Workshop 3 notes:
Discussing survey findings

Introductory guidance

This is part of a series of six workshop templates introduced in a separate guide: Exploring student engagement with academic staff: user guidance. Please refer to that document for general introductory guidance on organising these discussion workshops, including steps to take before and after the event.

About this workshop

The emphasis of this workshop is on students and staff to come to a shared understanding of the Student Learning Experience, using data that is already available. It is an opportunity for staff to learn about the different perspectives that students might bring to analysing data. Where an institution or its students' association already has relevant data collected by reps or through surveys, these can form the basis of discussions in this workshop.

It consists of two parts: preparatory discussions, and the workshop itself. It will work well at a course or faculty level, with staff and course reps working together.

Part A: preparation in advance

It is important for staff and students to agree the data that will be used in the workshop.

1. Collate the available data

Establish contact and communication with those who can make feedback and/or data available. For example:

- Your institution will undertake some form of unit, module or course evaluation surveys.
- Your course rep may have a summary of student feedback received from course members during the year.
- The students' association may have departmental or institution-wide summaries of student feedback, both quantitative and qualitative. This may include summary reports that have been presented at quality committees and student engagement forums.
- Various bodies may be able to provide data from student surveys. For example, the students' association and quality enhancement team may organise surveys at various times of the year or have access to national surveys. In some cases, data can be filtered for particular departments or programmes.

Make a list of the feedback types that are available and understand how these data can be made available to you. In some cases, those listed above may be able to help in interpreting the findings and producing a presentation for Part B of the workshop.

2. Review these data with students and staff

Invite a representative group of students and staff to review and discuss the data. It can be useful to invite a varied group of students and staff who can bring a range of perspectives to the discussion. This group would usually include your course rep(s).

Study the feedback and/or data together, along with any conclusions or analyses that are already available (for example, in reports and summaries). In this way, identify priority areas for the Part B workshop discussion. This can include areas where things are going well, and areas for further development.

3. Agree a focus for the Part B workshop

The main purpose of Part A is to identify priorities that will be discussed at Part B. These priority topic areas are likely to emerge through reviewing the data together.

One helpful model for categorising feedback is the SLE diagram (Student Learning Experience), which collates the wide-ranging elements of the learning experience of students under seven interconnected headings.

The SLE model is further explained in sparqs' [Suggested questions for course reps COVID-19 edition]

The document begins with a brief introduction to the SLE, and then continues with sections for the seven SLE aspects, each of which includes:

- A description of some of the impacts that COVID-19 is having on the learning experience of students.
- Some suggested questions that can help students to speak about their experience of learning.

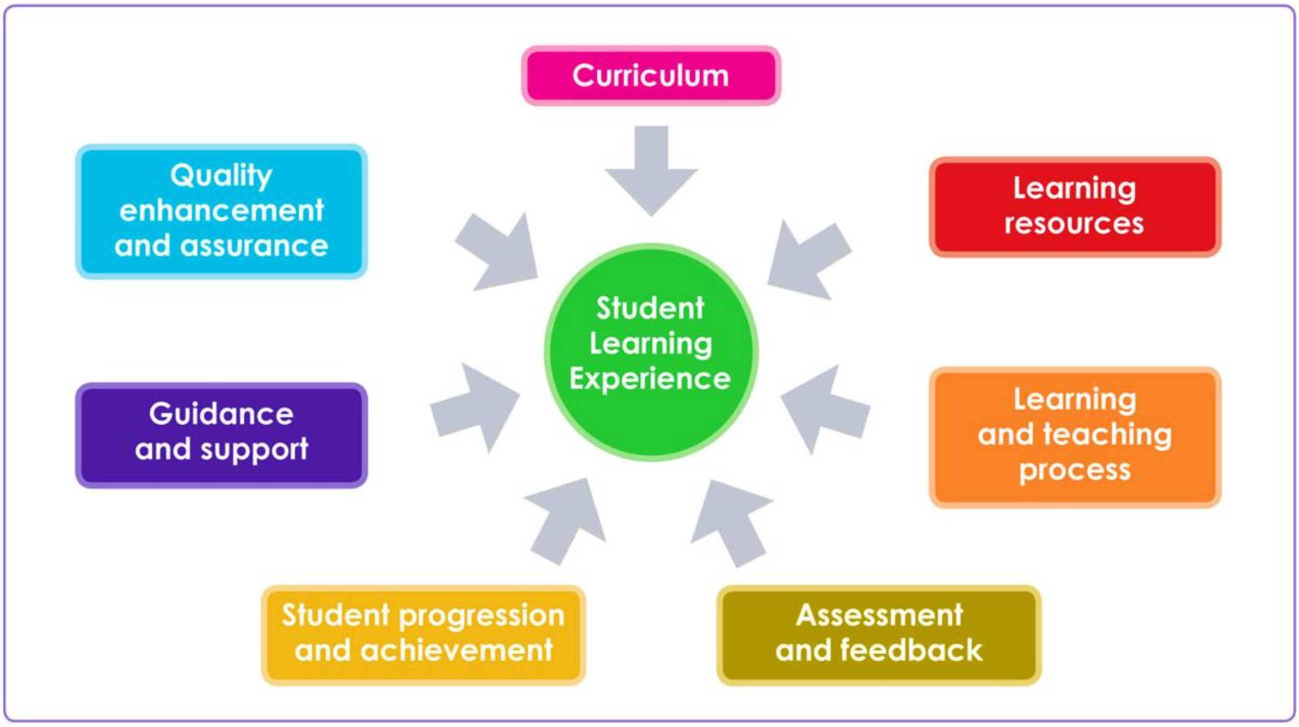


Diagram: The SLE Model (Student Learning Experience).

