



Student Satisfaction Survey: Frequently Asked Questions for Students

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Student Satisfaction Survey Frequently Asked Questions for Students

Contents

Contents

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| General Questions about the UL Student Satisfaction Survey | 3 |
| Q1 What is the Student Satisfaction Survey? | 3 |
| Q2 What is the purpose of the survey? | 3 |
| Q3 Why should I complete this survey? | 3 |
| Q4 How can I provide useful feedback? | 3 |
| Q5 What questions are asked in the survey? | 4 |
| Q6 What is the QSU's role in the survey? | 4 |
| Q7 Are such surveys undertaken in other third-level institutions? | 4 |
| Q8 Are all students surveyed? | 4 |
| Q9 How will students be invited to participate in the survey? | 4 |
| Q10 How many student invitations are sent for the survey annually? | 5 |
| Q11 Will I get a reminder to complete the survey? | 5 |
| Q10 When is the survey launched? | 5 |
| Q11 When does the survey close? | 5 |
| Q12 I have ideas to improve the survey. Who do I talk to? | 5 |
| Q13 Will the survey process be reviewed? | 5 |
| Analysis | 5 |
| Q14 What cohort of students does the survey refer to? | 5 |
| Q15 How is the data analysed? | 5 |
| Q16 How is the percentage satisfaction / "aggregate agree score" calculated? | 6 |
| Q17 Why is commentary "cleansed"/redacted? | 6 |
| Q18 Is commentary "cleansing" / redaction standard practice? | 7 |
| Reporting | 7 |
| Q19 What is the minimum response threshold for reporting? | 7 |
| Q20 Are the survey results published? | 7 |
| Q21 What about Data Protection and GDPR? | 7 |
| Q22 Who has access to my responses? | 7 |
| Q23 What happens to the survey results? | 7 |
| Q24 Who sees the results and are they confidential? | 8 |
| Q25 I am an eligible student that has not received an email to participate in the survey. What can I do? | 8 |
| Q26 I have completed the survey and I am worried that my responses will be linked to my name. Are my responses anonymous? | 8 |
| Q27 I don't want to take the survey, what can I do? Can I opt-out? | 8 |
| Q28 Where can I find out more about what personal data the university holds on me? | 9 |
| Appendix A – Student Satisfaction Survey | 10 |
| Revision History | 17 |

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/programme 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 departments¹, faculty deans, heads of support divisions and affiliates to assure and enhance the quality of a course/programme and the broader university supports. The questions focus on the course/programme as whole. Systematic surveys also help the university meet national and international quality obligations, and provide data for institutional, faculty and departmental quality reviews.

Q3 Why should I complete this survey?

The survey provides you with a confidential mechanism by which you can express your level of satisfaction with your programme, broader university supports and what you think could be improved upon. The higher the response rate, the more reliable the results and the greater the impact of the student message.

Q4 How can I provide useful feedback?

Your honest feedback plays a crucial role in helping us improve and enhance your learning experience. Comments that are respectful, constructive, and fair will have the most impact – please don't be mean.

- **Be descriptive.** “The business Co-op seminar was very general; more specific material related to accountancy would be appreciated.”
- **Explain what you liked.** “I really benefited from the access to my advisor because they helped me breakdown the project.”
- **Be respectful.** Honesty is important, but there's no need to be mean. Speak your mind politely about the university's strengths and weaknesses.
- **Be appropriate.** Focus on your opinions about your programme and university supports and not unrelated matters.

¹ Reference to departments includes schools and reference to heads of department includes heads of school.

- **Offer suggestions**, for example “Could you please offer more information on that topic earlier in the programme, Y2 rather than Y4?”
- **Acknowledge**. If you enjoyed something, please let us know.

Q5 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/programme, students are asked how satisfied they are with each of the following areas:

- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment and Feedback
- Academic Support
- Course/Programme Organisation and Management
- Learning Resources
- Personal Development
- Work Placements

“[Appendix A – Student Satisfaction Survey](#)” lists all of the questions asked in the survey.

Q6 What is the QSU’s role in the survey?

The QSU is responsible solely for administering the survey on behalf of the university, as well as managing the results data. The QSU also publishes institutional level summaries for [previous years on its website](#).

