

# Always listening: connecting with our students

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<b>Document Control Information</b>				
<b>Status and reason for development</b> This policy replaces the Student Voice Policy that was introduced in 2013.				
<b>Revision History</b>				
<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Summary of changes</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Authorised</b>
May 2015	Sam Grogan / Gill Molyneaux	<i>New policy to replace the Student Voice Policy</i>	V1.0	LTEC 17.06.15 Senate 10.07.15
<b>Policy Management and Responsibilities</b>				
Owner:	The Policy is owned by the Dean of Students.			
Others with responsibilities (please specify):	All students and staff are responsible for engaging with and adhering to this policy.			
<b>Assessment</b>	<i>Cross relevant assessments</i>	<i>Cross if not applicable</i>		
Equality Analysis	X			
Legal	<input type="checkbox"/>	X		
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<b>Document dissemination and communications plan:</b>	The document is disseminated as part of the online Academic Handbook.			

## 1.0 Purpose

1.1 This policy sets out how we and our students communicate and engage with each other, and how we work together in partnership to improve our students' experience. Our approach is guided by the following fundamental principles which are designed to encourage flexibility in how and when our students talk with us, and timeliness in how we and our students take action when it is required.

### 1.2 Principles

- Whenever, wherever and whatever our students communicate with us, it goes to the right place in a timely fashion.
- We and our students consciously choose the most timely and effective way of talking with and responding to each other.
- We aim to be agile in listening to and responding to our students.
- Effective communication leading to positive change is co-created by us and our students working together as equal partners.
- Our communication is a cycle of initiation – response

### 1.3 Outcomes

- Enhanced student engagement and belonging
- Clear, responsive lines of communication and engagement
- Student expectation is effectively met, managed and exceeded

### 1.4 Benefits

- An open, collegiate and collaborative environment founded on mutual trust and respect
- Enhancement of our institutional reputation internally, within the sector and with key external stakeholders
- Improvement of our institutional position in national league tables

## 2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all students who are undertaking a taught or research qualification that is delivered in whole or in part by the University of Salford.

2.2 Our collaborative partners are responsible for adhering to the principles and policy statements of this document but have discretion in how they are best applied in the local context except where the application of this policy may be stipulated under the relevant franchise agreement.

2.3 This policy does not provide an exhaustive list of the methods we and our students use to communicate and engage with each other. The examples given in this policy illustrate how the guiding principles set out in 1.2 might be applied.

## 3.0 Policy Statements

### 3.1 Purposes of talking with each other

3.1.1 Students talk with us for four primary reasons:

- **To co-create:** Our students have many ideas about how they might work with us to improve (for example) their learning experience, the facilities and services of the institution, and how they might create new opportunities helping them to achieve their aspirations. They have the right to expect that these ideas will be considered and receive an appropriate response.

- **To inform:** Our students may need to notify us of information that affects their academic studies or pastoral activities and wider wellbeing. This may cover a wide range of topics and situations, from changes in their personal circumstances, to completing surveys about their modules and programme. Our students need to know that information will reach the right person and that if action is required, it will be taken.
- **To instigate:** There are times when our students need to tell us that action is required. This might include making an appointment with an academic or professional services member of staff to seek help or advice, requesting more of something they particularly like or enjoy about their studies or activities, or asking us to rectify a mistake. Our students need to know who to go to, what will be done and, if applicable, a deadline for action.
- **To enquire:** Our students may need to ask us questions about their educational experience and life at university. In keeping with the fundamental principles of this policy, we aim to resolve the majority of enquiries the first time, in a timely manner and in the most effective way.

3.1.2 We talk with our students for four primary reasons:

- **To inspire:** We want to excite our students about the potential of their experience with us and help them turn opportunity into reality. We want our students to get involved not because they have to, but because they want to. This might include motivating our students to make a difference by becoming a student representative or encouraging them to apply for opportunities to gain real world work experience.
- **To inform:** We need to ensure we steer and guide our students and give them clear information about their programme or modules for example, or to highlight or signpost services, processes and facilities. This may be factual information that the student uses/does not use. The purpose is to inform, guide, steer, advise and recommend action where appropriate.
- **To instigate:** We would like our students to do something such as take specific action. The purpose is to clearly explain what needs to be done, who to go to, how to do it and, if applicable, a deadline for action.
- **To enquire and listen:** Talking with our students about their educational experience in our everyday interactions is crucial in creating clear, responsive lines of communication and engagement. Listening to informal feedback, received through personal tutor meetings for example, supports the co-creation of positive change.

