

Embedding the learner voice

Why listen to learners?

1. Learners have a right to comment on the quality of the education they receive, including the role of technology
2. Learners can be central to the quality improvement process in education
3. Involving learners in the planning and development of e-learning provision can help ensure that investment has the desired benefits
4. Learners have new expectations of the whole of their educational experience, thanks to the pervasive impact of technology in their lives

Discussion points:

- What other reasons are important at this institution?
- What challenges do we face that learners' ideas and insights could help us to solve?

Who do we need to involve?

1. Current learners
2. Previous learners
3. Potential learners
4. Other stakeholders (please identify)

Discussion points:

- What aspects of institutional policy and provision is it appropriate for each of these groups to comment on?
- How can their interest be captured and retained?
- What tools could we use to ensure we are really listening to learners, and making best use of their time?

Any learner involvement should:

1. Have the potential to make a difference to those learners' experiences, e.g. via processes such as curriculum design and planning, ICT provision and support
2. Involve learners in reflective and critical thinking about their learning and the technologies they use
3. Have clear outcomes and identifiable goals
4. Be ethically informed

Discussion points:

- How will learners involved in this process benefit from it?
- Are there any other ethical considerations (e.g. making clear to learners that participation/non-participation will not affect their grades; ensuring anonymity)

Potential benefits to institutions

1. Learners who are listened to feel more motivated and involved in their learning



2. Feedback from learners can help improve the quality of education and of the learning experience
3. Information from learners could help institutions to meet individual needs more effectively
4. Institutions can target their investment and support on technologies that learners feel add value
5. All this can lead to increased retention and achievement

Discussion points:

- What other potential benefits are important at this institution?



Involving learners in practice

Issues that strongly influence the learning experience

How does your institution ensure that learners' experiences are captured and learners' voices are heard in relation to the following processes?

- Course design and validation?
- Course evaluation and review?
- Design of learning spaces?
- Design of virtual learning environments?
- Provision and management of learning resources?
- Provision of ICT support?
- ICT use policies?

The changing experience of learning

How does your institution monitor *changes* in learners' experiences and expectations, and how does it plan to respond to them? For example:

- Levels of personal technology ownership?
- Expectations about ubiquity of network access, on and off campus?
- Expectations about access to staff members online, and about staff members' access to students' online spaces?
- Prior experiences of learning, particularly social and informal learning?
- The range of confidence and competence in using technology in learning
- Confidence with graphics, audio and video as knowledge media, as well as (instead of) text-based representations?
- Use of immersive environments such as gaming, simulations, second life?
- Knowledge cultures of the web?

Ways of involving learners

Does your institution do any of the following?

- Ensure that there are recognised structures and roles for learners to represent the views of their peers, e.g. Student Union Representatives, Student Liaison Officers?
- Have formal links to national bodies representing learners such as the National Learner Panel for further education, National Union of Students, UnionLearn representatives?
- Use available technologies (mobile phones, electronic response systems, audio logs, data tracking) to capture feedback from learners while they are engaged with learning?
- Use a range of methods to support learner reflection and feedback on their courses such as web surveys, email and social networks as well as focus groups (online or face to face) and the National Student Survey (HE)
- Have any learner mentor schemes and peer support processes in place?
- Invite learners to join institutional multi-role teams so that they can become co-creators in their academic experience (curriculum planning, design of technology rich learning environments, provision of ICT learner support)?