It is likely that a thorough set of student feedback (such as survey data) will include comments in all seven areas of the SLE – but it is usually helpful to restrict discussions at the Part B workshop to just one or two of these aspects. By studying the feedback and data, including any summaries or charts that are available, the priority areas for discussion will become clear.

For example, students may have raised points about access to Learning Resources, or Guidance and Support, or their Progression into subsequent years of the course. It can be informative to compare the priority areas revealed by the data with the topics that have been discussed most frequently (formally or informally) between departmental colleagues during the pandemic.

As an optional alternative, an online poll tool or app can be used to enable participants to vote for the areas that they consider to be amongst the priorities. This can be an engaging and participatory method – but be prepared to respond to whatever the outcomes might be!

4. Identify participants for the Part B workshop

Another activity for Part A is to identify the groups of students and staff who should be represented at the Part B discussion. The exact list may depend on the discussion topics agreed above. The following list may be helpful:

a) Course reps for relevant classes. And possibly lead reps (such as faculty reps) or someone else from the students' association with a faculty-wide or institution-wide perspective.
b) A cross-section of other students, especially those who are impacted by the topics to be discussed. Are there any sub-categories of students who should be represented, such as part-time students, international or second language students, students who are parents or carers, and students with disabilities?
c) A cross-section of staff from this programme or department, deliberately choosing staff with varied perspectives. It can be informative to include staff who teach on similar programmes but not on this course, for an external perspective.

5. Prepare presentation for the Part B workshop

This stage might take place as a separate activity, and not during the Part A discussions. However, it is still best practice to produce the presentation described here as a partnership activity, with students and staff working together and agreeing both the contents and the way that they are presented.

The discussions at Part B depend on the presentation of feedback and data relevant to the topics under discussion. Staff and students should work together on a presentation that clearly summarises the feedback and data, which will act as stimulus material for the discussion that follows.

The presentation may include any of the following:

a) **Methods used for collection and analysis of data.** How and when were the data collected? For example, this might be data from a survey, or feedback collected by reps. When did this take place, and which courses were invited to participate? Who has analysed the data and produced this summary?

b) **A summary of the Part A outcomes**. Start with a brief description of the discussions that took place in Part A, and who was involved. Which topics were identified as priorities for the Part B discussion? Conversely, which topics therefore fall outside the parameters of the Part B workshop? Reference to the SLE model (see Part A, above) may be helpful here.

c) **What do the data show?** Use the feedback and data related to the chosen topic areas to draw out key themes. This might include quantitative data such as percentages, and qualitative data such as individual student comments. This can include areas in which positive feedback was received, and areas where feedback indicates that further development is required.

Further reading to aid your preparation

- Heffernan, T. (2021). Sexism, racism, prejudice, and bias: a literature review and synthesis of research surrounding student evaluations of courses and teaching. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1888075
- Nair, C. S., Adams, P., & Mertova, P. 2008. Student engagement: The key to improving survey response rates. *Quality in Higher Education*, *14*(3), 225–232. https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320802507505
- sparqs. 2014. Grid for developing tools of feedback from students. https://www.sparqs.ac.uk/resource-item.php?item=206
- sparqs. 2014. An alternative to lengthy questionnaires. https://www.sparqs.ac.uk/resource-item.php?item=207
- Stewart, M. (2015). The language of praise and criticism in a student evaluation survey. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *45*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2015.01.004
- Wiley, C. (2019). Standardised module evaluation surveys in UK higher education: Establishing students' perspectives. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *61*, 55–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2019.02.004

Part B. Discussing survey findings.

The purpose of the Part B workshop is for students and staff to come to a shared understanding of the impact of COVID-19, by taking advantage of the data that was selected in the review described in Part A.

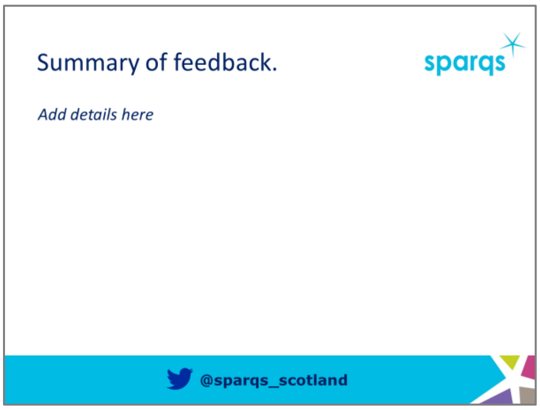
Each section is outlined in the paragraphs that follow.

