



Summary of 2015 QMUL Student Surveys

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| Outcome requested: | Council is asked to consider the Summary of 2015 QMUL Student Surveys. |
| Executive Summary: | <p>This paper summarises the results of the 2015 National Student Survey (NSS), Queen Mary Student Survey (QMSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The paper covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview of survey population, context and importance - Links to internal strategies and external league tables - Changes and improvements to surveys in 2015 - Summary of key findings, successes and areas of concern - Methods of sharing results and future considerations <p>Full results tables for each survey have been made available as additional reading.</p> <p>The external review of Council's effectiveness recommended that a report on the outcome of student surveys should be submitted to Council in order to improve members' engagement with issues of academic assurance and the educational character of the institution. A summary of student survey activities will be submitted to Council annually, and Council is being asked to consider this paper for information.</p> |
| QMUL Strategy: strategic aim reference and sub-strategies [e.g., SA1.1] | QMUL Strategic Aims: 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4 |
| Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satisfaction with learning resources on the NSS is an IoPs for the QMUL Strategy. - The Queen Mary Student Survey underpins the Student Experience, Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy, and is used for IoPs for the International and Students' Union Strategy. |
| Strategic Risks: | <p>Each survey provides information to assess progress against strategic aims and risks, notably:</p> <p>QMUL Risk Register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk 2: High quality student experience throughout the student life cycle • Risk 7: Design and delivery of high quality portfolio of programmes <p>SETLA Risk Register:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk 5: Failure to achieve target for student satisfaction with academic programme and university experience |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk 8: Failure to achieve target for staff development necessary to support high-quality teaching • Risk 9: Failure to design and deliver a portfolio of programmes that ensures a high-quality learning experience for students |
| Equality Impact Assessment: | Report only – EIA not undertaken. No equality and diversity impacts or issues have been identified by this paper. The BI survey tool described in the paper allows staff to filter results by ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, clearing status. |
| Subject to prior and onward consideration by: | QMSE |
| Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA: | No |
| Timing: | Annual report to Council – QMSS, PTES and NSS run annually. |
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| Date: | 29 th January 2016 |
| Senior Management/External Sponsor: | Professor Rebecca Lingwood, Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) |

QMUL Student Surveys – 2015 summary

Background

In 2015, several measures were employed to improve the quality of student surveys, the effective use of survey results, and reduce survey fatigue among students at QMUL. A Student Survey Coordinator was appointed and a Student Surveys Policy was implemented, which included a survey approval process for staff wishing to survey students from more than one school, as well as guidance and good practice documents. The policy recognised four surveys as 'core surveys' that are integrated into QMUL strategies and feedback mechanisms: the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience and Postgraduate Research Experience Surveys (PTES and PRES), and the internal Queen Mary Student Survey (QMSS), the latter of which is now in its second year.

Table 1: 2015 survey periods and target populations

| Survey | Population | From | To | Survey period |
|--------|------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| NSS | Final year undergraduates | January | April | 16 weeks |
| PRES | Doctoral research students | March | May | 9 weeks |
| PTES | Taught postgraduate students | March | May | 10 weeks |
| QMSS | Returning undergraduates | September | October | 5 weeks |

Strategies and impact

Student survey results are crucial indicators of progress for many QMUL-wide strategy stocktakes. They are the main means to quantify and measure student experience year-on-year and within the rest of the sector. The QMSS questions were selected to relate to areas identified in QMUL strategies as being of specific importance, in contrast to the national survey questions which ask questions intended for cross-institutional comparisons.

The QMUL Strategy uses satisfaction scores from questions regarding learning resources from the NSS, PTES and PRES as indicators of progress (IoPs). The majority of Student Experience, Teaching and Learning Strategy IoPs are taken from satisfaction and engagement scores from the four surveys; 23 QMSS questions are linked to the SETLA Strategy, as well as several NSS questions and one question each from the PTES and PRES. The Students' Union Strategy and International Strategy also use the QMSS for progress metrics.

The NSS is also important externally as its satisfaction scores are influential metrics in national university league tables and the Key Information Sets/Unistats data. In contrast, the Higher Education Academy does not encourage the use of PTES and PRES as cross-institutional comparators and only provide sector and Russell Group level benchmarks for comparison.

2015 Response rates and changes

One of the most notable successes this year was the increase in QMUL students engaging with surveys, with response rates rising in each core survey compared to 2014.

