Student Satisfaction Survey: Frequently Asked Questions for Students

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Contents

General Questions about the UL Student Satisfaction Survey

Q1   What is the Student Satisfaction Survey?

The Student Satisfaction Survey is an online survey, based on the UK's National Student Survey (NSS). The survey is being circulated to all students registered on taught programmes across all UL faculties this year. It is designed to provide students with the opportunity to provide commentary and meaningful feedback on both their course and the broader university supports. The specific questions included in the survey are given at the end of this document.

Q2   What is the purpose of the survey?

The survey provides feedback from students outlining what they liked about their time at UL and what they think could be improved. This feedback is aimed at course directors, course boards, heads of departments[1], faculty deans, heads of support divisions and affiliates to assure and enhance the quality of a course and the broader university supports. The questions focus on the course as whole. At an institutional level, the use of a systematic survey helps us meet national and international quality obligations, and aggregate data can serve as a useful starting point for discussions during institutional, faculty and departmental quality reviews.

Q3   What questions are asked in the survey?

This survey gives students the opportunity to reflect on their time at UL and give feedback on their unique student experiences. In addition to their overall satisfaction with UL and their course, students are asked how satisfied they are with each of the following areas:

- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment and Feedback
- Academic Support
- Course Organisation and Management
- Learning Resources
- Personal Development
- Work Placements
- Academic Integrity[2]

"Appendix A – Survey Instrument" lists all of the questions asked in the survey.

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[1] In these FAQs, reference to departments includes schools and reference to heads of department includes heads of school.

[2] These questions are taken from a module of the national studentsurvey.ie (paused for review this year) and have been reused with permission.

Q4   What is the QSU's role in the survey?

The QSU is responsible solely for administering the survey instrument on behalf of the university, as well as generating and distributing the resultant survey reports.

The QSU also publishes institutional level summaries for previous years on its website (https://www.ul.ie/quality/quality-ul/surveys). The QSU has no role in follow-up actions, which are a matter for individual course directors, course boards, heads of department and/or the academic line management system, as appropriate.

Q5   Are such surveys undertaken in other third-level institutions?

Yes. Systematic surveys designed to gather student opinion on courses and teaching are a growing feature of university life, both nationally and internationally.

Q6   Are all students surveyed?

Only currently registered students from taught programmes in the academic year that the survey is running are surveyed. Research postgraduate students are not included in this survey; these are surveyed by UL's Graduate and Professional Studies Unit.

Q7   How do you decide on what students to invite to participate in the survey?

Academic Registry provide the Quality Support Unit with a list of currently registered students in the relevant academic year (taught programmes only). This list is used to generate the list of student invitations to participate in the survey.

Q8   How many student invitations are sent for the survey annually?

In any given semester, approximately 16,500 students ((a combination of undergraduate, postgraduate, degree and non-degree) receive invitations to participate in the survey. The currently registered student list that Academic Registry provide to the Quality Support Unit is used to identify the appropriate students to include.

Q9   Are research postgraduate students surveyed?

No, research postgraduate students are not included in this survey; these are surveyed by UL's Graduate and Professional Studies Unit.

Q10   How will students be invited to participate in the survey?

Students will receive a personalised email from ulsurvey@ul.ie to their UL student email account, asking them to participate in the UL Student Satisfaction Survey. The unique link for each student to complete the survey will be included in this email, along with some information in relation to the survey and a list of FAQs.

Q11 **Will I get a reminder to complete the survey?**

The survey tool is set up to send out an automated reminder email only to those who have not completed the survey by a certain date. A course director may also request to have a "targeted" reminder sent to their class. This may be useful in cases where e.g. students are being invited on campus to meet with external examiners, or in cases where the course director would like to encourage students to complete the survey and would like them to have easy access to a survey invitation.

Q12 **When is the survey launched?**

The survey is launched in the spring semester.

Q13 **When does the survey close?**

The survey usually closes after 4 weeks.

Q14 **I have ideas to improve the survey. Who do I talk to?**

Please send your suggestions to us at quality@ul.ie

Q15 **Will the survey process be reviewed?**

As process owner, instigation of a review will be at the behest of the Office of the Provost & Deputy President.

Analysis

Q16   What cohort of students does the survey refer to?

The survey year refers to all current registered taught students across all years of a programme, e.g. Survey 2024 refers to all current registered students on taught programmes (Year 1 to Final Year) in academic year 2023/4.

Q17   How is the data analysed?