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.

Q7 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.

Q8 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.

Q9 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.

Q10 How many student invitations are sent for the survey annually?

In any given year, approximately 18,000 students (a combination of undergraduate, postgraduate, degree and non-degree) receive invitations to participate in the survey.

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 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.

Q10 When is the survey launched?

The survey is launched in the spring semester.

Q11 When does the survey close?

The survey usually closes after 4 weeks.

Q12 I have ideas to improve the survey. Who do I talk to?

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

Q13 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

Q14 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 2025 refers to all current registered students on taught programmes (Year 1 to Final Year) in academic year 2024/5.

Q15 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 using Excel/PowerBI as part of the standard survey reporting process. Some qualitative commentary may be redacted or anonymised as deemed necessary, prior to PowerBI dashboard publishing. The following roles are then given appropriate dashboard access as listed below:

| Report type | Circulation |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| University level data | Executive Committee / Academic Council |
| Institutional summary for the web | Public / online |
| Department data | Relevant HoD ² and Faculty Dean |
| Course/Programme data | Relevant Course Director/Board and HoD |
| Professional Service Unit data | Head of Unit and Line Leader |

Q16 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:

$$\frac{\text{strongly agree} + \text{agree}}{\text{Total} - \text{n/a}} = \frac{(50+20)}{(100-5)} = 74\%$$

Q17 Why is commentary “cleansed”/redacted?

As mentioned in Q15, the 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 dashboard publication, in accordance with the process outlined in the *Process for Redacting Qualitative Responses in QSU Surveys* document. The aim of redaction or anonymization 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.

² Head of Department

Q18 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

Q19 What is the minimum response threshold for reporting?

The minimum response threshold is *at least ten responses and at least 20% response rate*.

Q20 Are the survey results published?

Yes. An institutional summary report is [published online annually on the QSU website](#). See Q15 and Q24 for further information on the circulation of reports.

Q21 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 at UL](#).

Q22 Who has access to my responses?

Only designated system administrators can access the survey data. Under exceptional circumstances, the identity of an individual respondent may be unmasked. 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.

Q23 What happens to the survey results?

Once the survey closes, QSU staff clean and analyse the data for reporting. This data is fully anonymised and student names are not linked in this reporting.

The following role have access to the survey dashboard as follows:

- Overall aggregate data is provided to UL senior management (including the President, Provost, Vice Presidents and Deans).
- A public report is published on the [Student Surveys](#) area of the QSU website.
- Heads of Department receive detailed data relevant to all the programmes run by their department.
- Course directors receive detailed data relevant to the specific programme they manage.
- Reports are generated for heads of professional service 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.

Q24 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 Head of Department (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 Head of Department 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 course/programme, department, faculty or university level. Examples of such reports include the summary institutional-level report (available on the [Student Surveys](#) area of the QSU website), the report prepared for Executive Committee and reports that individual faculties may wish to share with external stakeholders such as accreditation bodies, quality review/accreditation panels or similar. *Student details are not linked to these aggregate reports and individual students cannot be identified.*

Q25 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.

Q26 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 reporting is fully anonymised and student names are never linked to these reports. Only designated system administrators can access the submitted survey results (see Q22 *Who has access to my responses?*)

When the survey is complete, QSU staff clean and analyse the data for broader circulation and follow-up action (see Q23 *What happens to the survey results?*). These reports are fully anonymised and no student name is ever linked to the data provided in these reports.

Q27 I don't want to take the survey, what can I do? Can I opt-out?

Participation in the survey is voluntary and you can choose not to complete it. The survey is one of the university's key quality assurance mechanisms and is a very important tool for improving the services we offer.

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. Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) the university must have a lawful basis for processing personal data. Please refer to section 3.1.1 of the University of Limerick [Student Privacy Notice](#) (Under 3.1.1).

Q28 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 on the UL website.

Queries regarding data protection may be directed to the [University's Data Protection Officer](#). The [UL Records Management Policy](#) is available on the UL website.

Appendix A – Student Satisfaction Survey

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?

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 for 2024 |
| 4 | 28 Mar 2025 | Director of Quality | Update & Revision for 2025 |