



# The Learner Voice

① information for staff



ABERDEEN COLLEGE®

## INTRODUCTION

Aberdeen College is committed to providing all learners with the best possible educational experience. To achieve this aim, the College recognises the value of listening to learners' views and acting promptly to address any issues which arise.

## MEETINGS WITH LEARNERS

Throughout the College, learners are given many formal opportunities to air their opinions and to raise any issues which are important to them, to various levels of College staff. In addition, a large amount of informal interchange of ideas and views occurs between students and staff on an everyday basis.

The formal opportunities afforded to the College's learners include:

- Student Discussion Groups with the Principal and Senior Management Team
- Student Focus Groups with Senior Lecturers (Quality)
- Student Meetings with Sector Managers
- Guidance Sessions
- Course Committee Meetings

These separate meeting forums are described in more detail below:

### *Student Discussion Groups with the Principal and Senior Management Team*

Each year, students within the College are given the opportunity to express their views on the effectiveness of College systems to the Principal and to members of the Senior Management Team, who conduct regular Student Discussion Groups with groups from all across the College.

These open forum meetings allow students to raise, directly with College management, any issues which may be of concern to them. These matters are noted and a deadline set for their resolution. Thereafter the issues are investigated by the relevant member of College staff, under the auspices of senior management, and once resolved, the results are fed back to the students by way of a formal letter containing confirmation of actions taken.



### *Student Focus Groups with Senior Lecturers (Quality)*

Five Senior Lecturers (Quality Improvement) (SLQIs) facilitate focus group sessions with specific classes of students. Each SLQI chooses 3 class groups and meets with these groups on three occasions during the academic year. These meetings are timed throughout the academic year to ensure that participants will have developed views on Early Introduction to College (Weeks 1-5), the Learning Process, and Learner Progress and Achievement. Any actions arising from the meetings are copied to a relevant manager responsible for investigation and closure of the actions.



Once issues have been resolved, they are either fed back to students orally at subsequent meetings, or, if the issue demands an immediate response, the students are e-mailed to inform them of the course of action taken.

Trends are documented and comparison year-on-year is possible through the selection for focus group activity of one class group common to the year before.

### *Student Meetings with Sector Managers*

Sector Managers meet with new groups of learners as part of the induction programme, in order that, from the very beginning, students are aware of the management support that is available to them. In addition, teaching staff and class tutors inform students of the support system in place to manage student issues, from the teaching staff through Curriculum Manager to Sector Manager.

The Sector Manager meets regularly with student groups, to discuss issues pertaining to their experience at College, and specifically pertaining to their course – issues such as staffing, accommodation, equipment and progression are discussed, along with progression opportunities and success.

Sector Managers also meet with students on disciplinary issues, including attendance issues, and a very good referral system is in place to monitor and act on any attendance problems.



## Guidance and Support

Students at Aberdeen College are fully encouraged to share their thoughts and opinions on a wide range of topics within their weekly guidance sessions. These sessions are led by a team of Guidance Tutors who discuss issues relating to citizenship, employability, sustainability and soft skills, giving students an opportunity to express their thoughts and consider the views of others within their class groups. The guidance sessions also cover subject specific sessions but the approach is always learner lead in order for the students to gain confidence and develop educationally in a holistic manner.



Client Satisfaction surveys are readily undertaken with learners to ascertain their views on the quality of education and service they receive. These are undertaken face-to-face through the weekly guidance session, by telephone and by mail.



These surveys give students the opportunity to truly voice their opinion and the feedback from these surveys is of vital importance to the College when developing the future academic provision, guidance and support for the learners. Surveys are undertaken throughout the year from Induction right through to the conclusion of the programmes of study. This in turn gives a balanced representation of opinion throughout the academic year and encourages students to play an active part in contributing to the development of their education.

The guidance and support within the college has been established to ensure that all students are given every opportunity to succeed in their studies.

## **Course Committee Meetings**

Course Committee Meetings are a key driver for quality improvement, held two or three times a year by the teaching team and arranged by the Curriculum Manager. At these meetings, the student voice is heard via the class representatives for each group following the same course. Also in attendance at these meetings are teaching staff from the different subjects taught. The meetings are recorded, and provide the framework for action in relation to the College's self-evaluation process, ensuring that student views are heard, and acted upon as a key process for quality improvement.

## **OTHER FORUMS FOR LEARNER INTERACTION**

In addition to the formal meetings listed, Aberdeen College encourages other forums which allow the learner voice to be heard clearly. Some examples of these are described below.