In the first instance, the data is anonymised and no student name is ever linked to the data provided in standard reports. The quantitative data is analysed in Excel using prescribed reporting templates. The Quality Support Unit (QSU) reviews qualitative commentary from surveys as part of the standard survey reporting process. Some commentary may be redacted or anonymised as deemed necessary prior to standard report distribution. The following standard reports are then generated and circulated as listed below:

Report type	Circulation
University level report	Executive Committee / Academic Council
Institutional summary for the web	Public / online
Department reports	HoD and faculty dean
Programme reports	Course director/board and HoD
Support Department reports	Head of unit and line leader

Q18   How is the percentage satisfaction / "aggregate agree score" calculated?

The "aggregate agree score", as used in the NSS, is the sum of the "strongly agree" and "agree" responses, divided by the total number of valid responses for each question. The number of valid responses is the total number of responses less the "n/a" (not applicable) responses. A sample calculation is given below:

Let's say that 100 students respond to a question with the following response distribution:

strongly agree	50
agree	20
Neither agree nor disagree	10
Disagree	10
Strongly disagree	15
n/a	5

The "aggregate agree score" or percentage satisfaction is calculated as:

$$\frac{sssss\ oooo\ \text{strongly agree}\ aaaaaa\ aaaaaaaaaa}{TTooTTaaTT-aa/aa} = \frac{(50+20)}{(100-5)} = 74\%$$

Q19 Why is commentary "cleansed"/redacted?

The Quality Support Unit (QSU) reviews qualitative commentary from surveys as part of the standard survey reporting process. Some commentary may be redacted or anonymised as deemed necessary prior to standard report distribution, in accordance with the process outlined in the *Process for Redacting Qualitative Responses in QSU Surveys* document. The aim of redaction or anonymization of standard reports is to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the survey as a quality assurance and enhancement instrument by preventing the publication of potentially false negative statements in relation to individuals. Profanities are also removed during this process.

Q20 Is commentary "cleansing" / redaction standard practice?

Yes, both the UK's NSS (on which the survey is based) and ISSE (Irish Survey of Student Engagement) have policies of anonymising and cleansing commentary prior to releasing the data to institutions.

Reporting

Q21 What is the minimum response threshold for reporting?

The minimum response threshold is *at least ten responses <u>and</u> at least 20% response rate*. In cases where this minimum response rate is not met, the standard report that is generated for the programme/department is a "comment only" report. This report does not contain any graphs, but contains any comments made by students.

Q22 Are the survey results published?

Yes. An institutional summary report is published online annually on the QSU website (https://www.ul.ie/quality/quality-ul/surveys). See Q17 and Q24 for further information in relation to the circulation of reports.

Q23 What about Data Protection and GDPR?

All data is processed in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy and our Student Privacy Notice. Further information on Data Protection is available at: www.ul.ie/dataprotection.

Q24 Who has access to my responses?

The survey is administered by the university's Quality Support Unit (QSU). Only QSU staff can access the submitted survey results and can, under exceptional circumstances, unmask the identity of an individual respondent. This is done only if the Director of Quality deems it necessary to follow up on a serious issue relating to, for example, student welfare. When the survey is complete, the QSU compiles the responses into a series of standard reports for broader circulation and follow-up action (see Q25 *What happens to the survey results?* below). These standard reports are fully anonymised and no student name is ever linked to the data provided in these reports.

Q25   What happens to the survey results?

Once the survey closes, QSU staff download the results into different standard reports. These standard reports are fully anonymised and student names are not linked to these reports. The following reports are generated:

- An overall aggregate report is provided to UL senior management (including the President, Provost, Vice Presidents and Deans).
- A public report is published on the Student Surveys page of the QSU website.
- Heads of department receive detailed reports relevant to all the programmes run by their department.
- Course directors receive detailed reports relevant to the specific programme they manage.
- Reports are generated for heads of support divisions/units based on commentary made by students.

The survey results are then discussed at university, department and course board level with a view to improving the student experience.

Q26   Who sees the results and are they confidential?

The results for any one programme are made available to (a) the course director (b) the relevant HoD (c) the relevant faculty dean and (d) members of Executive Committee as part of an aggregate report. The course director is expected to share the results with the course board. The results for any one programme are confidential to this group of individuals.

The aggregate department results are made available to (a) the relevant HoD and (b) the relevant faculty dean. These aggregate department results are also included in the report to Executive Committee.

Survey results may be used for reporting purposes at programme, department, faculty or university level. Examples of such reports include the summary institutional-level report (available on the Student Surveys page of the QSU website), the report prepared for Executive Committee and reports that individual departments may wish to include in, for example, their quality review self-assessment report.

