



UNIVERSITY OF  
LINCOLN

## SECRETARIAT

### ACADEMIC POLICY SUMMARY SHEET

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| <b>NAME OF ACADEMIC POLICY:</b>                             | Module Evaluation Policy   |
| <b>PURPOSE OF POLICY AND WHOM IT APPLIES TO:</b>            | The policy sets out the University's approach to module evaluation which applies to all taught undergraduate and postgraduate modules leading to a University award. |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ COMMITTEE WITH ROUTE OF APPROVAL:</b> | Academic Board and the Education & Student Life Committee  |
| <b>LEAD STAFF MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS UPDATE:</b>        | Professor Susan Rigby – Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Development)   |
| <b>PERSONS CONSULTED IN DEVELOPING POLICY:</b>              | The policy was considered by members of the Education & Student Life Committee.  |
| <b>POLICY FINALLY APPROVED BY:</b>                          | Chair of Academic Board on 8 November 2016   |
| <b>DATE OF ORIGINAL IMPLEMENTATION:</b>                     | November 2016  |
| <b>DETAIL OF DISSEMINATION:</b>                             | Circulated, publicised and uploaded to policy portal page on 22 November 2016  |
| <b>PROPOSED DATE OF REVIEW</b>                              | To be confirmed  |
| <b>SECRETARIAT OFFICER – MAIN CONTACT</b>                   | Officer to Education & Student Life Committee  |
| <b>DATE:</b>  | November 2016  |

# Module Evaluation Policy

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1

The University of Lincoln is committed to ensuring that students, as partners in learning, have an opportunity to comment on every module they undertake through the University Module Evaluation process, working in partnership with the Students' Union to amplify the student voice at Lincoln.

### 1.2

The Module Evaluation process is a key part of Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement, and the institution requires that the outcomes of these evaluations are used to improve the quality of educational provision within the institution. Other elements explore the academic outcomes of educational provision (for example, through degree outcomes), and the peer-assessed quality of educational provision (for example, through External Examiners' comments).

## 2. Scope

### 2.1

The University has a range of formal and informal mechanisms for collecting student feedback including elected Academic Representatives, Subject Committees and student involvement in the programme validation process. The main purpose of Module Evaluation is to enhance the student learning experience in order to make continuous improvements to student satisfaction and student success as measured through retention, progression and achievement.

### 2.2

For the duration of their enrolment on a programme of study at the University of Lincoln, the onus is on the student, as an independent learner, to utilise the Module Evaluation process as a mechanism to identify the necessary adjustments to educational provision and work in partnership with staff to make these a reality.

### 2.3

This Policy applies to all taught undergraduate and postgraduate modules, including work-based learning modules, whether offered as credit-bearing short courses or as part of a programme leading to a University award.

### **3. Key Principles**

#### **3.1**

The primary purpose of student Module Evaluation is to assure the quality of learning, teaching and assessment and to enhance the student experience. Student Module Evaluation must be conducted within strict ethical guidelines and the methods employed should not preclude any student from participation.

#### **3.2**

The timely communication of the results of Module Evaluation, and the subsequent academic responses, to students is a key part of the value of Module Evaluation. Feedback gathered from students must be responded to within a timescale appropriate to student needs and actions taken in response to feedback must be communicated to students within an agreed timescale.

#### **3.3**

Every Module should be evaluated each time it is delivered, using the University standard process. This event will take place towards the end of module delivery. Mid-module informal evaluation, through appropriate mechanisms, is also encouraged and can be undertaken locally; such activity should not take place coincident with the University Module Evaluations

#### **3.4**

Questionnaires are only one way of gathering student opinion; other means can be used at the discretion of the Module Leader, although the timings of these should be complementary to offer maximum value to academics and students from such feedback. Where other means are desired, academics are encouraged, first and foremost, to use their Academic Representatives.

