

Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme

Case study

As a way of capturing the detail and impact of your Learning & Teaching Enhancement Project, please complete the questions below, which align with the QAA Scotland reporting template. *Please answer all questions in 200 words or fewer.* Case studies may be published on the University's website and elements may be used in reports for QAA Scotland. Project teams may be asked to contribute a Blog or Podcast to help to share project activities and outcomes. Any questions, please contact cad@abdn.ac.uk.

Project Title

Supporting Student Voice: Utilising Student Partnerships to Enhance Communication and Close the 'Feedback Loop'

Project Team

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Context

This section should provide brief details about the context of the project/activity, highlighting any specific challenges and/or strategies it intended to address.

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**.

This evaluation project explored student perspectives on communication, engagement, and student voice within the School of Psychology, with the aim of understanding why initiatives designed to enhance the student experience had not always achieved their intended impact. Over several years, the School and University had implemented measures in response to student feedback and NSS outcomes, including a feedback and assessment guide and institution-wide "You Said, We Did" communications. Despite these efforts, student engagement with these resources and initiatives remained limited, raising questions about how effectively information was communicated and received.

The project centred around student-led focus groups. Key challenges included low levels of student engagement, difficulties in ensuring awareness of available resources, and potential misalignment between staff priorities and student expectations. Focus groups investigated the underlying causes of these issues and explored how communication methods could be improved to better support student participation and partnership.

Prompted by NSS results, the project was designed to produce recommendations to support student voice, assessment, and feedback. It supported Curriculum Transformation

priorities by positioning students as partners in shaping their educational experience and aligned with the Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Programme's focus on Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys and Aberdeen 2040's commitment to inclusivity.

Description of activity

In this section, you should provide brief descriptive details of the activity. Please include information on student engagement in the design and delivery of the activity here.

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**.

A student intern, funded through the project, was recruited to support the design, delivery, and analysis of a series of student focus groups. The focus group approach was developed collaboratively through several meetings between the intern and supervisory team, allowing the design and implementation to evolve in response to emerging priorities. The focus groups involved undergraduate Psychology students from across the programme, who were compensated for their participation. Recruitment was successful, with the project achieving its target sample size and generating strong levels of engagement.

The focus groups explored students' priorities and personal goals for their university experience, perceptions of assessment and feedback, engagement with course information, and views on university communications more broadly. Discussions also examined what information students considered most relevant, how they preferred to receive communications, and how they shared feedback about their experience. Particular attention was given to students' perceptions of how the University responded to student feedback and the visibility of resulting actions.

All focus groups were facilitated by the student intern, who subsequently undertook the thematic analysis of the data and presented a summary of the findings to the project team, providing the basis for recommendations to improve communication and student engagement.

Evaluation and impact

This section should provide an analysis of evaluation and impact of the project.

To support evaluative activity, institutions are encouraged to use the [resources](#) developed by Professor Stella Jones-Devitt and Dr Liz Austen, particularly the Enhancement Themes Theory of Change model and the Universal Evaluation Framework (UEF).

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**

This project provided valuable insight into how students engage with course materials, assessment information, and University communications, as well as how they perceive wider institutional processes. It also generated important evidence relating to assessment and feedback and students' experiences of student voice, both of which are key areas for enhancement within the School and relevant to NSS performance.

The findings offered an opportunity to evaluate the impact of initiatives introduced in recent years, including assessment briefs and marking rubrics, resources explaining

assessment and feedback processes, and efforts to review the content and volume of student communications to encourage engagement while reducing information overload. The data collected has improved understanding of student experiences, highlighted areas of effective practice, and identified opportunities for further enhancement, which are outlined in the following section.

A key strength of the project was the use of a student intern to design and facilitate the focus groups. This approach created a peer-led environment in which participants appeared comfortable sharing their views openly and candidly. In addition, the semi-structured format enabled discussion to move beyond predetermined questions, allowing participants to explore issues in greater depth and raising insights that may not have emerged through more structured methods.

Lessons learned and next steps

In this section, you should reflect on the key learning points drawn from this activity for the institution. You might also consider what learning other universities or the tertiary education sector could take from this activity. If there is any planned follow-on activity, please provide brief details here.

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**.

The focus groups provided us with specific, actionable feedback. In the coming weeks, we will further discuss findings in relation to our educational planning for the coming academic year and beyond. Some initial specific areas of focus include:

Enhancing student feedback literacy, for example by utilising insights from metacognition to support students to understand their feedback and how to improve. This will also be supported by evaluating our feedback and assessment resources, and ensuring students have access to tangible examples of assessment criteria in the undergraduate programme.

Reflect on communication strategy. HB and JH have met with colleagues from the Communications Team in the university and we have identified areas of opportunity to streamline communications to students and avoid repeated and/or redundant communications.

Review opportunities for student voice. We plan to revise our student voice approach, including extending opportunities to provide feedback, and hosting feedback sessions with class representatives in our newly established student common room.

More broadly, there are clear opportunities for us to more widely reflect on participants' descriptions of their engagement and their wider university experiences, feeding back to key platforms within the institution as appropriate.

References

Please provide links to any relevant websites or further information about the activity in

this section.