1. Presentation - Summary of feedback

This activity is a short presentation summarising the data that have been collected.

It is recommended that the key information for this section be summarised on some slides and/or a handout. The slides provided can be customised.

Slide template:
Course learning objectives.



The presentation is described in the guidance for Part A, above.

In summary, it may include some or all of these sections:

a) Methods used for collection and analysis of data.

b) A summary of the Part A outcomes.

c) What do the data show?

2. Activity A - Discussion of survey findings

This is the main discussion activity of the workshop. Structured steps are provided to guide discussion around the chosen priority areas. This activity can take place as a whole group, or in breakout groups, depending on numbers attending.

Where breakout groups are used, they can be given different areas to discuss, or alternatively all the groups can work through the same list of topics.

It is recommended that the discussion points are introduced in turn (not all together). For each point to be considered, two slides are provided with structured steps to guide discussion. It is intended that both slides be used for each topic – this means that the discussion will incorporate the areas that have gone well and the areas for improvement. In some cases, the quantity of discussion generated will vary between the two slides.

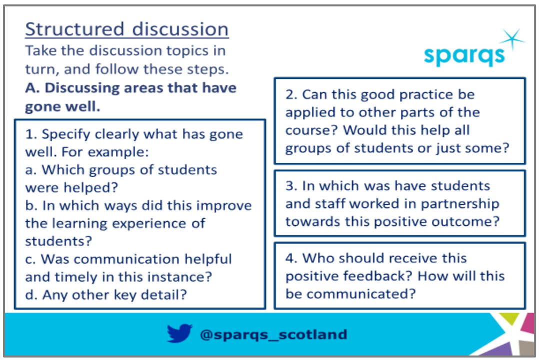
Discussing aspects that have gone well

The first slide is for discussing aspects of the topic that have gone well. The discussion can be guided by working through these structured steps:

1. Specify clearly what has gone well. For example:
   a) Which groups of students were helped?
   b) In which ways did this improve the learning experience of students?
   c) Was communication helpful and timely in this instance?
   d) Any other key detail?
2. Can this good practice be applied to other parts of the course? Would this help all groups of students or just some?
3. In which ways have students and staff worked in partnership towards this positive outcome?
4. Who should receive this positive feedback? How will this be communicated?

A slide is provided for these structured steps. The steps (and slide) can be customised to suit your needs.

Example slide:
Discussing aspects that have gone well.



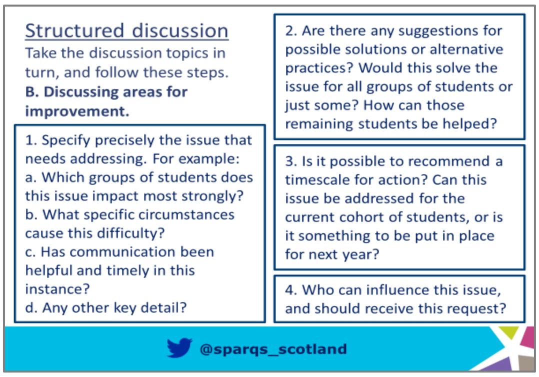
Discussing areas for improvement

The first slide is for discussing aspects of the topic where further improvement is required. The discussion can be guided by working through these structured steps:

1. Are any further details required to specify precisely the issue that needs addressing? For example:
   a) Which groups of students does this issue impact most strongly?
   b) What specific circumstances cause this difficulty?
   c) Has communication been helpful and timely in this instance?
   d) Give any other key detail.
2. In response to the points made in part (a), are there any suggestions for possible solutions or alternative practices? Would this solve the issue for all groups of students or just some? How can those remaining students be helped?
3. Is it possible to recommend a timescale for action? Can this issue be addressed for the current cohort of students, or is it something to be put in place for next year?
4. Who can influence this issue, and who needs to receive this request?

A slide is provided for these structured steps. The steps (and slide) can be customised to suit your needs.

Example slide:
Discussing areas for improvement.



The idea of the activity is to generate discussion and feedback from students. So, introduce each development point in turn, and give adequate time to work through all four steps for each one. Each development need might require several minutes – it might be possible to cover only two or three development needs in a 20-25 minute discussion.

If required, alternative discussion questions can be found in this sparqs resource:
[Suggested questions for course reps COVID-19 edition]

This document contains a range of alternative questions for each aspect of the SLE.
We recommend that the choice of questions is made by students and staff in partnership – for example by the course teacher and course rep working together.

3. Activity B - Feedback on discussions and recommendations

If participants have been working in breakout groups, give a short time for each group to present a summary of their discussions. Depending on the context, you might ask them to describe one or more of the development needs that they addressed, with brief details for each of the four structured discussion steps given above.