#### **3.5**

Students will be informed of their responsibility to provide constructive feedback. Results of Module Evaluation will never be provided to academic staff in a way that could identify individual students from their responses. Additionally, the Module Evaluation process should not be used as a medium for abusive and defamatory comments about academic staff and disciplinary action will be taken against students in accordance with the Student Conduct and Disciplinary Regulations if necessary; that said, students must always be encouraged to be honest in their responses (remembering to be constructive), and reminded that the process is anonymous.

### 3.6

Access to Module Evaluation data will be provided as follows:

- Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Pro Vice Chancellors/Heads of College, Heads of School and Directors of Education can access quantitative data and unredacted free text comments about all modules for which they have oversight.
- School administrative managers and central professional services staff will have access to quantitative data redacted free text comments as necessary to process these data.
- Programme Leaders will have access to quantitative data and redacted free text comments for all modules that comprise their degree programme.
- Module Leaders and all other academic teachers on the Module will have access to quantitative data and redacted free text comments for their Module.
- Students will have access to quantitative data about their modules that has been contextualised by staff analysis of this data, and to actions taken to develop modules which will be agreed and developed in partnership with students.

### 3.7

Module Leaders must respond to student feedback with plans identifying any agreed actions, and Module Evaluation data must be discussed at Subject Committee Meetings and at College Academic Boards. Module staff teams may be offered bespoke support, in discussion between Heads of School and Directors of Education. Programme Leaders should be consulted where this is relevant. In addition, any module is eligible for this support at any time should it be considered a useful mechanism for reflection and enhancement.

### 3.8

The University will be responsible for the data collected, though the University of Lincoln Students' Union's bespoke Students' Union Management System (SUMS) will be used to collect the data. All personal and performance-related data is exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. The University will respect the data liabilities set out in the Data Protection Act and will dispose of the data five years after collection.

### 3.9

The Module Evaluation process will be evaluated every four years, in steady state, with the first review in January 2017.

### 3.10

Supplementary guidance for Heads of School, Programme Leaders, Module Leaders, senior staff and students is provided in appendices 1 to 5 of this Policy document.

## Appendix 1 – Supplementary Guidance for Students

- The main purpose of Module Evaluation is to enable staff to direct developments in their educational provision towards improving your learning experience, as a result of student feedback and in partnership with you.
- Module evaluation provides a means of understanding the student impact of educational provision, and a way of planning for the next iteration of a module. Your input is key because it helps academics to develop their modules for future students, and because it allows you to reflect on your learning and the ways in which you have developed and grown as a consequence.
- A new module may have teething problems and a low Module Evaluation might be of no concern; that said, the results will be carefully considered in order to support efficient and meaningful module development, as is the case with all modules. A cohort of students who have experienced a difficult semester may give lower scores than a happier cohort. The emphasis here should be on correcting the issues behind the overall experience, and not on the Module Evaluation per se.
- It is expected that all comments provided during the Module Evaluation process will conform to the provisions of the University's Respect Charter in terms of language and content.
- Your considered and mature comments and suggestions will have a long term and beneficial impact on the University and should also contribute to your own understanding of your learning style and response to various types of learning setting.
- In giving feedback to academic staff, you should bear in mind the learning you have derived from receiving feedback on your work, and ensure that you are offering a fair insight and constructive suggestions for future change.
- You should be aware that there is a tendency to provide higher Module Evaluation scores for academics that might fit your preconceptions of what an academic is like. It is important that you explore any tendency to stereotype; good educational provision comes from diverse sources, and all educational provision is capable of development and enhancement.
- You should also take time to reflect on the long-term value of learning in a particular module, as well as your immediate response to it. An exceptional lecturer delivering education in a fascinating subject is easy to evaluate (as is the opposite), but a rigorous and professional approach to a difficult or unfamiliar area of study may be more challenging to rate. Please take time to reflect on these issues, and please feel free to explore them in your written comments.
- It is important to be aware that your experience of a module is a complicated outcome of your own engagement, personal situation and the learning and educational provision you experienced. The Module Evaluation is an opportunity to consider all of these and to use this reflection to help academics develop their curriculum.

