

LEEDS BECKETT STUDENT CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK



leeds beckett
students' union

WHAT IS THE FRAMEWORK?

The Leeds Beckett Student Consultation Framework is a set of guidelines which have been agreed by the University and Students' Union. The guidelines exist to cement the principles of Leeds Beckett University working in partnership with its students, and ensuring that they are at the heart of its decision-making processes.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY CONSULTATION?

Consultation can be carried out at any level, by any department or person, at any time a decision needs to be made that will have an impact on students' experience at Leeds Beckett. The University already has a number of mechanisms to listen to student feedback – such as through the network of Course Representatives, through module feedback, and through the various monitoring and review processes that exist. The Students' Union believes that we can go further than this, and that there should be agreed methods for not just giving feedback, but also for informing the decision-making process from the outset.

WHEN AND WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS EXPECT TO BE CONSULTED ON?

Decisions are made every day in the University that will impact on the student experience – from a decision to change the time or location of a lecture, through a change in the modules available on a course, right up to a major building project that might transform an area of the campus. We have broken down the various levels of consultation that might exist into three clear categories.



WIDER CONSULTATION LEVEL

Methods of consultation planned and agreed with the Students' Union prior to major decisions with significant impact – such as the replacement of a key IT system or a significant estate development.



FOCUSED CONSULTATION LEVEL

Use of established systems and structures to consult prior to decisions that carry a more significant impact for students, for example consulting with Course Reps about moving teaching permanently to a new location on campus, or any proposed major modifications to your course.



INFORMING LEVEL

Agreed process for informing students of minor changes with a short-term impact, such as a one-off change in time or location of a lecture, or any approved minor modifications to your course.



GUIDANCE FOR USING THE FRAMEWORK

1

INVOLVING ALL AFFECTED STUDENTS IN THE PROCESS

At the Informing Level, this should happen as a matter of course. With more complex decisions where it is not possible to consult with each individual, steps should be taken to ensure that effective use of representative structures has been made to engage the widest range of student views. Consideration of incoming students and potential knock-on effects for others should also be considered as part of the consultation process.

2

UTILISING A RANGE OF CONSULTATION METHODS

As many methods of communicating with affected students as is practical should be employed when carrying out consultation. A simple email or text message might be sufficient for certain notifications, but a face to face conversation with a student representative may assist in establishing the best ways of carrying out a more in-depth consultation – these may vary according to course, type, location and mode of study.

3

CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATIVES TO CONSULT WITH

As well as the University's own procedures for seeking student feedback through their review processes, there is a vast range of representative structures and mechanisms that exist, both in the University and Students' Union – as well as in partnership. It is impossible to define fully which of these should be involved at each level of consultation, as it will vary according to the issue being consulted on – please refer to the Student Voice section of our website for a detailed breakdown of some of the options available for effective consultation.

THE STUDENT CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK PROCESS

STEP 1: ACCESS THE LEVEL OF CONSULTATION REQUIRED

Is this an unavoidable, one-off situation that students just need to be told about?

INFORM

Ensure that direct communication is made to all students affected.

Or is it appropriate, if time allows, to gather opinion before making a decision?

FOCUSED CONSULTATION

Establish the best means of communicating with affected students.

Carry out the initial consultation and agree any further actions.

On completion of consultation - communicate outcomes to affected students.

Could this have a widespread impact on a large number of students and, if so, should the Students' Union be involved?

WIDER CONSULTATION

Agree methods of consultation with the Students' Union.

COMPLETED

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE CONSULTATION

1

A CHANGE TO STUDENTS' TIMETABLE (INFORMING LEVEL)

Where there is a one-off change proposed to a lecture or other timetabled session, such as an unavoidable room change, all students likely to be affected will be advised as soon as possible before the session. Normally this would be by email, a notice on the VLE, timetable change or text. If this an immediate unavoidable change and was to affect the session that day then normally students would be made available via the stated mechanism (with text where this is feasible) and notices placed at former room in the event that students may have missed the notification.

2

A CHANGE OF ASSESSMENT TYPE ON A COURSE (INFORMING LEVEL)

An isolated change is proposed by the Course Team to a specific assessment for an elective module on Level 5 of the course. This amends the balance of percentages for the two course work components:

From: 60% report and 40% presentation

To: 65% report and 35% presentation

There are no other modifications proposed to the course. This proposed change is a modification which would need to be approved in accordance with our University's academic regulations. Given the nature of the modification, formal consultation is not a requirement though students or course representatives may be consulted, particularly if this is likely to have an immediate impact. Once the modification is approved all students likely to be affected (in this case for example, those on this module if the change is intended to apply to them; those starting the course or progressing from level 4 into level 5) must be informed of the change and related definitive

documentation updated. Schools may select communication mechanisms appropriate to the situation to inform students, such as email, by inclusion within a revised module/course handbook (where applicable) or on the Virtual Learning Environment. These students may also be advised by the relevant member of academic staff, e.g. Module Leader or Tutor. It would be good practice to keep student representatives informed of such changes so that they are aware and can work with the Course Team in engaging students and communicating changes.

3

A CHANGE OF ASSESSMENT METHODS AND WEIGHTINGS (FOCUSED CONSULTATION)

Changes are proposed to the substantive assessment methods and weightings for a number of core modules on a course. This changes the overall balance between examinations and coursework and the nature of some assessments. These are considered major changes and would need to be approved in accordance with our University's academic regulations.

Modifications of this type would normally be proposed by the Course Team who would consult with students and their Course Representatives as well as consult with the relevant External Examiners prior to approval of these proposed changes. This consultation may involve meetings with Course Representatives, a written briefing provided to students via email, on the VLE, via printed form and via a focus group or other face to face session to enable discussion of the proposals. Once approved, existing students on the course likely to be affected must be notified of the changes and related definitive documentation updated. All students likely to be affected should be informed using appropriate communication methods such as email, letter, by inclusion within a revised module/course handbook (where applicable) and/or on the Virtual Learning Environment. It would be good practice for a member of the Course Team (e.g. Course Director, Level Leader/Tutor) to arrange a presentation/discussion session for students affected so that these changes can be confirmed and any questions discussed. Where these course modifications constitute a change to material course information then communication with relevant applicants would be required in accordance with our University Regulations and process.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE CONSULTATION

4

CONSULTING WITH THE STUDENTS' UNION ON RENT SETTING FOR UNIVERSITY ACCOMMODATION (INFORMING LEVEL)

Every three years, the National Union of Students and Unipol produce an accommodation costs survey. The 2012 survey stated that 'in the rent setting process, and in planning for future developments, providers of accommodation should make sure they properly consult and actively engage student representatives. Working with students' unions on their expectations of accommodation and cost is an important way of ensuring that provision is appropriate and suitable to meet students' needs'. With this in mind, the University has agreed to consult with the Students' Union prior to making any changes to rent levels at University accommodation sites.

The decision-making process for such a change would usually begin in September/October, for the following academic year. Best practice in this scenario would involve the University's Director of Finance consulting with appropriate Students' Union officers and staff. This would most likely include the Students' Union President, VP Welfare, and representatives from the Student Advice team, and would involve setting out the reasons behind any proposed changes to rent levels. It would be expected that any feedback or concerns put forward by the Students' Union during this consultation is carefully considered before rent levels are finalised.