Table 2: 2015 student survey response rates

| Survey | Responses (no.) | Responses (%) | Difference to 2014 |
|--------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| NSS | 1901 | 68% | +2% |
| PRES | 600 | 56% | +17%* |
| PTES | 1184 | 32% | +9% |
| QMSS | 1605 | 21% | +11% |

*PRES is a biennial survey – preceding survey was in 2013

In an attempt to increase student engagement with the QMSS, several changes were made including:

- An additional question was added as an indicator of progress for the new International Strategy
- The survey period was extended from four weeks to five, and the survey was available through a link on QMPlus for several weeks before the survey launch
- The survey was easier to access and promote with the introduction of a simple, generic URL
- School staff were sent weekly response-rate updates to encourage student participation
- Results were analysed and made available to Schools and Professional Services within weeks.

There were no significant changes made to the questions or required methodology for external surveys this year.

Results

NSS

QMUL experienced increases in all but one of the main categories (Learning Resources) and achieved a higher or equal percentage satisfaction compared to 2014 in 21 of the 23 questions in the survey. The two questions with lower scores regarded Library and IT Resources, which had decreased by 2% and 4% respectively. With the exception of Learning Resources, QMUL increased its percentage of satisfaction in six of the seven question categories compared with 2014. It is worth noting that Learning Resources is the only category utilised within the QMUL Strategy IoPs. Slippage against the sector and Russell Group performance will make the IoP target of reaching the Russell Group median by 2018/19 more difficult to achieve. QMUL is now above the HEI sector average in three categories, equal to two, and below average in two categories (See Annex Table A). Five categories were below sector average in 2014, so this is a great improvement.

Assessment & Feedback continues to receive the lowest satisfaction score (72% in 2015) and whilst this is a trend experienced across the HEI sector, it is encouraging that QMUL recorded a 4% improvement in this category and is now only 1% below the HEI sector average. The three lowest scoring questions in this category regarded satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of feedback. However, all feedback questions had an increase of around 5% compared with 2014, suggesting an upward trajectory in satisfaction.

PTES

Overall, satisfaction scores were similar to 2014 scores, with small improvements across most categories. 25 questions had higher scores than in 2014, and there was only one question, ('My supervisor provides helpful feedback on my progress'), with a decrease in satisfaction of over 5%. There was a lower rate of satisfaction with dissertation supervision across all faculties. Respondents were most satisfied with elements of teaching and learning, which had an average satisfaction score of 79.1% over six questions.

However, QMUL continued to perform lower than sector averages and participating Russell Group HEIs across every category, and scores were in the bottom quartiles for both groups (see Annexe).

PRES

QMUL's PRES 2015 results show little change relative to other institutions from 2013 in a number of key areas. Student satisfaction levels remain very close (within 5%) to the Russell Group (RG) in relation to Supervision (-2%), Research Culture (-2%), Research Skills (-2%), Professional Development (equal), and Timely Submission (equal). Medicine and Dentistry benchmarked top of the Russell Group and London institutions for Researcher Development, Research Culture and Supervisor Involvement in Research Projects.

However, the only area where satisfaction levels have actually risen on 2013 is Professional Development (up from 76% to 78%, equal with the RG average). QMUL now sits somewhat below the RG average in a number of other areas, notably Resources and Support for Teaching. Overall student satisfaction has also declined, and the gap between QMUL and the RG has widened with student satisfaction levels of only 77% (down from 79%) compared to the RG average of 82%.

QMSS

Overall satisfaction and engagement scores were similar to 2014 scores. Satisfaction for QMUL services and resources remains high, with each service receiving overall scores of between 76% and 92%. Conversely to Learning Resource scores on the external surveys, Library Services received the highest satisfaction score. Questions regarding time with academic staff and feedback had some of the lowest scores. Respondents from SMD scored most questions more highly than students from other faculties and were more engaged with the Students' Union, but were less satisfied with campus facilities and environment. For example, satisfaction with the outdoor campus environment had a score of 80% for HSS & S&E students, and 45% for SMD students, suggesting dissatisfaction with Whitechapel facilities (there were no students based at Charterhouse Square in the target population for SMD).

Overall satisfaction

Students are asked to rate their overall satisfaction in each core survey. Responses to this question were particularly positive, and with the exception of research students, there was an increase of 2-2.5% satisfaction for each student population surveyed. This year in the NSS, overall satisfaction increased by 2% to 88%. This is 2% above the HEI sector average, which is a positive position given that the sector average remains unchanged for a third year. These NSS results have placed QMUL joint second amongst London universities and 10th in the

Russell Group. The satisfaction question was the highest scoring non-service related question on the QMSS, with scores between 85% and 97% in all QMUL Schools.

