Survey Framework and Process

Overview

Background
In a Report to the Learning and Teaching Board (LTB) in September 2009, it was noted that there was an apparent lack of University strategy with respect to management and annual scheduling of all institution-wide student surveys. The Report also noted a need to improve the co-ordination of the survey process.

It was recommended that the University should adopt a Survey Framework and Process, which would include all institution-wide student surveys, thereby ensuring a managed, coordinated and consistent approach rather than disparate and often duplicated procedures, depending on the nature of the survey and who it was being conducted by.

Purpose
The management and co-ordination of key student surveys is central to Heriot-Watt’s efforts to enhance learning, teaching and the wider student experience. The feedback received is used to inform developments at both School and University levels. It is a means of providing all Heriot-Watt University students across all Schools, modes and locations of delivery, including those studying at Approved Learning Partners (ALPs) and via Independent Distance Learner (IDL) mode, with the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience as an HWU student at appropriate junctures, and then to take action to address issues highlighted and provide feedback. The University is currently at the early stages of development of the ALP and IDL survey process.

Developments
The Survey Framework process is now managed and coordinated across the institution by a specially constituted group, the Student Survey Management Group (SSMG), with devolved responsibility from the LTB and Student Learning Experience Committee (SLEC). As such, the membership comprises senior individuals and the remit reflects a strategic focus. The Terms of Reference are attached as Appendix 1.

The Group focuses on coordination of annual processes for running student surveys. The key surveys cover learning and teaching and the wider student experience. Surveys remain open for several weeks, enabling completion at the student’s convenience within the schedule.

The main key student surveys are:

External
1. National Student Survey (NSS)  
   (all final year undergraduate students at Scottish campuses)
2. Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)  
   (all postgraduate taught students across all Schools, modes and locations, including Partners and independent distance learners (IDLs) – with the exception of Partner and IDL students in the Edinburgh Business School who provide feedback via alternative, EBS-specific mechanisms)
3. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)  
   (all postgraduate research students)

Internal
4. Course Feedback Survey (CFS)  
   (all students across all Schools, modes and locations, including Partners and IDLs)
5. Annual and Welcome Student Survey  
   (all students at all campuses, except final year undergraduate students eligible for NSS, postgraduate research students and Edinburgh Business School students. Final year Dubai and Malaysia final year students will participate in an NSS-type Annual Survey.)

An audit of University student surveys was conducted to identify any gaps in knowledge, overlaps in survey questions and timing of surveys. An overview was produced of all student surveys running within the University across Academic Year.
**Survey Framework and Process**

These documents aim to reduce the possibility of survey fatigue, to inform colleagues of existing data, and to provide key contact details for each survey.

**Closing the loop**

SSMG initially focused on development of a schedule of annual student surveys and management of the processes for running these surveys, as well as providing guidance on ad hoc surveys.

However, it is also important to consider how the loop is closed with respect to feedback provided by students and what outcomes are communicated to those who have taken time to provide the feedback. Therefore, once the management of student surveys was in place, the next stage for the SSMG has been to consider what is done with the information provided, and how progress is tracked and outcomes are reported to students. An institution-wide process for “closing the loop” on student surveys has been developed to provide a formal audit trail for the University, as well as ensuring that the student community is informed of what action has been taken in response to their feedback.

**Student Feedback Process**

The enclosed Student Feedback Process Diagram outlines the process for ensuring that the University and Schools close the loop, and that feedback from key student surveys is taken on board and reported back to relevant students. The process applies to all of the key institutional student surveys: NSS (including the Dubai and Malaysia Campus NSS-type Annual Surveys), PTES, PRES and CFS.

1. The results and analyses of key surveys will be presented through Student Survey Results Summary Reports prepared by survey coordinators and considered by the relevant Schools/Professional Services/relevant Boards.

2. A summary of the analysis of student feedback and proposed actions will continue to be incorporated into School Review and Evaluation Reports (SRER) as part of the Annual Monitoring Review process.

3. Following analyses of results, minor issues will be taken forward and dealt with through the relevant Schools/Professional Services.

4. University-level issues will be highlighted through the relevant Boards/Committees and also through the Annual Monitoring Review process as follows:

   - University-level learning and teaching issues in the NSS, CFS, PTES and Annual Surveys will be recorded, addressed, monitored and any actions and/or enhancements taken forward through the Student Learning Experience Committee and the Learning and Teaching Board.

