

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

PROPOSED REINSTATEMENT OF EXTERNAL SURVEYS

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper is about the reinstatement of student surveys provided by external organisations.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	SSEC	5 December 2022
Further consideration/ approval required by	UEC	

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The UEC is invited to note the paper, the recommendation of SSEC (see 9.1) and to provide a view on the points raised in 9.2 regarding future possible operational matters.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1.1 Information is at the heart of informing the academic and pastoral support and experience UoA provides to students. Survey fatigue has, however, been considered a challenge for many years. The issue compelled the former Student Survey Working Group (SSWG) to reduce the number of surveys (internal and external) aimed at students, and to identify alternative ways to capture student feedback.

4.1.2 The SSWG agreed that all surveys targeting large groups of students, such as entire years or larger, required approval before proceeding.

4.1.2 This led to a reduction in the number of surveys, with the National Student Survey (NSS) remaining in place, and the creation of the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES).

4.1.3 The NSS captures final year undergraduate student views on predominantly academic related matters. At present, UoA is not part of any large-scale survey regarding postgraduate taught students.

4.1.4 The ASES captures all student views, some of which are academic related, but most are non-academic such as University systems, facilities, professional services, and overall experience related.

- 4.1.5 The NSS is a valuable source of information about our undergraduate students and a benchmarking tool. Having similar information in respect of PGT students could complement the ASes and further inform our decision making regarding the academic and wider student experience and support which we provide to PGT students. The next part of the paper explores some possibilities.

5. Postgraduate **External Survey Possibilities**

- 5.1.1 The **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)** is designed to gather information about the experience of any PGT student on a Masters, Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma course. The PTES is delivered by Advance HE, a member-led, sector-owned charity that works with institutions and higher education across the world to improve higher education for staff, students and society.

PTES aims to help us better understand the PGT students' experience in the key areas of:

- Teaching and learning
- Engagement
- Assessment and feedback
- Organisation and management
- Skills development

PTES also considers students' motivations for taking their programme and – where relevant – their experience of undertaking a dissertation or major project. PTES was developed in consultation with the sector and tested across diverse disciplines, institutions and student.

Data from the PTES would allow us to compare UoA PGT provision against others in the sector at both a discipline and institution level. This information can be used to identify areas of strength, as well as to address areas for development - increasing the appeal of programmes and the information we provide to prospective students.

PTES supports us to:

- gain valuable data to inform enhancements to the experience of PGT students
- benchmark UoA provision against others, while all results remain confidential
- tailor the survey by adding our own questions

PTES also provide support for survey delivery, analysis and use of the survey for enhancement.

- 5.1.3 The **International Student Barometer (ISB)** aims to gather information on the student experience both in and outside the classroom environment and produces results data that helps to inform future policy and practice at a university and national level.

The default survey covers international students only. It surveys currently enrolled EU & international students, including study abroad and exchange students at all years and levels of study (but not including students studying offshore at overseas campuses or English language preparatory courses, who complete separate surveys). Survey coverage can be upgraded to also capture domestic students.

It is a confidential and comparative feedback process for education providers and governments. i-graduate is the company that manages the survey process from planning to reporting.

The scope of the questionnaire covers the following:

1. Arrival and orientation – e.g. the welcome experience, orientation, accommodation.
2. Learning experience – e.g. lecturers, course content, facilities, employability
3. Living experience – e.g. accommodation, friends, part time work, safety
4. Support services – e.g. health, disability, employment, counselling, accommodation
5. Value for money
6. Decision making – influences, motivations, and importance*
7. Application – route, use of agents, service levels*
8. Visas – type, application, support*
9. Enquiry to acceptance – service and timings
10. Happiness and Wellbeing
11. Employment and careers support expectations and service levels
12. Demographics
13. Course – e.g. main area of study, mode of study, course title level
14. Recommendation
15. Future plans and career intentions*
16. Institutional response to Covid-19*
17. Inclusivity*
18. Derived Importance – identifying those elements that have the strongest link to recommendation.

* These questions are optional and can be included or excluded.

6. Costs

6.1.1 PTES - £2500 (No VAT)

This includes participation in any or all of PTES, Post Graduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) & UK Engagement Survey (UKES).

Jisc Online Survey Package - £1690 + VAT

Total estimated cost £4190 + part VAT

6.1.2 ISB - £7800

£6000 to add domestic students.

£4500 of optional extras available, some of which make the survey more user friendly with preloaded data and others relate to reporting results.

Total estimated cost £18300 + VAT

7. Timelines

7.1.1 **PTES** - The survey windows begin on 1 February and must be run for at least 3 weeks before close in Mid-June.

7.1.2 **ISB** - Clashes with new student ASES and would be close to, or clash with, returning student version.

Registration	By 4th November 2022
First survey launch	22nd September 2022
Last survey launch	24th November 2022
All surveys close	19th December 2022
Initial reporting	3 weeks after survey closes
Full reporting	February 2023 onwards

8. Recommendations

8.1.1 Reinstatement of the PTES. This will allow us to capture valuable PGT specific student data which we have not gathered for several years. There is no budget currently available for this, funds will need to be requested centrally.

8.1.2 Do not reinstate ISB as this overlaps with the ASES. Continue to monitor the feedback captured through the ASES to ensure that we gather data relevant to the overall student experience and that appropriate outcomes are actioned and reported to the University community.

9 Updates

9.1 SSEC recommended that the PTES is reinstated. It was noted that the fee for the survey (see 6.1.1) included the Post Graduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The PGR Policy Committee met and discussed this and support the use of PRES.

9.2 Discussions have begun regarding internal responsibility for the operation of the PTES if it is put in place, regarding promotion, management and actions in response to the results. These discussions need to be completed, budget found (see 8.1.1) and decisions made on future governance of the PTES.

10. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Duncan Stuart, Head of Student Experience d.stuart@abdn.ac.uk and Jason Bohan, Dean of Student Support jason.bohan@abdn.ac.uk

21 December 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open