Student engagement and feedback policy and procedures

Purpose

Student engagement in feedback and quality assurance and enhancement processes is fundamental to the enhancement of the student experience. This policy explains how AECC University College works in partnership with students to support them in actively engaging with and participating in, quality assurance and enhancement activities. It sets out the various mechanisms through which such engagement is encouraged, enabled and used, to our mutual advantage.

Matters related to the engagement of students in their learning (rather than in feedback and quality assurance) are addressed in a separate document (currently under development).

1.   Background and general principles

1.1   In the context of this policy 'student engagement' is defined as '*the active participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, in partnership with staff, resulting in the improvement of the learning experiences provided by the University College'.*

1.2   This policy is based on the following principles:
- our commitment to develop as an integrated learning community in which the views of all are respected, listened to and responded to;
- provision and promotion of opportunities for all students to engage as partners in enhancement and quality assurance;
- provision of and support for effective student representation at all organisational levels.

1.3   AECC University College is a unique, close knit community where staff and students work together in partnership to maintain a collegiate, open and safe environment for all aspects of learning and development. Working in partnership with students is essential for us to improve the relevance, structure and delivery of our courses and enhance the learning opportunities we offer. We actively welcome and encourage student participation and engagement across all aspects of University College life, through both formal and informal means, and take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

1.4   Student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes, through which the views and experience of students contribute to enhancing the learning experience and to our decision-making, is achieved mainly through:
- student feedback, both formal and informal, including feedback through surveys
- student representation
- student participation in course monitoring, approval and review.

1.5   Communication is a key factor in successful student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes. Communication is achieved via a number of channels, including:
- ASU Officers
- Student Representatives
- Student representatives on committees
- The Student Union and Engagement Manager
- Student Experience Committee
- Course Steering Committees
- Academic staff – particularly course and unit leaders
- Course Administrators and other Registry Colleagues
- Email communication about day to day University College issues
- University College announcements on the VLE
- Specially-convened meetings for students to dive feedback or to highlight key issues.

2. The Student Charter

2.1 The Student Charter sets out what is expected of an individual student and what students can expect of the institution. The Student Charter was produced by the Students' Union (ASU), academic staff and senior management. It is reviewed regularly and discussed through Student Experience Committee before formal approval by Academic Board. It is available on the University College website, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and the Staff Information Portal (SIP).

3. Student Feedback

3.1 Oversight of student feedback mechanisms rests with Student Experience Committee. Student Experience Committee has responsibility 'to consider and respond to the outcomes of internal and external student surveys and evaluations'.

3.2 We encourage and expect students to raise any issues, pastoral or academic, with a relevant member of staff as soon as issues occur. This can be done in person or electronically. We will ensure that tutors have access to support and guidance in order to help students engage with their studies and University College life.

3.3 It is essential that students know that their opinions and concerns are taken into consideration and that the feedback they give is listened to, so that, working together, the student experience can be improved. When issues or suggestions for improvement are raised, students should be be part of developing the solutions.

Course Steering Committees

3.4 Course Steering Committees are the main formal channel of communication between students and staff in academic and related matters. They provide students with the means of raising matters of concern, via their course representatives, and are an ideal environment for discussing matters of interest to students and staff, and for Course Teams to demonstrate engagement with, and responsiveness to, such feedback. Operating procedures and template agendas are used to ensure best use is made of this opportunity for student engagement.

Student Feedback through Surveys

3.5 Feedback from student surveys is used to assist the University College in enhancing the student experienced and the quality of learning opportunities.

3.6 The paragraphs below cover surveys of current University College students.

3.7 Students should have the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback via a survey for each unit they undertake – this may be feedback secured mid-unit or on its completion, but students should not normally be asked to complete more than one survey per unit. Unit-level feedback should be reviewed by the unit leader, action taken where possible/appropriate, and a response provided. This is normally all completed through the VLE. Unit Leader reflection on student feedback on units will form part of Unit Monitoring Reports, and feeds into the annual course monitoring process.

3.8 Final year undergraduate (including MChiro (Hons)) students take part in the National Student Survey (NSS). This national survey provides information on final year student perception of their experience over their course as a whole, and provides an opportunity for benchmarking against performance across the HE sector. NSS responses will be provided to Course Leaders and will be considered at the relevant Course Steering Committee and Student Experience Committee. Agreed actions are monitored through the Action Plans for each course.

3.9 Student feedback should be systematically and anonymously collected from students on all courses, normally by means of an annual survey, issued by Registry, to provide all students with the opportunity to give feedback about their course and the University College learning environment more generally. The relevant Course Administrator is responsible for analysing the results of these surveys and providing this information to Course Leaders. Course Leaders are responsible for managing follow up, action planning and feedback to students (closing the feedback loop. Students should have input into determining responses and actions, where appropriate. The output from and responses to the surveys feed into annual course monitoring,

and the agreed actions are monitored through the Action Plans for each course.

3.10 Any proposed changes to the questions for the course level surveys should be brought to Student Experience Committee for consideration.