   - University-level Professional Services’ issues in the Annual Surveys, NSS and PTES will be recorded, addressed, monitored and any actions and/or enhancements taken forward through the Secretary’s Board.

   - University-level research issues in the PRES will be monitored by Research and Enterprise Services, who will ensure that these are recorded by Schools, addressed, monitored and any actions and/or enhancements taken forward through the Research Student Coordinators Group (RSCG). The Representatives on the RSCG will feed back outcomes to the postgraduate research community through events and email communication. The Research & Knowledge Exchange Board (RKEB) will also be kept informed via the RSCG.
Survey Framework and Process

5. Student members on the Boards/Committees will be tasked to ensure that feedback is communicated to students through the Student Union. Student representatives will be invited to attend Secretary’s Board meetings where student surveys are being discussed.

6. The actions taken and outcomes from student feedback will also be communicated to SSMG to ensure that the feedback loop has been closed. Actions/outcomes may be used for promotion of future surveys in highlighting the benefits of providing feedback and influencing change.

7. The actions taken will focus on enhancement of the academic and wider student experience, and outcomes will be reported to students to ensure that the loop is closed on student feedback. This will be reviewed by LTB, the Secretary’s Board, and where relevant, RKEB, to ensure that there is an enhancement focus and that progress is being made towards the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy, the Professional Services’ Strategy and the International Strategy.

Annual/Welcome Survey Student Feedback Process
The enclosed Student Feedback Process Diagram for the Annual Survey outlines the process for ensuring that the University closes the loop, and that feedback from this key student survey is taken on board and reported back to relevant students.
Useful Resources

Student Survey Management Group  http://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/student-learning/university-student-surveys.htm
Learning and Teaching Policy Bank  http://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/learning-teaching/policy-bank.htm
Annual Monitoring and Review (Quality Briefing Paper 1)  http://www.hw.ac.uk/services/docs/amr-briefing.pdf
Code of Practice for the Management of Multi-Location, Multi-Mode Programmes, Parts 1 & 4 http://intranet.hw.ac.uk/ps/registry/ar/quality/Pages/COP-Multicode.aspx
Learning and Teaching Board:  http://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/learning-teaching/learning-teaching-board.htm
QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education:  http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code
Student Learning Experience Committee  http://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/student-learning/student-learning-experience-committee.htm

Further Information

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Version History

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Appendices

The Study Survey Feedback Cycle  Appendix 1
Student Survey Framework and Process  Appendix 2
Student Survey Framework (Annual & Welcome Survey) Overview  Appendix 3
Student Survey Management Group (SSMG) Terms of Reference (updated)  Appendix 4
The Student Survey Feedback Cycle

Survey Project Planning

Feedback & Promotion of Feedback

Survey Form Delivery

Implementation & Monitoring

Survey Promotion & Data Collection

Interpreting Results & Action Planning

Data Analysis & Results Report
Student Survey Management Group

The Student Survey Management Group (SSMG), which reports to the Learning and Teaching Board via the Student Learning Experience Committee, co-ordinates and manages all internal and external student surveys. The Group has produced an annual schedule of activities so that surveys are appropriately timed and “survey fatigue” is minimised.

Key Academic Student Surveys

The SSMG manages both academic and general student surveys (see Briefing Paper 16b); the four key academic surveys are:

- National Student Survey (NSS)
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- Course Feedback Survey (CFS) (HWU’s own survey)

Student Survey Framework and Process

In 2014/15, a common framework and process for the four academic surveys was approved. Processes are now in place to “close the feedback loop” for each survey, ie to ensure that issues are identified, addressed and reported on, and are communicated to students. The framework also includes a process for engaging all campuses through the Academic Councils.

References and Further Information

Contact: m.r.stenhouse@hw.ac.uk  
Student Survey Framework and Process: http://www1.hw.ac.uk/committees/ltb/ssmg.htm

Learning and Teaching Briefing Papers

This briefing paper has been produced by the Academic Registry and is one of a series related to Learning and Teaching. The briefing papers aim to provide a concise, informative overview of key policies, and include links to relevant procedures and templates.
ANNUAL SURVEY PROCESS

Survey Project Planning
The Annual Survey is an internal student experience survey that also helps track NSS/PTES-type questions at all stages of the student transition.

Each year, in February, eight separate Annual Surveys will be issued to all students, all campuses (except PGR) based on their level of study (Y1, Y2, Y3/4/5, Final Year (HWUM/HWUD) and IDL/ALP).

