, HoDs may well want to have meetings with staff to allay any concerns. Timings and frequency of meetings are up to individual HoDs to determine with academics. Although potentially a sensitive subject, these informal conversations should primarily be developmental in focus and be a celebration of teaching achievements and sharing of good practice.

- These meetings provide a recognised opportunity for the academic to share their own reflections on their teaching. All academic staff, to a greater or lesser degree, reflect on their teaching and now they have a more formal opportunity to do this informed by student module evaluations. By structuring the conversation around the individual academic's own awareness of what they thought went well, what could have been improved and what they would work on in the future and how this triangulates with the student module evaluations, academic staff have the opportunity to share their own concerns and ideas about their teaching
- Taking a coaching style approach to the discussion will enable a fuller conversation and provide the individual academic with the chance to explore their own views of the module. This will also prevent defensiveness and potential conflict
- At the end of the meeting, the academic will want to define some resulting actions from the feedback. These actions may be in relation to professional development or the introduction of new innovations or teaching approaches. Such actions should be noted but also the HoD or nominee needs to ensure, particularly in the case of any professional development needs, that resources are given to the academic to pursue these
- Many academics will be team teaching on modules and therefore the evaluations may not solely represent an individual performance. Although discussions need to be had with individual academics, a full module team meeting where future actions can be shared would be beneficial to ensure a consistent approach to teaching on that particular module
- Where issues are raised that are beyond the control of the individual academic, the HoD needs to ensure that these are raised by other formal means and via existing processes for example issues with estates/IT via APEs. Where response rates are particularly low any evaluation needs to be used with caution
- Discretion should be used in relation to the experience and qualifications of the academics concerned. Staff new to teaching or with particularly negative feedback may need a fuller conversation and a more developmental approach, whereas those staff that are performing consistently well should be encouraged to share their good practice more widely. The important thing is that the opportunity for self reflection, informed by evidence, is maintained and that the individual academic gains some benefit from considering the evaluations alongside their own perceptions of their teaching
- The Learning Development Centre will provide support and guidance for staff in responding to module evaluations – both in terms of sharing good practice and meeting development needs. HoDs are strongly encouraged to make academic staff aware of such support.