3.11 In addition specific surveys may be required to obtain feedback on students' clinical placement(s).

Introducing additional surveys to gather student feedback

3.12 From time to time, there will be proposals for additional surveys to be used to gather feedback from students on their educational experience. Any proposals for additional surveys should in the first instance agreed by the Chair of the Student Experience committee to ensure that issuing the survey will not detract from, or discourage students from completing University College surveys relating to units/course, or the NSS. It should be clear who will receive, consider and respond to the outcomes from the survey, and how the outcomes will be disseminated.

3.13 Managers of services (for example the refectory) may wish to issue surveys to evaluate the services provided. They are encouraged to check with Registry that there is no duplication with surveys already issued and that the timing of issue will not detract from, or discourage students from completing, the standard University College surveys or NSS.

Collating student feedback

3.14 The Student Experience Committee will consider annually an overview of student feedback received at the course and institutional levels and on responses developed to identify any overarching themes and opportunities for institutional action/ enhancements.

4. Student Representation

The Students' Union (ASU)

4.1 The ASU is a voluntary organisation run by students, for all students within the University College. Its objectives are focused on the advancement of the education of students at the University College. To this end, the ASU engages in:
- promoting the interests and welfare of Students at the University College during the course of their study and representing, supporting and advising Members;
- being the representative channel between Students and the University College and any other external bodies;
- providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its Members.

4.2 The University College promotes the activities of the ASU by employing a Students' Union and Engagement Manager to provide continuity over the years as ASU officers change, and by engaging collaboratively with the ASU on all matters for the enhancement of the student experience for all students. The ASU Manager ensures that the ASU are acting in accordance with relevant legislation and in the best interests of the student body and the reputation of the University College.

4.3 The ASU has a number of Executive officers, with defined roles, who work as a team to support students. Elections for these posts are organised annually by the ASU. New ASU Officers have a hand-over period at the beginning of their term of office and receive relevant information such as the ASU Constitution, bye-laws, meeting schedule, an introduction to a year in office as well as information on higher education at the University College. To make sure that ASU officers perform their roles as effectively as possible the ASU encourages them to attend training courses offered by relevant external agencies, to aid the development of student officers, and enable them to engage with the wider higher education NUS community.

4.4 There are regular meetings between the ASU Manager, members of the ASU Executive Team and the Vice-Chancellor and/or other members of the University College Executive Team, to share information and discuss any concerns.

Student representation on committees

4.5 There are student members on the Board of Governors and all academic committees. This ensures that student views are heard at the highest level and gives the student body a voice in decision-making and in the development, review and monitoring of our academic courses, policies and procedures. Unless otherwise specified in the terms of reference student members on committees are identified through the ASU.

Student Representation System

4.6 All students should have access to appropriate student representation through Student Representatives. Student Representation provides opportunities for all students to offer feedback to staff on both positive and negative experiences. Student Representation is coordinated through the ASU. Student Representatives and all members of staff should commit to mutual respect and to working together proactively to find solutions to any issues highlighted, for the enhancement of the student experience for all students Student Representatives are elected annually. The ASU coordinates the election process. The ASU Manager oversees and provides training to Student Representatives at the beginning and during their term of office.

4.7 The ASU Champions Scheme is designed to promote input from students from underrepresented areas to ensure their voice is heard, and to encourage student engagement in particular areas of key interest for the institution, such as sustainability and mental health awareness.

5. Student Participation in Quality and Enhancement Activities

5.1 The University College seeks to work together with students in the process of designing, developing and approving new courses, periodically reviewing existing courses and as part of professional body accreditation/re-accreditation.

- Student involvement during the planning, design and development of a new course/ review of an existing course is expected, and Course Leaders are asked to explain as part of the documentation for the course consideration/review process how this has been achieved and how this input has been taken into consideration in the process. The involvement of alumni and recent graduates is also encouraged, in order to learn from their experiences post-graduation.

- Groups of students will usually be invited to meet with the review panel for course reviews and professional body re-accreditation

- All Course Consideration Panels for new course approval and periodic course reviews will normally include a student nominated by the ASU in consultation with the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance), as a full member of the panel.

5.2 Students take part in unit and course monitoring processes by providing feedback (see section 3) which is then reviewed, responded to and reported on as part of the annual monitoring process.

5.3 All students have access to the names of the External Examiners for their course for information. However students must not contact External Examiner(s) directly. If a student has any queries about the assessment process for the course, or about their individual performance they should raise these with the appropriate member of AECC University College academic staff (such as Unit or Course Leader), the relevant Student Representative, or an ASU Executive Officer. Some students may be invited to meet with External Examiners so that External Examiners have the opportunity to get direct feedback from students on how they are experiencing their courses.

5.4 We make external examiners' annual reports and course responses available to all students on that course via the VLE. Students are encouraged to read these and feed back any reflections through their student representatives, who can then raise these with staff and at relevant academic committees as appropriate. Student representatives on these committees will have the opportunity to consider External Examiners' reports as part of our quality assurance processes.

6. Review of Effectiveness

6.1 We welcome suggestions for new or improved ways in which we could foster active student participation in our quality systems; if any student has suggestions, or has a concern that systems are not working effectively, they should let the ASU and Engagement Manager, a member of the SU Executive Team or the relevant Course Leader know, as soon as possible.

6.2 Mechanisms for considering and evaluating the effectiveness of student feedback and engagement in quality assurance processes will be considered, agreed and monitored through the Student Experience Committee.

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