## Appendix 2 – Supplementary Guidance for Senior Staff

- The main purpose of Module Evaluation is to enable staff to direct developments in their educational provision towards improving the learning experience of students, as a result of student feedback and in partnership with them. It is primarily a tool of local use, and the main emphasis of senior support for it should be in ensuring that it is used in this way.
- Clearly, it is also a useful data source for aggregated snapshots and longitudinal overviews of educational provision and learning in degree programmes, Schools and Colleges. Care needs to be taken in using the data in these ways to allow for natural variations and in recognising that no cohort is sampled twice for the same module.
- Module evaluation is only one way of evaluating the perceived effectiveness of learning and educational provision. It will not be used as a stand-alone way of assessing the educational provision ability of an academic or group of academic staff.
- Scores in Module Evaluation are modulated through student understanding of good educational provision, which may show bias towards traditional perceptions of an academic (white, male, middle aged). It may also show bias towards those characteristics that make students feel at ease in a learning setting, such as an easy lecturing style or straightforward content. While academic challenge is generally appreciated by students, some elements of learning that are of real benefit in the longer context of a degree programme may not be apparent to the learner at the time.
- A new module may have teething problems and low Module Evaluation score might be of no concern; that said, the results will be carefully considered in order to support efficient and meaningful module development, as is the case with all modules. A cohort of students who have experienced a difficult semester may give lower scores than a happier cohort. The emphasis here should be on correcting the issues behind the overall experience, and not on the Module Evaluation per se.
- Care needs to be taken in the oversight, and use of, free text comments from Module Evaluations. While many of these are both positive and creative in their suggestions about improving learning and educational provision, it is always possible that either positive or negative comments are mischievous, or a consequence of immaturity on the part of the author.

### **Appendix 3 – Supplementary Guidance for Heads of School**

- The main purpose of Module Evaluation is to enable staff to direct developments in their educational provision towards improving the learning experience of students, as a result of student feedback and in partnership with them. It is primarily a tool of local use, and the main emphasis of senior support for it should be in ensuring that it is used in this way.
- Clearly, it is also a useful data source for aggregated snapshots and longitudinal overviews of educational provision and learning in degree programmes and Schools. Care needs to be taken in using the data in these ways to allow for natural variation and in recognising that no cohort is sampled twice for the same module.
- Module evaluation is only one way of evaluating the perceived effectiveness of learning and educational provision. It will not be used as a stand-alone way of assessing the educational provision ability of an academic or group of academic staff and is not intended, nor should be viewed as, a punitive tool.
- Scores in Module Evaluation are modulated through student understanding of good educational provision, which may show bias towards traditional perceptions of an academic (white, male, middle aged). It may also show bias towards those characteristics that make students feel at ease in a learning setting, such as an easy lecturing style or straightforward content. While academic challenge is generally appreciated by students, some elements of learning that are of real benefit in the longer context of a degree programme may not be apparent to the learner at the time.
- Care needs to be taken in the oversight and use of free text comments from Module Evaluations. While many of these are both positive and creative in their suggestions about improving learning and educational provision, it is always possible that either positive or negative comments are mischievous, or a consequence of immaturity on the part of the author.
- A new module may have teething problems and a low Module Evaluation might be of no concern; that said, the results will be carefully considered in order to support efficient and meaningful module development, as is the case with all modules. A cohort of students who have experienced a difficult semester may give lower scores than a happier cohort. The emphasis here should be on correcting the issues behind the overall experience, and not on the Module Evaluation per se.
- The results of Module Evaluation should not be considered as the sole justification for discontinuing a module of study. As ever, NSS scores, feedback from Academic Representatives and other students, and a host of other factors would be considered before the cancellation of a module.

