Code of Practice for Surveying University of Bristol Students

University of Bristol

Code of Practice for Surveying University of Bristol Students

Contents

Context and purpose

1.1. The University is committed to partnership between staff and students to form a community in which we learn and research; one feature of that partnership is listening to our students and one way of achieving this is through the practice of surveying.

1.2. Student feedback plays an integral role in quality assurance and enhancement; the University is committed to providing effective structures for gathering student feedback to help identify what works well and what could be improved in order to better support the student journey, enable academic endeavour, increase student satisfaction and develop strong academic communities.

1.3. Ensuring our students have the opportunity to shape their educational and extra-curricular experience is one of the University of Bristol's key commitments to its student body, as outlined in the University's Vision and Strategy 2017-23, Education Strategy 2017-23 and the Student Partnership Vision.

1.4. The purpose of this Code of Practice ('the Code') is to outline the principles and processes that have been agreed to ensure that the University takes a strategic and consistent approach to surveying our students.

1.5. This Code is for University staff and is designed to help establish the framework within which student surveys should operate to ensure that they are run efficiently using effective practices, that the results are used to maximum effect and students are not over-surveyed.

1.6. This Code applies to all large-scale surveys of registered students. This encompasses all student surveys which include students from more than one school/department from initial University registration until graduation.

1.7. Large scale surveys covered by this Code encompass:

    1.7.1. Surveys conducted by or with external organisations[1].

    1.7.2. Surveys of students from more than one school.

    1.7.3. Professional services wanting to conduct surveys of students on any of the services they provide, (*for example IT Services or Residential Services surveys carried out with all the students receiving the service*).

1.8. This Code does not cover the following:

    1.8.1. Surveys undertaken of students from within one school or department; permission for these should be given through internal school mechanisms, *(for example end of unit surveys or Library Services surveying to inform library refurbishments for one particular school/subject)*.

    1.8.2. Feedback gathered on specific events, courses or workshops attended, *(for example surveys issued to those students who attended a particular IT or Careers workshop)*.

    1.8.3. Small-scale survey sampling on a particular issue or service, *(for example surveys with five or less questions gauging views on service received or ideas for improvement hosted on the portal).*

1.9. A Student Survey Request must be submitted for each occasion a survey is run.

1.10. The Student Survey Approval Panel (SSAP) is responsible for overseeing University participation in all large scale internal and external surveys of our registered students as defined in this Code. The Student Survey Approval Panel are:

---

[1] for the purposes of this Code this does **not** include academic student societies or the medical academies

- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)
- Executive Director for Education and Student Experience
- Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality)
- Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) and/or Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) (depending on the students involved)

1.11. SSAP is advised by staff from the Academic Quality and Policy Office who also annually review the Code.

2. Principles

2.1. A set of principles and commitments underpins the University's approach to the surveying of our students and these help guide the Student Survey Approval Panel in their decision making as to whether to approve a survey request as the best mechanism for gathering student feedback.

Principles:

2.2. Student surveys will only be carried out when there is a cogent plan to analyse and utilise the results.

2.3. Student surveys will only be carried out when it is shown that similar (and if necessary up to date) data does not already exist.

2.4. Student surveys will not normally offer a completion incentive.

2.5. Students will normally only be asked to respond to one large scale survey at any one time to minimise survey fatigue.

2.6. Individual respondents will not be identified in any reporting.

2.7. Surveys will be designed to be inclusive and to optimise participation.

2.8. Key messages will be fed back to students as soon as practicable, as well as the actions planned in response to the survey results.

2.9. Students will be involved in reviewing survey results and helping develop actions where appropriate.

3. Survey request and review

Consideration of need for a survey

3.1. Before submitting a Student Survey Request Form consideration should be given as to whether the information expected to be collected via the survey already exists elsewhere and whether a survey is the best way of collecting that information.

3.2. When completing a Student Survey Request Form it is expected that applicants will have already considered and confirmed the following:

3.2.1. that surveying is the most appropriate way of data gathering (have alternative approaches been considered e.g. sampling, focus groups, consultation through school course reps rather than surveying students en masse);

3.2.2. that the timing of the survey is appropriate; the survey is conducted at the most relevant time in relation to the survey subject (e.g. the survey doesn't ask questions about a students' experience of applying to University a number of months later), the survey fits around other important student life-cycle events for that cohort and is not scheduled at the same time as other large scale University surveys e.g. NSS or YourBristolSurvey (a timeline of the approved large scale surveys can be found on the Student Surveys

SharePoint (https://uob.sharepoint.com/sites/education-student-experience/SitePages/code-of-practice-for-surveying-university-students.aspx);

3.2.3. that the frequency of the survey is appropriate, (if this is a survey that has been undertaken previously; when was the last time, when would be an appropriate time to ask again, could it be biennial instead of annual?);

3.2.4. that the survey design includes careful consideration of the phrasing of questions and statements to avoid leading or biased questions, or weighted statements; that an appropriate type of question is used in order to ensure respondents understand the survey question; a useful article on survey question design can be found here: 10 Key Things To Consider When Designing Surveys (alchemer.com);

3.2.5. that the proposed survey cohort has been identified;

3.2.6. whether the survey can use pre-populated student data or needs to be completely anonymous; using pre-populated data allows the results to be linked to other student survey results or data already held about the student, Annex C contains information on the categories to use against these characteristics based on the guidance provided by the Equality Challenge Unit on collecting data relating to protected characteristics[2];

3.2.7. that the intended use (and possible future uses) of the data is made clear in the data protection statement (see Annex D for the appropriate statement);

3.2.8. that a suitable survey tool has been identified;

3.2.9. that the full costs of running the survey (including promotion, analysis, reporting) can be covered by the survey requester.

