

Improving student learning through departmental student feedback self-studies

Possible Action Plan (B) for a Participating Department

Desired Outcomes

1. A deeper appreciation of those parts of the programme, or its presentation, which create problems for learners, and at the same time those aspects which they judge well-tailored to their needs.
2. Some knowledge of how students undertake the study required by the programme, which may or may not be in accordance with the learning outcomes and teaching objectives

Action intended

- Publication of results of feedback enquiry, and of proposed actions to be taken
- Selection, possibly in conjunction with student reps, of letters to be passed on to the next cohort
- Changes in teaching and learning strategy, and possibly even in learning outcomes, if these appear likely to bring about improvements either in respect of difficult parts of the programme, or learning responses to planned activity
- Monitoring of effect of changes

Method

1. The lecturer will approach learners individually, and invite them to write a letter of advice to one of the next cohort of students following this part of the programme.
2. The lecturer will suggest that this letter should be written as if to a friend, or relative, with genuine and frank advice. It should mention the highlights and, if there are any, the troughs of the programme experience. It should suggest the best way to tackle the demands of the course and to optimise learning, and marks, in relation to effort. It may usefully contain a paragraph which begins "I wish I had known when I began that"
3. The lecturer indicates that a selection of these letters, unedited and chosen to convey as much as possible of the overall advice from this cohort, will be made available to students in the next cohort. The lecturer will ensure that this is done.
4. In addition, and probably at an earlier date, the lecturer makes available to this cohort the results of the analysis of returns – and the consequent action points

Analysis of Feedback

The analysis will map the descriptive feedback onto the learning outcomes, to the learning and teaching activities which are designed to enable the desired learning and development, and possibly onto the associated and possibly *not* aligned, assessment.

Some parts of the programme in question may well be reported as being difficult because they are indeed difficult. A judgement will be needed here about the possibility of drawing upon the students' reported ways of coping in order to adjust learning and teaching accordingly. Alternatively, indications that desired outcomes are not being achieved, or are being side-stepped, will call for changes in either the outcomes, the assessment, the programmed activities – or all three of these.

Equally the course team will wish to identify those aspects of the programme which are successfully achieving the learning outcomes within the range of activity which has been designed and intended, and without undesirable additional effort. Feedback to endorse programme design will be as valuable as that to enhance it, for similar reasons.