Overview

It has been agreed that the Personal Tutor (PT) system of the Enhancing Student Support (ESS) project will be evaluated independently during the formal phases of the project and that subsequently, and where appropriate, the QAE approach will be embedded within mainstream University processes.

The purpose of monitoring, evaluation and enhancement of the PT system is to ensure its effective implementation across the University and given the diversity of local contextualised approaches, to understand what models are being most effective in achieving the aims of the new scheme. Key performance indicators and targets have also been included in the University’s 2012-16 strategic plan against which aspects of the new system will be measured.

It is recognised at the outset that the move to a more pro-active form of providing scheduled and personalised tutorial support for both academic and personal advice represents a change for continuing students and staff. Any form of evaluation or measure therefore simply provides a ‘snapshot’ and indication of the progress made towards achieving the culture change envisaged and needs to provide helpful and constructive information to enable Schools to develop and enhance their approach further.

Phase 1 Evaluation - Undergraduate Students

The two elements to the evaluation were as follows:

Personal Tutor and Student Support System Evaluation Survey

Building on the development of the recently introduced internal University survey for pre-final year Undergraduate (UG) students, a supplementary survey was developed to focus specifically on the personal tutor system and the support provided locally within each School. The survey questions were informed by the analysis of the main survey and sought to understand what could be improved upon in providing academic and pastoral support at School level. This was developed in conjunction with the new survey unit and one College representative was on the questionnaire design team.

All 2nd and 3rd year (and 4th years on five year programmes) UG students were invited to take part in the survey between Thursday 5th and Friday 4th September and Friday 4th October 2013: PT system Evaluation - Student Survey.

Semi-Structured Focus Groups

Semi-structured focus groups were then used to further explore the findings of the survey during semester two. Each group was run by members of staff drawn from outwith the host School (comprising of a Senior Tutor and at least one member of a Student Support Team) to provide a level of neutrality and opportunities for staff development and sharing of good practice across the University: PT Evaluation - Student Focus Groups.

The key findings of the Phase 1 Evaluation were then discussed at the Senior Tutor and Student Support Team Networks: PT system Evaluation - Key Findings.

Staff Survey

All staff involved in the delivery of the PT system were invited to offer their viewpoint on the system by completing an online survey during Semester two of the 2013-14 academic session. The key findings of this survey were then discussed at the Senior Tutor and Student Support Team Networks during the final meetings of the session in June 2014: PT system Evaluation - Staff Survey.

Phase 2 Evaluation - Postgraduate Taught Students

The Personal Tutor system for Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students was evaluated during Semester 2 of the 2014-15 academic session.

On-campus students were surveyed between 16 June – 6 July 2015: On-Campus PGT Student Survey - Key Findings

On-line distance learning students were surveyed between 7 – 27 July 2015: On-Line Distance Learning PGT Student Survey - Key Findings

The key findings of the Phase 2 Evaluation were then discussed at the Student Support Implementation Group (SSIG) and a joint meeting of the Senior Tutor and Student Support Team Networks.

Report

A final project report, encompassing all elements of the evaluation process, will now be compiled and submitted to Senate Learning and Teaching Committee before dissemination to Colleges and Schools.