It tracks the decision-making, perceptions, expectations and experiences of students, and encompasses academic, support and infrastructure aspects that impact on the whole student lifecycle.

The Secretary’s Board and the Student Survey Management Group (SSMG) have direct input to the survey, whilst the Student Learning Experience Committee (SLEC), and the Learning and Teaching Board (LTB) monitor the outcomes and action plans related to Learning and Teaching. This ensures that Committees and Directorates' views are taken on board and that the Annual Survey process is aligned with the University’s other student surveys, and with the University’s Learning and Teaching Strategy, as well as the Professional Services strategies (see Briefing Paper 16B).

Survey Form Delivery
The survey is being run for the first time in February 2016. It is promoted to Professional Services, the Student Union and School contacts to encourage participation.

The Annual Survey is delivered through Vision’s Enterprise Survey. An email is sent to students to alert them to the launch of the survey and email several reminders to only those students who have yet to complete their survey.

Data Collection and Survey Promotion
Data is collected through Vision’s Enterprise Survey tool.

The survey is promoted in various ways:

- Articles are included in student and staff e-newsletters announcing Annual Surveys launch and social media is used, e.g. Twitter, Facebook;
- All emails and targeted reminders are sent to students at several points during the survey period (targeted reminders are only sent to students who have not responded to the survey);
- Registry Services Directorate send emails to School and Service contacts to indicate the response rate and identifying demographics of students that are doing well or require to increase participation rates;
- Centralised poster campaign to promote the campaign across all campuses;
- Academic/administrative colleagues promote and remind students.

Data Analysis and Results Report
Throughout the survey period, reports on response rates will be provided to Registry Services Directorate and these are shared with SSMG/University so that action can be taken to increase participation rates if required.

At the end of the survey period, the survey results are collated by the Planning Manager. For future Annual Surveys, results will be ‘benchmarked’ across the cohort, and also for different cohorts, to identify the impact of action plans to enhance the student experience.

A summary of the results are provided to the Secretary’s Board and SLEC (via SSMG).

Crucially, all students who complete the survey will receive a results summary and this will also be displayed on the University’s website for broad dissemination.

The Student Union will also disseminate results via elected representatives and the School Officer and class representative structure. The Student Union will also be encouraged to interpret and enhance their services as there are questions which relate to their activities and events.
Interpreting Results and Action Planning
The University, Student Union and Professional Services are responsible for acting on the Annual Survey results.

Minor issues will be taken forward and dealt with through the relevant Schools/ Services. University-level issues will be highlighted through the relevant Boards/Committees. University-level learning and teaching issues will be recorded, addressed, monitored and any actions and/or enhancements taken through the Student Learning Experience Committee and the Learning and Teaching Board. University-level Professional Services’ issues will be recorded, addressed, monitored and any actions and/or enhancements taken forward through the Secretary’s Board. This process continues in a rolling manner.

Implementation and Monitoring
Schools/Services are responsible for implementing actions and for providing evidence of this, so that monitoring can take place at the School/Service and University levels.

Feedback and Promotion
Crucially, all students who complete the survey will receive a results summary and this will also be displayed on the University’s website for broad dissemination.

Student members on the relevant Boards/Committees will be tasked to ensure that feedback is communicated to students through the Student Union. Student feedback actions and outcomes will also be communicated to SSMG to ensure that the feedback loop has been closed.

A ‘You Said, We Did’ campaign will also be used to communicate enhancements across the University.
### Student Survey Management Group

The Student Survey Management Group, which reports to the Learning and Teaching Board via the Student Learning Experience Committee, co-ordinates and manages all internal and external student surveys. The Group has produced an annual schedule of activities so that surveys are appropriately timed and “survey fatigue” is minimised.

Briefing Paper 16A covers the student survey framework and process for four key academic student surveys to Heriot-Watt. They are:
- National Student Survey (NSS)
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- Course Feedback Survey (CFS)

### Annual Survey and Welcome Survey

This paper covers the newly created Welcome Survey and Annual Survey and the process for ‘closing the feedback loop’ for these surveys, outlined below. The key element is the inclusion of the ‘Student Panel’ in the survey framework which requires the Committees and Directorates to consult the Student Panel before shaping their survey action plans. This is primarily to encourage greater student partnership which takes account of the global student experience.