Q27   I am an eligible student that has not received an email to participate in the survey. What can I do?

Please contact quality@ul.ie with your student ID number and programme of study, and we will investigate this for you.

Q28   I have completed the survey and I am worried that my responses will be linked to my name. Are my responses anonymous?

The survey is completely confidential. All standard reports are fully anonymised and student names are never linked to these reports. Only QSU staff can access the submitted survey results and can, under exceptional circumstances, unmask the identity of an individual respondent. This is done only if the Director of Quality deems it necessary to follow up on a serious issue

relating to, for example, student welfare. When the survey is complete, the QSU compiles the responses into a series of standard reports for broader circulation and follow-up action (see Q25 *What happens to the survey results?*). These standard reports are fully anonymised and no student name is ever linked to the data provided in these reports.

Q29 I don't want to take the survey, what can I do? Can I opt-out?

The survey is one of the university's key quality assurance mechanisms and is a very important tool for improving the services we offer. Participation in the survey is voluntary and you can choose not to complete this survey. Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) the university must have a lawful basis for processing personal data. The lawful basis used to process data for the survey is the provision of a contract. An opt-out option is not permitted for operations and core services in the provision of a contract. Please refer to section 3.1.1 of the University of Limerick [Student Privacy Notice](https://www.ul.ie/dataprotection) (Under 3.1.1). This Notice may also be viewed at www.ul.ie/dataprotection

Q30 Where can I find out more about what personal data the university holds on me?

All data is processed in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy. Further information on this policy, the student privacy policy and GDPR are available at www.ul.ie/dataprotection

Queries regarding data protection may be directed to the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie.

The UL Records Management policy is available at www.ul.ie/recordsmanagement

Appendix A – Survey instrument

Q1. What is the name of the course you are about to complete?

Q2. Which of the following best describes your entry route to this course?
(You may choose more than one option if applicable)
 q2.1 = Student who entered through CAO
 q2.2 = Mature student
 q2.3 = Transferee from another UL programme
 q2.4 = Transferee from another 3rd level institution
 q2.5 = Overseas student studying abroad
 q2.6 = Other

Q3. Course Delivery
 q3.1 Learning materials made available on my course have enhanced my learning.
 q3.2 The range and balance of approaches to teaching helped me to learn.
 q3.3 The delivery of my course has been stimulating.
 q3.4 My learning has benefited from the modules that are informed by current research.
 q3.5 Practical activities on my course have helped me to learn.
1 = Definitely agree
2 = Mostly agree
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Mostly disagree
5 = Definitely disagree
6 = N/A

Q4. Course Workload
 q4.1 The workload on my course is manageable.
 q4.2 This course does not apply unnecessary pressure on me as a student.
 q4.3 The volume of work on my course means that I can always complete it to my satisfaction.
 q4.4 I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn.
1 = Definitely agree
2 = Mostly agree
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Mostly disagree
5 = Definitely disagree
6 = N/A

Q5. Course Content and Structure

q5.1 All of the compulsory modules are relevant to my course.

q5.2 There is an appropriate range of options to choose from on my course.

q5.3 The modules of my course form a coherent integrated whole.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q6. Academic Support

q6.1 I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies.

q6.2 I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.

q6.3 Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q7. Course Organisation and Management

q7.1 The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned.

q7.2 Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively.

q7.3 The course is well organised and is running smoothly.

q7.4 Communication between Course Director and students has been efficient and effective.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q8. Course Teaching Standard

 q8.1 Staff are good at explaining things.

 q8.2 Staff have made the subject interesting.

 q8.3 Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.

 q8.4 The course is intellectually stimulating.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q9. Personal Development

 q9.1 The course has helped me present myself with confidence.

 q9.2 My communication skills have improved.

 q9.3 As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q10. Intellectual Motivation

 q10.1 I found the course motivating.

 q10.2 The course has stimulated my interest in the field of study.

q10.3 The course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q11. Are there any improvements UL should be making in relation to teaching and course management?

Q12. Student Assessment

q12.1 Teaching staff test what I have understood rather than what I have memorised.

q12.2 Assessment methods employed on my course require an in-depth understanding of the course content.

q12.3 Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.

q12.4 The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.

q12.5 The marking scheme for each module was published at the start of the semester.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q13. Feedback to Students

q13.1 Feedback on my work has been prompt.

q13.2 I have received detailed comments on my work.

q13.3 Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q14. Feedback from Students

q14.1 I had adequate opportunities to provide feedback on all elements of my course.

q14.2 My feedback on the course has been listened to and valued.

q14.3 It is clear to me how students' comments on the course have been acted upon.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q15. Are there any improvements UL should be making in relation to assessment and feedback?