3.3. It is advisable to give as much notice as possible when requesting a survey; when considering the timing around requesting and running surveys please also consider:

3.3.1. that the SSAP will require time to consider the request and may have additional questions or recommendations about survey design, please ensure you submit your request at the earliest possible time;

3.3.2. that once approved, and if using pre-populated student data, there may be a minimum three-week lead time on data requests made to the Education Data and Insight team: Education Services (email: edit-info@bristol.ac.uk).

Survey request submission

3.4. All large-scale internal and external surveys need approval from the Student Survey Approval Panel and survey requesters should complete a Student Survey Request Form, found at https://uob.sharepoint.com/sites/education-student-experience/SitePages/code-of-practice-for-surveying-university-students.aspx.

3.5. Once completed the Student Survey Request Form will be automatically emailed for consideration.

---

[2] Monitoring questions | Advance HE (advance-he.ac.uk)

Student Survey Request Review Process

Student Survey Request Review Process

Survey Requester
- Submit survey request to student-surveys@bristol.ac.uk
- Make changes to survey request (e.g. timing / questions)
- Survey rejected
- Survey approved*

Academic Quality & Policy Office
- Review request against principles in the Code of Practice
- Does request satisfy principles in CoP? — NO / YES

Student Survey Approval Panel
- Approved? — NO / NO / YES

* Actions following survey request approval:
If pre-populated data is required, the requester should liaise with the Education Data and Insight team in Education Services – email: edit-info@bristol.ac.uk
If central support for survey promotion is required, please contact student-comms@bristol.ac.uk.

4. Survey Operation and Practice

Survey promotion

4.1. Please contact the Communications and Marketing team student-comms@bristol.ac.uk for advice on communications with students. They can advise you on:
- design of promotional materials, ensuring that they align with the brand guidelines and visual identity of the University;
- appropriate channels to promote your survey to students;
- use of emails to communicate with your survey cohort ensuring that these are sent at appropriate times.

4.2. The following methods are useful to help promote surveys, depending on who your survey cohort includes (e.g. all undergraduate or postgraduate students, first year undergraduate students) different channels may be appropriate:
- student newsletter;
- portal;
- blackboard;
- digital screens;
- printed material – posters and flyers;
- social media;
- Bristol Students' Union (use of their student and social media where appropriate).

4.3. When considering how best to promote the survey, think about the survey cohort, if for example they are in their first year it may help to engage the assistance of the University residences in helping promote the survey.

4.4. Survey promotion should be targeted equally to all those within the survey cohort.

Results and analysis

4.5.   It is the responsibility of those undertaking the survey to ensure that they have arranged for the resource to carry out the analysis of the survey results; resource requirements should have been factored in at the survey request stage.

4.6.   Factors to consider when analysing the results include:

    4.6.1.   Trends over time (if applicable), this would also give a sense of whether a survey needs to be run every year (for example if the results are consistent over time the survey could be run less frequently).

    4.6.2.   Correlation between the responses to any two questions (do people answering x also seem to answer y).

    4.6.3.   Applying statistical tests to the results (if appropriate), for example to determine whether differences in responses are statistically significant.

4.7.   When handling large data files containing potentially sensitive information, the following should be considered:

    4.7.1. The University's information security procedures www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec, (e.g. password protection and secure sharing methods).

    4.7.2. Compliance with the data protection statement used by the survey (see Annex D).

    4.7.3. Redacting text identifying individuals in any free text comments.

4.8.   For purposes of protecting individual anonymity and ensuring any inferences from the data are robust, it is recommended that reporting should only be done on groups of students with five or more respondents (e.g. if broken down by a student characteristic).

Reviewing, reporting and action planning

4.9.   Review results analysis and create action plan: Relevant parties should review the findings and a plan developed in order to respond to, and monitor, the survey findings; wherever feasible this should be undertaken in partnership with students.

4.10.   Feeding back to students: Key messages from the survey should be provided to the student cohort invited to participate in the survey; this should include the key findings and plans for responding to the survey.

4.11.   Reporting to the University: A Student Survey Results Report Form (Annex B) should be completed and returned to the Student Survey Approval Panel (via email to student-surveys@bristol.ac.uk) within three months of the survey closing.

5. Responsibilities

5.1.   **Survey Requester**

    5.1.1.   Complete and submit Student Survey Request Form
    5.1.2.   Design and set up survey
    5.1.3.   Promote survey participation
    5.1.4.   Analyse survey data
    5.1.5.   Review, report and action plan

5.2.   **Education Services**

    5.2.1.   Academic Quality & Policy Office (AQPO) – maintain operation of the Code of Practice for Surveying UoB Students

5.2.2.   AQPO review survey requests and liaise with SSAP where necessary, and the survey requester

5.2.3.   Education Data & Insight Team (EDIT) – if requested provide pre-population data file for survey requester

5.3.   **Communications and Marketing Office (Student Communications team)**

5.3.1.   Provide advice on survey promotion using existing communication channels

5.4.   **University (Student Survey Approval Panel)**

5.4.1.   Provide guidance for some survey requests

5.4.2.   Receive and consider survey result report forms (Annex B)

Annexes – all available at https://uob.sharepoint.com/sites/education-student-experience/SitePages/code-of-practice-for-surveying-university-students.aspx

A.   Student Survey Request Form

- Student survey request review process
- Timeline of large scale student surveys in 2020/21

B.   Student Survey Results Report Form

C.   Categories of student characteristics to be included in surveys

D.   Data protection statements

Document History:
- Approved by Education Committee, June 2015
- Minor amendments approved by Student Survey Strategy Group, June 2016
- Minor amendments approved by Student Survey Approval Panel, March 2018
- Minor amendments, July 2021