

Ensuring the student voice is heard

Disabled Students' Sector Leadership Group – Student Voice Subgroup

December 2016

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As the sector responds to the demands of the Equality Act and the changes in provision for disabled students, and as they aim to become inclusive learning environments, it is critical that students – particularly disabled students – are able to shape that response. If inclusive practice is in part defined as, “valu[ing] the diversity of the student body as a resource that enhances the learning experience” then it is evident that this resource must be utilised in developing the strategies and interventions that an institution puts in place.

There will be many mechanisms to do so: the students’ union as a representative body; surveys, focus groups and other research tools; or feedback gathered via the disability support office or individual academics, just as examples. However, providers should have a clear plan to ensure they ask students for their input, and to communicate how that input has shaped policy and practice thereafter, as well as prompting further feedback at regular intervals as the changes are embedded. Of course, many higher education providers will already have engaged their students and the students’ union in their early work, and there is undoubtedly good practice to share. We would strongly encourage providers to do so.

In the context of the Disabled Student Sector Leadership Group, the student voice subgroup seeks to support providers in gathering student feedback. We considered conducting a national survey of students, but we were conscious of the time it would take to collect the data and analyse it thoroughly. Perhaps more importantly, we concluded that provision varies too greatly between and within different providers. The barriers to inclusive education in a small campus-based arts college barriers may differ to those in a large, urban university. Institutions specialising in science will have different considerations to those who focus on business and law. Universities spread over multiple campuses will have their own challenges, and so on. A national survey report would not, therefore, provide the necessary granularity to aid institutions in making decisions about the provision that would be of most benefit to their students.

Instead, we believe that providers undertaking this data collection on a local level would be the most effective mechanism to ensure the right information is available to those making changes at each individual institution. This document provides a template survey tool for institutions to use to capture the views of students, if they feel this would be the most helpful way of gathering information. Providers should, of course, feel free to amend, shorten, lengthen or otherwise tailor the survey tool as required, or consider alternative means of gathering data (such as focus groups), as student views can be gathered in many different ways. However, we hope that this will give those working in this area a starting point for this work.

Note that the survey is designed so that all students, including those who do not declare a disability, can respond, in line with the Disabled Student Stakeholder Leadership Group’s views that gathering these views will be helpful in identifying improvements. The results can then be analysed by whether or not the respondent declares a disability.

We would strongly recommend involving your students’ union in this work, but it is critical that the provider takes a strong lead, in part because it will have greater resource and access to greater expertise in research, but also to ensure the findings are acted upon.

We would welcome further feedback on the survey tool and any other ideas for supporting the sector in capturing the student voice on these issues in the coming months and years.

SURVEY INTRODUCTION HEADING

Welcome to our survey. [Institution] is seeking input and ideas from students on the learning environment, what the barriers are to effective learning and how to make it more accessible. The survey is straightforward and will take around 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Please be assured that all your answers are confidential. There are no right or wrong answers, we are just keen to understand your views on student diversity in the learning environment, so please be honest. Your individual answers will only be seen by the project team involved in preparing the report, but they will never be attributed back to you personally.

The survey closes at TBC so click 'next' to get stuck in.

A. BACKGROUND / DEMOGRAPHICS

Subheading: Firstly, we would just like to know a little more about you...

A1. How old are you?

Please pick one

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS		New page. Force	
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
Under 16		1	SCREEN OUT 1
16-18		3	
19-20		4	
21-22		5	
23-24		6	
25-26		7	
27-30		8	
31-35		9	
36-40		10	
41-45		11	
46-50		12	
51-60		13	
61-70		14	
71-80		15	
81+		16	
I would prefer not to say		17	SCREEN OUT 1

A2. Which of the following best describes your current level of study?

Please pick one

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS		New page	
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
Foundation year		1	
1 st year at university/college		2	

2 nd year at university/college	3	
3 rd year at university/college	4	
4 th year at university/college	5	
5 th or more year at university/college	6	
Postgraduate – studying for a Masters, diploma, PGCE etc.	7	
Postgraduate – studying for a PHD	8	
I have already graduated and am no longer a student	9	SCREEN OUT TEXT 2
Other	10	

- A3. **Which of the following best describes your gender identity?**
Please pick one

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS		New page	
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
Man		1	
Woman		2	
In another way (how would you describe your gender identity? [optional])		3	
Prefer not to say		4	

- A4. **Which of the following best describes your residential situation?**
Please pick one

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
Halls of residence owned by the university/college		1	
Halls of residence owned by a private company (e.g. Unite)		2	
Living at home with parents or other family		3	
Living in rented accommodation in the private sector		4	
Living in your own home		5	
Other (<i>please specify</i>)		6	

- A6. **Which of the following statements best describes you?**
Please pick one

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS		New page.	
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
I am a UK citizen studying in the UK		1	

I am an international student from within the EU studying in the UK	2	
I am an international student from outside the EU studying in the UK	3	

A7. **Are you classed as a part-time or full-time student by your institution?**

Please pick one

v			
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
Full-time study		1	
Part-time study		2	
Other (<i>please specify</i>)		3	

A8. **And which of the below most closely matches with your course subject?**

Please pick one

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
Engineering and Technology		1	
Biological sciences		2	
Subjects allied to medicine		3	
Physical sciences		4	
Mathematical sciences		5	
Computer science		6	
Education		7	
Business & administrative studies		8	
Agriculture, building and planning		9	
Law		10	
Creative arts & design		11	
Social studies		12	
Historical & Philosophical studies		13	
Mass communication and documentation		14	
Languages		15	
Medicine & Dentistry		16	
Veterinary Science		17	
Combined		18	
Other		19	