#### Welcome Survey and Annual Survey

Survey Results Summary Report produced by survey coordinator

#### Consider Relevant Summary Report

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<td>SLEC (For Learning +Teaching matters); Academic Councils; Secretary’s Board</td>
<td>Through the Service Director, survey results are considered by the Directorate’s relevant sections</td>
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#### IN DUE COURSE A STUDENT PANEL WILL BE ESTABLISHED

**Consult Student Panel**

The Committees and specific Directorates will consult the Student Panel before producing Action Plans. This allows for more detailed discussion with groups of students (through focus groups or targeted surveys) and foster greater partnership working. Until Student Panel is established, the Committees/Directorates will follow process

1. **Produce University Action Plan**
   - Report Back to Student Body
   - Action Plan is taken forward
     - Student Union disseminate via Reps
2. **Produce Directorate Action Plan**
   - Service Director oversees action
   - Action Plan is taken forward

SLEC and Secretary’s Board monitor progress towards actions. Outcomes inform future surveys, Action Plans and strategic decision-making.

#### References and Further Information

Contact: m.r.stenhouse@hw.ac.uk  
Student Surveys Framework and Process: [http://www1.hw.ac.uk/committees/ltb/ssmg.htm](http://www1.hw.ac.uk/committees/ltb/ssmg.htm)

Learning and Teaching Briefing Papers

This briefing paper has been produced by the Academic Registry and is one of a series related to Learning and Teaching. The briefing papers aim to provide a concise, informative overview of key policies, and include links to relevant procedures and templates.
**WELCOME SURVEY PROCESS**

**Survey Project Planning**
The Welcome Survey is an internal student experience survey which primarily looks at how the recruitment, marketing, induction and accommodation services were perceived by new students. It also provides the first overall experience indicator for comparison with other surveys like the Annual Survey, PTES and NSS.

The Secretary’s Board and the Student Survey Management Group (SSMG) have direct input to the survey, whilst the Student Learning Experience Committee (SLEC), and the Learning and Teaching Board (LTB) monitor the outcomes and action plans related to Learning and Teaching. This ensures that Committees and Directorates’ views are taken on board and that the Annual Survey process is aligned with the University’s other student surveys, and with the University’s Learning and Teaching Strategy, as well as the Professional Services strategies (see Briefing Paper 16B).

**Survey Form Delivery**
The survey ran for the first time in September 2015 and included only Edinburgh undergraduate entrants and acted as a pilot for the Annual Survey (to be launched in February 2016). The Welcome Survey is delivered through Vision’s Enterprise Survey. An email is sent to students to alert them to the launch of the survey and email several reminders to only those students who have yet to complete their survey.

**Data Collection and Survey Promotion**
Data is collected through Vision’s Enterprise Survey tool.

The survey is promoted in various ways:

- Articles are included in student and staff e-newsletters announcing Annual Surveys launch and social media is used, eg. Twitter, Facebook;
- All emails and targeted reminders are sent to students at several points during the survey period (targeted reminders are only sent to students who have not responded to the survey);
- Centralised poster campaign to promote the campaign across all campuses;
- Academic/administrative colleagues promote and remind students.

**Data Analysis and Results Report**
Throughout the survey period, reports on response rates will be provided to Registry Services Directorate and these are shared with SSMG/University so that action can be taken to increase participation rates if required.

At the end of the survey period, the survey results are collated by the Planning Manager. For future Welcome Surveys, results will be ‘benchmarked’ to identify the impact of action plans to enhance the student experience from recruitment up until the start of teaching.

A summary of the results are provided to the Secretary’s Board and SLEC (via SSMG).

Crucially, all students who complete the survey will receive a results summary and this will also be displayed on the University’s website for broad dissemination.

The Student Union will also be encouraged to interpret and enhance their services as there are questions which relate to their activities and events.

**Interpreting Results and Action Planning**
The University, Student Union and Professional Services are responsible for acting on the Welcome Survey results.

Minor issues will be taken forward and dealt with through the relevant Schools/ Services. University-level issues will be highlighted through the relevant Boards/Committees. University-level learning and teaching issues will be recorded, addressed, monitored and any actions and/or enhancements taken through the Student Learning Experience Committee and the Learning and Teaching Board.

University-level Professional Services’ issues will be recorded, addressed, monitored and any actions
and/or enhancements taken forward through the Secretary's Board. This process continues in a rolling manner.