Q16. Learning resources

 q16.1 The library resources and services are good enough for my needs.

 q16.2 I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to.

 q16.3 I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities or rooms when I needed to.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q17. Welfare Resources and Facilities

 q17.1 There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.

 q17.2 When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q18. Work Placements (Coop, Clinical Placement, TP etc)

 q18.1 I received sufficient support and advice from my institution about the organisation of my placements.

 q18.2 My placements were valuable in helping my learning.

 q18.3 My placements helped me to develop my skills in relation to my course.

 q18.4 My placements helped me to develop my general life skills.

 q18.5 My placements were a worthwhile use of my time.

 q18.6 The taught part of my course was good preparation for my placements.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q19. Careers

 q19.1 As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects.

 q19.2 Good advice is available for making career choices.

 q19.3 Good advice is available on further study opportunities.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q20. Are there any improvements UL should be making in relation to resources, placements and careers?

Q21. Social Opportunities

 q21.1 I have had plenty of opportunities to interact socially with other students.

 q21.2 I am satisfied with the range of clubs and societies on offer.

 q21.3 I am satisfied with the range of entertainment and social events on offer.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q22. The Physical Environment

 q22.1 Security has been satisfactory when attending classes.

 q22.2 My institution provides an appropriate environment in which to learn.

 q22.3 My institution provides an appropriate environment for personal development.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q23. Learning Community

 q23.1 I feel part of a group of students committed to learning.

 q23.2 I have been able to explore academic interests with other students.

 q23.3 I have learned to explore ideas confidently.

 q23.4 Within my course, I feel my suggestions and ideas are valued.

 q23.5 I feel part of an academic community in this university.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q24. Are there any improvements UL should be making in relation to the university environment?

Q25. Overall satisfaction

 q25.1 I am satisfied with the quality of the course.

 q25.2 I am satisfied with the campus facilities.

 q25.3 I am satisfied that I chose to study at UL.

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Mostly agree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Mostly disagree

5 = Definitely disagree

6 = N/A

Q26. Looking back on the UL experience, are there any particularly positive aspects you would like to highlight?

Q27. Looking back on the UL experience, are there any particularly negative aspects you would like to highlight?

Q28. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about your time at UL?

Academic Integrity[3]

Q29. During the current academic year, about how much support and training has your institution offered you in:

q29.1 Upholding academic integrity and the importance of avoiding academic misconduct.

q29.2 Avoiding plagiarism by referencing correctly.

q29.3 Understanding the risks (e.g., blackmail, extortion) of engaging with individuals or companies offering cheating services.

q29.4 Accessing useful resources and/ or assistance from professional staff to help you to behave ethically.

1 = Very little

2 = Some

3 = Quite a bit

4 = Very much

Q30. Based on your experience during the academic year to date, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

q30.1 I see other students engaging in academic misconduct and getting away with it.

q30.2 I will not be penalised for minor breaches of academic integrity, such as copying a short text or omitting a reference, in my institution.

q30.3 I do not see a problem sharing my completed assignments with others.

q30.4 At times, I have felt pressure to help other students cheat in their assessed assignments or exams.

q30.5 I have been targeted (including being exposed to advertising) by an online cheating service.

q30.6 If I am struggling to get assessed coursework completed, I know where and how I can avail of the support services in my institution.

q30.7 I can discuss any problems I am having related to academic integrity with my lecturers or other staff.

q30.8 My assignments and how they are assessed are designed to reduce the possibility of cheating.

q30.9 My grades are a fair reflection of the work I put in and my level of understanding of the course material.

q30.10 I am confident that I would know if I was acting unethically in my studies.

q30.11 I understand the limits of providing help to others while behaving with academic integrity.

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly agree

Q31 In your view, what more could institutions do to help students avoid engaging in academic misconduct?

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[3] Topical Module on Academic Integrity, Annual HEA Studentsurvey.ie. Definitions from QQI NAIN & University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Revision History

Rev. no.	Date	Approved by	Details of changes
1	22 June 2018	Director of Quality	Initial release document
2	25 Feb 2019	Quality Research Officer	Updated with relevant FAQs for software change and GDPR
3	29 Feb 2024	Director of Quality	Update & Revision