- A9. **Do you consider yourself to have a specific learning disability, other disability, impairment or long-term health condition?**

Please pick one

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS		FORCE	
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
Yes		1	
No		2	
Don't know		3	
Prefer not to say		4	

- A10. **Please describe your disability, impairment or long-term health condition**

Please select all that apply

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	A9=1	Type	MULTI
Response		Code	Route
Physical impairment, such as using a wheelchair to get around and/or mobility difficulties		1	
Blind or partially sighted		2	
Deaf or hard of hearing		3	
Mental health difficulties, such as depression or schizophrenia		4	
Learning difficulty (such as dyslexia, dyspraxia)		5	
Profound and/or multiple learning difficulties		6	
Autistic Spectrum Disorder		7	
An unseen disability or health condition e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma, HIV		8	
A disability not listed above (please describe)		9	
Prefer not to say		10	

- A11. **Are you in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)?**

Please pick one

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS		FORCE	
Routed	A9=1	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
Yes		1	
No		2	
Don't know		3	

A12. **What year did you first apply for DSA?**

Please type the year in numbers in the box below (e.g. 2015)

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	A11=1	Type	TEXT
Response		Code	Route
Verbatim		0	

B. **INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

Subheading: We are now interested to know how inclusive you feel your university/college's learning environment is...

- B1. **Inclusive learning environments can be defined as putting the 'social model' of disability into practice in the context of higher education. Instead of requiring the student to adjust to the learning, it ensures that the way students are educated is accessible, relevant and approachable for all, by changing the curriculum or the means of delivery, or both. It also starts from the position that learning is improved by taking into account the varied experiences of all students. In doing so it aims to ensure students can engage with learning and reach their full potential. [Note: the provider may wish to include information here about the specific strategic approach it has taken in relation to the learning environment so that this places the following questions in further context.]**

Keeping this in mind, to what extent, if at all, would you agree with the following statements?

Please pick one response for each statement

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS				ROTATE		
Routed	ASK ALL			Type	Grid	
Scale	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know / not applicable
My university/college is an inclusive learning environment				1		
The teaching staff at my university/college understand how to make the learning environment inclusive				2		
I know who to ask if there is a barrier to my learning				3		
I am given the right support to participate fully in learning				4		

B2. Thinking about the learning environment at your university/college, are there any aspects which make it difficult for you to learn?

Examples could include (but are not limited to) the physical environment of the classroom or laboratory, the different ways students are taught or are expected to learn, timetables or the timescales of assessments, the availability of different technologies, or the information and guidance all students receive.

Please type your answer in the box below

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	TEXT
Response		Code	Route
Verbatim		0	

B3. What, if anything, does your university/college already do to make the learning environment more inclusive?

This can include any adjustments that make it easier to learn and study for disabled and non-disabled students. Examples of areas where adjustments could be made include (but are not limited to): the physical environment of the classroom or laboratory, the different ways students are taught or are expected to learn, timetables or the timescales of assessments, the availability of different technologies, or the information and guidance all students receive.

Please type your answer in the box below

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	TEXT
Response		Code	Route
Verbatim		0	

B4. What changes to the learning environment would make it easier for you to learn?

Please type your answer in the box below

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	TEXT
Response		Code	Route
Verbatim		0	

B5. Is there anything that other students could do at your university/college which would make the learning environment more inclusive?

Please type your answer in the box below

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	TEXT
Response		Code	Route
Verbatim		0	

- B6. **To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements?**
Please pick one response per statement

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS							
Routed	ASK ALL				Type	Grid	
Scale	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know / not applicable	
I know who to ask if I want to know how my institution makes the learning environment inclusive.					1		
I am aware of what I need to do if I disagree with the decisions my institution has made about the learning environment.					2		
I know how to challenge decisions the institution has made about the learning environment.					3		

C. HOW INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT WORKS

Finally we are going to ask you about your experience of the support that you get from your university/college and Government financial support as a disabled student

- C1. **To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements?**
Please pick one response per statement

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS							
Routed	A9=1				Type	Grid	
Scale	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know / not applicable	
I know who to ask if I need more support from my institution					1		
I am aware of what I need to do if I disagree with the decisions my institution has made about my support					2		
I know how to challenge decisions Student Finance England (or another funding body) has made about my support					3		

- C2. **How satisfied are you with your university/college's process for agreeing the support you need?**
Please pick one

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	A9=1	Type	SINGLE
Response		Code	Route
Very dissatisfied		1	
Dissatisfied		2	
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		3	
Satisfied		4	

Very satisfied	5	
Don't know / not applicable	6	

D. FINAL COMMENTS

D1. Are there any final comments that you would like to make about the inclusivity of the learning environment at your university?

Please type your answer in the box below

SET UP INSTRUCTIONS			
Routed	ASK ALL	Type	TEXT
Response		Code	Route
Verbatim		0	

<End Text>

Thank you for completing our survey, we really appreciate you taking the time.

Your responses are completely confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than for this research. [University] will never use this data outside of this research and you will not be identifiable personally.

To be in with a chance to enter the TBC prize draw, please enter your name and email address into the boxes below so that we can contact you if you win.

Name
Email Address

Please click the 'tick' button to finish!

Screen Out Text 1

<Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey but on this occasion we are looking for feedback from students who are over the age of 16

Please click the 'tick' button to finish.>

Screen Out Text 2

<Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey but on this occasion we are looking for feedback from current students.

Please click the 'tick' button to finish.>