**Implementation and Monitoring**
Schools/Services are responsible for implementing actions and for providing evidence of this, so that monitoring can take place at the School/Service and University levels.

**Feedback and Promotion**
Crucially, all students who complete the survey will receive a results summary and this will also be displayed on the University’s website for broad dissemination.

Student members on the relevant Boards/Committees will be tasked to ensure that feedback is communicated to students through the Student Union. Student feedback actions and outcomes will also be communicated to SSMG to ensure that the feedback loop has been closed.

A ‘You Said, We Did’ campaign will also be used to communicate enhancements across the University.
STUDENT SURVEY MANAGEMENT GROUP

Terms of Reference

1 Constitution and purpose

1.1 The purpose of the Student Survey Management Group (SSMG) is to manage and co-ordinate a University-wide Student Survey process/framework for all students of Heriot-Watt University (HWU).

1.2 The Group will report to the Learning and Teaching Board (LTB) via the Student Learning Experience Committee (SLEC) and will have devolved responsibility from the other main Boards of the University ie the Research and Knowledge Exchange Board (RKEB) and the Secretary's Board (SB) for management of student surveys. The membership and remit will reflect the strategic focus required.

1.3 SSMG will oversee the development and co-ordination of all student survey processes, focusing on:

- management of the annual cyclical survey schedule for core surveys, as well as encompassing the process of managing ad hoc surveys
- ensuring that a consistent approach is taken and that all HWU students have an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience as an HWU student at appropriate junctures
- ensuring that appropriate action is taken by the University as a result of the feedback provided and that this is communicated to the student body
- avoidance of duplication which may result in survey fatigue and lack of response.

2 Remit

2.1 The remit of the SSMG is to:

i) Manage and co-ordinate all Heriot-Watt University student survey processes including:
   - consideration of the need and benefit of running specific surveys
   - identification of appropriate student cohorts
   - actions taken to address issues highlighted
   - reporting back to students and closing the loop
   - consideration of further developments required

ii) Develop the student survey framework in response to national initiatives, practices at other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and benchmarking opportunities, and internal priorities.

iii) Act with the delegated authority of SLEC and main Boards/Committees in:
   - designating the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders
   - specifying actions for Boards/Committees or individual members of staff to take forward

iv) Meet and progress activity throughout the entire student survey cycle.
2.2 A major focus of the SSMG will be on the key annual student surveys which are:

- National Student Survey (NSS)
- Course Feedback Survey (CFS)
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- Annual University level Student Survey

2.3 SSMG will oversee the processes for: pre-survey preparations; promotion; data gathering; analysis and summary report preparation; consideration of student feedback by School and University Committees and Boards, actions plans, actions taken and follow-up actions; and provision of feedback to students.

2.4 All ad hoc student surveys will be considered by SSMG at the planning stage. The Group will be well positioned to provide advice on existing survey data, best practice, timing, survey structure and communications.

### 3 Membership

The membership shall include:

3.1 Academic Registrar (Chair)
3.2 Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching)
3.3 One Representative of the Planning Office
3.4 A representative from each School, the make-up to represent
   3.4.1 One Director of Learning and Teaching
   3.4.2 One Director of Administration
   3.4.3 One Director of Research
   3.4.4 One representative from other Schools not included in 3.4.1 -3.4.3
3.5 President of the Student Union or nominee
3.6 One member of Marketing and Communications
3.7 One member of Information Services
3.8 One member of the Centre for Academic Leadership and Development
3.9 One member of Registry Directorate
3.10 Clerk

### 4 Group Chair

4.1 The Chair of the Group shall be appointed by LTB via SLEC.

### 5 Frequency

5.1 The Group will meet at least three times per academic year.
5.2 Additional meetings may be held in order to meet business requirements.
### 6 Minutes

6.1 Minutes will be submitted to SLEC for approval.

6.2 Relevant minutes will be submitted to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Board and the Secretary's Board as appropriate for information, following approval by SSMG.

#### Supporting Information

**Groups feeding into the Student Survey Management Group**

None at present.

**Effectiveness and lifespan**

Lifespan ongoing.

**Actions that may be taken by the Group**

The Survey Management Group:

- Note
- Receive
- Consider
- Endorse
- Approve
- Recommend
- Reject

**Most appropriate minuting style**

Traditional / formal minutes in accordance with internal University guidance.

**Resources**

- **Clerk**: Mrs M R Stenhouse, Academic Registry
- **Meetings**: At least three times per academic year.