Methods of obtaining student feedback

Every undergraduate module evaluation, no matter what method is used, is required to ask students about their overall satisfaction of the module. Responses should include very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied options.

Online Methods

The two online survey tools supported by College are Blackboard and SurveyMonkey. Both have advantages and limitations, depending on the user’s requirements and experience. Blackboard is the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) tool used in College and SurveyMonkey is used by the Centralised Student Survey Facility, Quality Office.

Blackboard Learn is available to all Schools and supported by College. Training and support is available from CAPSL http://www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/staff/e-learning/. This may be a good option for those who are familiar with using this software. Training courses in using SurveyMonkey is available by IS Services. Refer to http://isservices.tcd.ie/training/ for schedule of training courses.

SurveyMonkey is a commonly used survey tool and is credited with its ease of use, user-friendly interface and simplicity in producing feedback reports. It is free when limited to 10 questions and 100 responses. Otherwise there is an annual charge of €225 for unlimited questions and responses. Confidentiality is ensured by the use of enhanced security SSL encryption.

Both softwares have capabilities of saving templates, making announcements and sending emails.

Paper Questionnaires

Paper questionnaires are reported to have a higher response rate than online surveys. Considerations such as the time required in administering paper-based questionnaires, costs of additional equipment such as OMR/scanner(s) and possible issues of anonymity in smaller classes.

Paper versus Online Methods

While response rates may be lower using online questionnaires, there are many advantages using online surveys rather than the traditional method. Online surveys (eg. using blackboard or surveymonkey tools) allow students to complete questionnaires in their own time rather than impacting on teaching time. Less administrative time and costs are spent on developing and producing feedback reports. There is also evidence of students providing more detailed feedback when online.