3.1.3 The purposes of talking are not mutually exclusive. The reasons for talking outlined in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 mirror each other as shown in Appendix 1.

## 3.2 Co-responsibilities

3.2.1 In the spirit of co-creation we and our students undertake the following responsibilities:

3.2.2 Students will:

- Engage in structured as well as ad hoc opportunities to tell us about their university experience, and work with us to identify areas where we can make improvements.
- Communicate with us about matters that are affecting their student experience and seek advice about how to do this, if required.
- Tell us when we do something well to help us make further improvements.

- Communicate with us in a timely fashion to capitalise on opportunity and to ensure issues are highlighted early.
- Provide us with all relevant information that may be required to ensure we are able to take effective action.
- Provide us with up-to-date contact information.

### 3.2.3 We will:

- Listen to and co-create with our students as equal partners to understand and improve their university experience.
- Inform our students of the action(s) that we take in response to their ideas, their requests for action and their feedback.
- Respond to our students using the most appropriate method(s) of communication.
- Endeavour to respond to our students in a timely manner and, where a matter cannot be addressed quickly, inform our students when they can expect to receive an update.
- Inform our students as and when it is appropriate or necessary to invoke another procedure in response to what they tell us.
- Provide up-to-date information for our staff and student-facing services.

## 3.3 How we listen and respond to our students

3.3.1 We use a wide range of formal and informal methods and media to listen to our students.

3.3.2 Formal channels of communication include, but are not limited to:

- Undergraduate and postgraduate programme and School level committees focused on articulation of the student voice
- School and University level committees
- Student representation system
- Personal tutoring system
- Programme design, monitoring, enhancement and review procedures
- Focus groups
- Student fora
- Hard copy and online questionnaires/surveys
- Email communication with staff
- Telephone

3.3.3 Informal channels of communication include, but are not limited to:

- Face-to-face conversations with members of staff
- Social media, such as Twitter

3.3.4 External organisations collect students' views about their experience on our behalf. Examples include the National Student Survey, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

### **3.4 How we fulfil our responsibilities**

3.4.1 We fulfil our responsibilities in 3.2.3 in the following ways:

- Through student representatives on formal School and University committees.
- Through the students' union and student representation system.
- Through the personal tutoring system.
- Through the online Student Channel and University website.
- To groups of students in class, or in writing via email or the Blackboard virtual learning environment.
- On an individual or small group basis, where appropriate.
- We may use social media where it is appropriate to do so.

3.4.2 This is not an exhaustive list and we will continue to review and develop the ways in which we communicate with and respond to our students.

### **3.5 Outputs of this policy**

3.5.1 Ongoing development of the ways in which we communicate with and respond to our students.

3.5.2 In partnership with the students' union, delivery of continuous improvement of the student representation system.

3.5.3 Continuous improvement in the operation of formal methods of communication and feedback.

### **4.0 What happens if the policy is not followed?**

4.1 The consequences include a breakdown in communication between us and our students, a disengaged student body and lost opportunities to improve our University.

### **5.0 Related Documentation**

**<http://www.salford.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/governance/policies-and-procedures>**

- Data Protection: Fair processing of student personal information
- Data Protection Policy
- Personal Tutoring
- Programme Design, Approval, Amendment and Withdrawal
- Programme Monitoring and Enhancement Procedure
- Periodic Programme Review and Re-approval
- Scheme of Academic Governance
- Student Behaviour Guide
- Student Charter
- Student Complaints Procedure
- Student Engagement, Participation and Attendance Policy
- Student Representative Handbook

**Appendix 1**

**Model for communication and engagement**