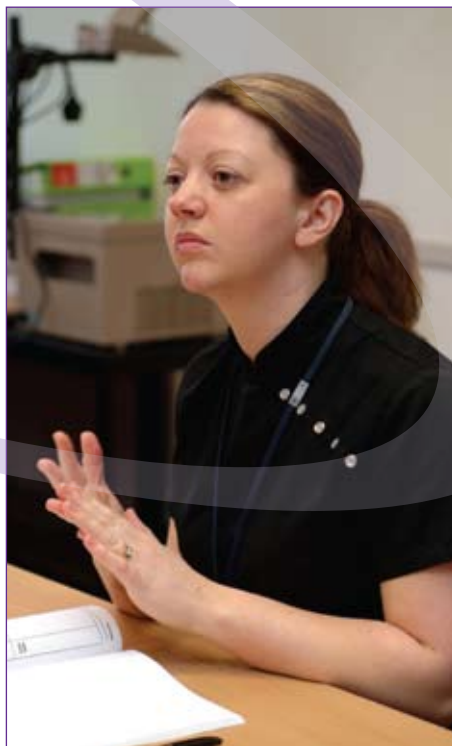
### ***Aberdeen College Student Association and the College Board of Management***

The President of Aberdeen College Students' Association represents the learner voice on the College's Board of Management and also on a number of the committees of the Board. The role of the Board of Management is to give the College its strategic direction and, as a member, the Student Association President plays an active part in that process.

The Student Association President also represents the learner voice on several key cross-College committees, such as the Guidance Committee, the Equal Opportunities Committee and the Health and Safety Committee.

### ***Student Suggestions/Comments***

Students can submit their suggestions/comments through a standard form. This form can be placed in suggestions boxes positioned throughout the College (all sites) or be submitted via the college internet. All suggestions and comments received are addressed and responded to by the College's Head of Quality and Staff Development.



## *Class Representatives*

Every full-time group of students elects a class representative, who is assisted in his/her duties both by the Sector and the Students' Association. Training in duties can be arranged by the Association (SPARQS training), and sector managers arrange to meet with their class representatives on a regular basis, at least three times a year. The issues raised are recorded, and actions taken are confirmed in writing to representatives.

## *Course Evaluation*

Course evaluation forms are utilised both at individual subject level, and at course level, to identify trends in student satisfaction year on year. Any issues arising at course, team and Sector level are considered carefully, and issues inform the planning for quality improvement.

## *Lesson Observation – student feedback*

Student feedback is sought on a routine basis during the lesson observation process, and the records of feedback are sent to the lecturer and to the manager, for information and action. This is an objective and useful way to listen to the student voice.

## *Competitions/Awards*

Participation in student competitions is actively encouraged to raise awareness of successful students. The Sector regularly reviews and reports on student success to senior management. In addition, student success is highlighted through the Intranet, press releases, and within various College publications such as the College Year Book. Of course, student success is celebrated at the Annual Awards Ceremony, where the successful student voice is clearly heard. Annual ceremonies and events, such as the International Day, the Christmas and Easter Church Services and the End of Year Shows all allow learners to participate in College life.



## Visits and Guest Speakers

External visits and guest speakers are used to ensure that the learner voice is heard outwith the College. Trips may include visits to local government, local employers, and to universities for interviews, tours or special events. Guest speakers come to College, and are keen to hear student views, and to inform course development, offering a two-way interchange of information and views, which is key to the learning process.

## Learner Representation in College Policies

Aberdeen College welcomes the views of learners. At Aberdeen College the learner is central to everything we do and therefore policies or schemes which govern relationships between the College and its learners must take into account their voice. Through the College website, learners are invited to comment on new or updated College policies and action plans, eg the Gender Equality Action Plan.

## Student Questionnaires

Students in all College classes are surveyed by questionnaire at various stages throughout the academic year. Key stages include unit and subject end, mid-course and the end of the academic year. Data from these surveys are analysed by Sector staff and used by curriculum teams and departments in self-evaluative activity to compare year-on-year findings and



to encourage improvements to programmes and services. Data gathered from the post-induction and Quality of Learning and Teaching survey are analysed centrally and fed back to Sectors and curriculum teams for use in self-evaluative activity. The Board of Management receives a summary report based on the data gathered, which is also published in the College Annual Review. Surveys will cease to be paper-based from 2007-08. They will be completed online using the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).



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