## Appendix 4 – Supplementary Guidance for Programme Leaders

- The main purpose of Module Evaluation is to enable staff to direct developments in their educational provision towards improving the learning experience of students, as a result of student feedback and in partnership with them. It is primarily a tool of local use, and the main emphasis of support for it should be in ensuring that it is used in this way.
- Clearly, it is also a useful data source for aggregated snapshots and longitudinal overviews of educational provision and learning in degree programmes. Care needs to be taken in using the data in these ways to allow for natural variations and in recognising that no cohort is sampled twice for the same module.
- In other institutions, there appears to be a correlation between Module Evaluation data and NSS outcomes. There is, therefore, potential to use Module Evaluation data to focus support and curriculum development on areas that are likely to have a significant impact on the NSS, in addition to a broader focus on the enhancement of a degree programme as a holistic learning experience.
- Module evaluation is only one way of evaluating the perceived effectiveness of learning and educational provision. It will not be used as a stand-alone way of assessing the educational provision ability of an academic or group of academic staff.
- Scores in Module Evaluation are modulated through student understanding of good educational provision, which may show bias towards traditional perceptions of an academic (white, male, middle aged). It may also show bias towards those characteristics that make students feel at ease in a learning setting, such as an easy lecturing style or straightforward content. While academic challenge is generally appreciated by students, some elements of learning that are of real benefit in the longer context of a degree programme may not be apparent to the learner at the time.
- Care needs to be taken in the oversight and use of free text comments from Module Evaluations. While many of these are both positive and creative in their suggestions about improving learning and educational provision, it is always possible that either positive or negative comments are mischievous, or a consequence of immaturity on the part of the author.
- A new module may have teething problems and a low Module Evaluation score might be of no concern; that said, the results will be carefully considered in order to support efficient and meaningful module development, as is the case with all modules. A cohort of students who have experienced a difficult semester may give lower scores than a happier cohort. The emphasis here should be on correcting the issues behind the overall experience, and not on the Module Evaluation per se.

## Appendix 5 – Supplementary Guidance for Module Leaders

- The main purpose of Module Evaluation is to enable you to direct developments in educational provision towards improving the learning experience of students. It is primarily a tool of local use, and the main emphasis of senior support for it should be in ensuring that it is used in this way.
- Module evaluations provide a means of understanding the student impact of educational provision and a way of planning for the next iteration of a module.
- Care needs to be taken in using the data in these ways to allow for natural variations and in recognising that no cohort is sampled twice for the same module.
- Module evaluation scores are only useful in the context of a local understanding of the ways in which educational provision and learning operated through the semester and module in question. A new module may have teething problems and a low Module Evaluation score might be of no concern. A cohort of students who have experienced a difficult semester may give lower scores than a happier cohort. The emphasis here should be on correcting the issues behind the overall experience, and not on the Module Evaluation per se.
- Module evaluation is only one way of evaluating the perceived effectiveness of learning and educational provision. It will not be used as a stand-alone way of assessing the educational provision ability of an academic or group of academic staff.
- Scores in Module Evaluation are modulated through student understanding of good educational provision, which may show bias towards traditional perceptions of an academic (white, male, middle aged). It may also show bias towards those characteristics that make students feel at ease in a learning setting, such as an easy lecturing style or straightforward content. While academic challenge is generally appreciated by students, some elements of learning that are of real benefit in the longer context of a degree programme may not be apparent to the learner at the time.
- Care needs to be taken in the oversight, and use of, free text comments from Module Evaluations in module reports. While many of these comments are both positive and creative in their suggestions for improving learning and educational provision, there is always the possibility that either positive or negative comments are mischievous, or a consequence of immaturity on the part of the author.
- It is critically important that students understand the impact of their participation in the Module Evaluation process. This requires an excellent communication strategy for students on a module and for the cohort that follows. Using Module Evaluation data as the starting point for a conversation about learning and educational provision should add value to subsequent Module Evaluations completed by these students.