Table 3: Overall Satisfaction questions

| Survey | Satisfaction measure | 2015 Score | Difference to 2014 | Difference to sector |
|-------------|---|------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| NSS | Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course | 88% | +2% | +2% |
| PRES | Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme | 77% | -2.5%* | -4% |
| PTES | Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course | 80% | +2% | -2% |
| QMSS | Would you recommend the university to other students thinking of applying here? | 90% | +2.5% | N/A |

*PRES is a biennial survey – preceding survey was in 2013

In 2015 the HEFCE benchmark score for QMUL increased by 1% to 87% in 2015. QMUL’s overall satisfaction score is 1% above the benchmark

Table 4: Overall Satisfaction (Q22) at QMUL against HEFCE Benchmark 2013-2015

| Year | QMUL | HEFCE Benchmark* | % above/below HEFCE benchmark |
|------|------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2013 | 89% | 86% | 3% |
| 2014 | 86% | 86% | 0% |
| 2015 | 88% | 87% | 1% |

*The HEFCE benchmark takes into account the student population characteristics and provides a comparator figure based on the composition of the student body at each institution.

Future considerations

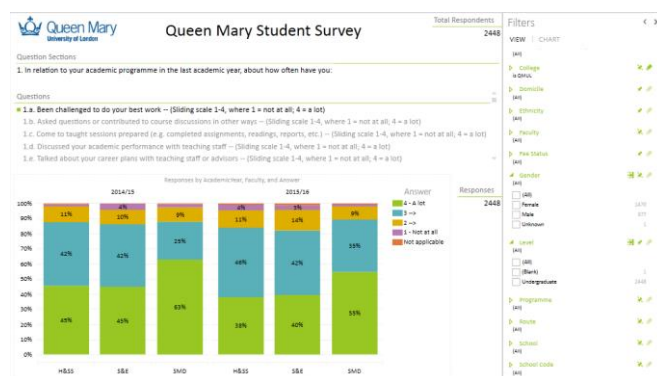
Increasing student engagement with the QMSS

Although the QMSS response rate improved compared to 2014, less than a quarter of eligible students participated in the survey. There are currently several ideas that are being considered to encourage engagement with the QMSS, such as changing the time of year in which the survey takes place or the possibility of winning high value incentives. The first and simplest possibility is that with 72 questions the survey is too long, and many students that begin the survey do not complete it. The Student Survey Coordinator is currently working with Schools, the Interim Chief Operating Officer and the Students’ Union to create a streamlined version of the survey without removing any of the questions that are IoPs for strategies.

Consideration is also being given to extending the survey to QMUL students on the Joint Programme with Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications and to extend the QMSS to first year students by incorporating the arrivals poll that was piloted within the QMSS 2015 survey period.

Business Intelligence (BI) survey tool

The 2014 & 2015 QMSS and 2015 PTES results are available to all QMUL staff within the university's BI tool. Staff are able to select individual questions and cross-tabulate results from these surveys with demographic and academic indicators such as programme, gender and fee status. This is to enable academic and service staff to closely interrogate data for trends, and identify differences in engagement and satisfaction between different student groups.



Sharing survey results

Communicating results to students

In early February, the Internal Engagement team will be launching a student campaign highlighting how survey results have been used in the last year. This will include an updated 'You Said, We Did' poster, digital and social media campaign, and will be timed to encourage participation in the NSS. The Student Surveys Coordinator has been gathering examples for this campaign from Schools, the Students' Union and services. Key messages from the core surveys will be shared with students during this campaign, and headline results from each survey will be online.

Responses and actions from Schools and Professional Services

Results from the QMSS, NSS and PTES were considered and responded to in the following ways:

- Heads of Schools were asked to formulate and provide actions plans, with deadlines, on issues highlighted by the NSS and PTES, and circulate for discussion at two consecutive Faculty Deans of Taught Programmes Advisory Groups (DTPAGs)
- All three surveys were used as key evidence bases for the S&E and SMD Academic Performance Reviews (APRs) in December 2015, and will be used in HSS APRs in March 2016. S&E, in particular, used QMSS results to identify weaknesses that could be addressed in time for the launch of the 2016 NSS.
- Several Professional Services have used satisfaction scores and free-text comments from these surveys as key evidence in business cases for the 2016 Planning and Accountability Review (PAR).

Results from PRES were circulated to Schools in preparation for a Doctoral College away day, in which schools discussed actions plans in response to the results. Results have also been used as evidence for an increased subscription budget for the library for the 2016 PAR round.

