Feedback Top Tips

What?

Feedback is any bit of information you receive from students that is related to the academic experience. It can take lots of different forms – from a formal survey to a quick instant message – and all of it should be considered a contribution to the student voice.

As an academic rep, gathering feedback is a key part of your role. Feedback is really important for a number of reasons:

- As evidence to justify any changes you want to make
- Checking that students are satisfied with their experience
- Identifying any patterns in students' experience that might be evidence of discrimination
- Finding out the impact of any changes on students
- To find out what works best so departments can keep doing it!

Areas you might want to gather feedback on could be:

- The blended learning experience
- Assessments
- Facilities
- Support – wellbeing, personal tutors, support for Joint Honours students etc.
- Teaching
- Communication
- Academic community

When?

Thinking about **when** the best time is to gather feedback is useful. If it's a time of year where the University are sending out lots of surveys, students might get 'survey fatigue' and feel less inclined to fill yours in. Or, if a big change has happened, students might have a lot to say so a proactive approach to gathering their views could be useful.

It might also be a good idea to let students know if you'll be asking for their feedback at key points in the year – for example, at the beginning of term and at the end. Explaining *why* you're asking for feedback is a big motivator for students to get involved – perhaps you're asking in advance of an SSC, or the Deparment have plans for a project that they need feedback on first.

How?

Gathering feedback is about more than just emailing people a link to a SurveyMonkey. There are loads of different ways to find out what students think:

- Utilise MS Teams to your full advantage this year – check out the briefing on the resources page on the Rep Hub
- Organise a fun online meet-up – social events can be great ways to get people chatting

- Ask your lecturer if you can have a moment at the beginning or end of class for students to send you a private message with their feedback
- Get creative – organise a conversation with a student media outlet about academic representation
- Utilise your existing networks on WhatsApp, Facebook, WeChat, Weibo…

Thinking about how you ask questions is just as important:

- For something you need speedy feedback on, asking a closed, 'yes' or 'no' question might be most effective
- An emotive issue might require longer responses from students, so you might want to ask something like 'How do you feel about …' or 'What are your experiences with…'
- Being specific about what exactly you're asking for feedback on will help you get the most relevant responses – asking 'What are your thoughts about **how fair** the **new marking procedure** is' would be more effective than 'What do you think about marking?'

What now?

You've just collected student feedback – fantastic! Now what should you do with it?

- Sometimes an issue will have a clear solution – e.g. if a lecturer has forgotten to upload a PowerPoint presentation onto Moodle, sending them a quick email should solve it
- Check in with the other course and senior course reps – maybe there are issues that cross departments
- If it's a big issue or a big idea, take it to your next SSC
- Could the issue be University-wide? Check in with the VP Education if something concerns you
- The SU has a list of key contacts – if you're not sure who to take your feedback to, drop us an email

Think about *how* you give your feedback to members of staff:

- Make sure the feedback you're relaying is specific – 'students think xyz is rubbish' isn't as helpful as 'students dislike xyz because…and would rather xyz happened instead…'
- Don't be all negative – this can be demoralising both for yourself and the person you're relaying the feedback to. Make sure you're collecting feedback about what's working well too
- Think about when you're giving feedback – if you find an issue that can be solved quickly, solve it quickly! You don't always need to wait for an SSC
- Do you have evidence for your feedback? For example, saying '20 people that responded to my survey think xyz could be improved' is potentially more helpful than 'I think that students think this'

Good luck!

If you need help with gathering feedback, you've received a piece of feedback that worries you, you're not sure where to go with your feedback or anything else, don't forget you can always email **voice@su.rhul.ac.uk** for support.