Appendices

- 1 - NSS 2015
- 2 - PRES 2015
- 3 - PTES 2015
- 4 - QMSS 2015

Annexe:

Table A : NSS Results by category

| Category | QMUL 2015 | Diff to 2014 | Sector average |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Teaching | 88% | +2% | 87% |
| Assessment & Feedback | 72% | +4% | 73% |
| Academic Support | 82% | +3% | 82% |
| Organisation & Management | 82% | +2% | 79% |
| Learning Resources | 80% | -1% | 87% |
| Personal Development | 83% | +3% | 83% |
| Overall Satisfaction | 88% | +2% | 86% |

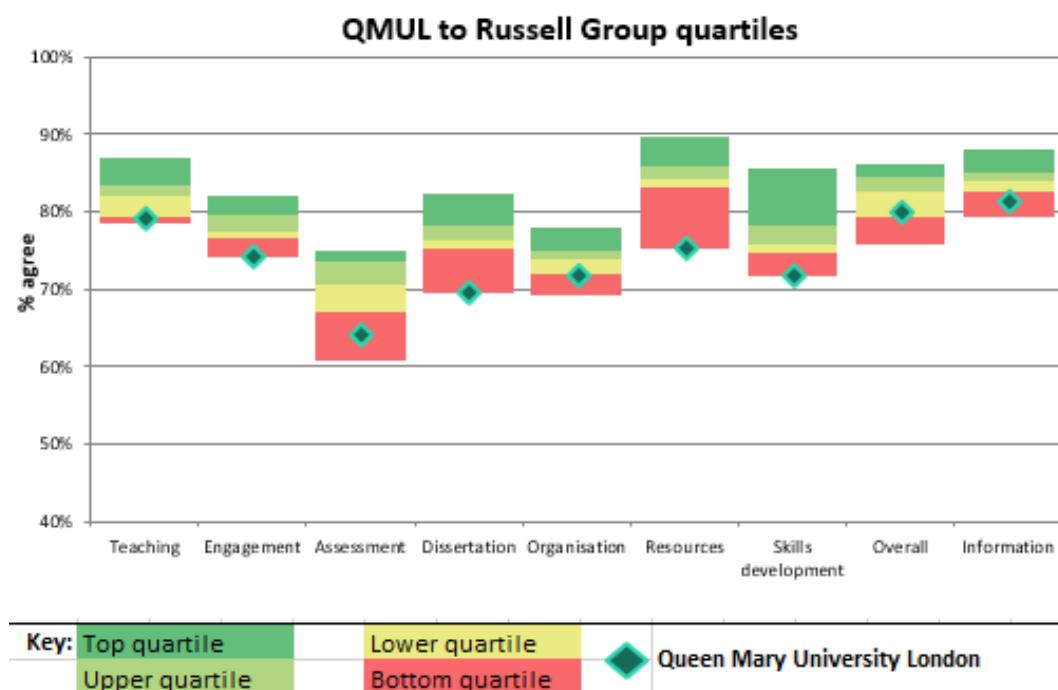
Table B: PRES results by category

| Category | QMUL 2015 | Diff to 2013 | Sector 2015 | Russell Group 2015 |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Supervision | 84% | 0% | 86% | 86% |
| Resources | 71% | -1% | 79% | 82% |
| Research Community | 67% | -2% | 66% | 69% |
| Progress and Assessment | 80% | +2% | 79% | 78% |
| Responsibilities | 75% | -1% | 79% | 78% |
| Research Skills | 84% | 0% | 86% | 86% |
| Professional Development | 79% | +3% | 78% | 78% |
| Teaching Support | 54% | 0% | 60% | 60% |
| Overall Satisfaction | 79% | -1% | 81% | 82% |

Table C: PTES results by category

| Category | QMUL 2015 | Diff to 2014 | Sector average | Russell Group average |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Teaching | 79% | +3% | 82% | 82% |
| Engagement | 74% | +2% | 78% | 77% |
| Assessment | 64% | +2% | 73% | 71% |
| Dissertation | 70% | -4% | 77% | 76% |
| Organisation | 72% | +2% | 73% | 74% |
| Resources | 75% | -1% | 82% | 84% |
| Skills development | 72% | +1% | 77% | 76% |
| Overall satisfaction | 79% | +2% | 83% | 83% |

Graph A & B: Higher Education Academy visualisations of QMUL PTES performance compared with RG and sector quartiles



QMUL to Sector quartiles



| | | | |
|------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Key: | Top quartile | Lower quartile | ◆ Queen Mary University London |
| | Upper quartile | Bottom quartile | |