

As a course representative, one of your key responsibilities is to collect and analyse student feedback. Whether qualitative (opinions and comments) or quantitative (numerical data), understanding how to process and interpret this information is essential for effectively representing your peers and facilitating improvements. This guide will provide a step-by-step approach to analysing both types of feedback.

Why Feedback Analysis Matters

Student feedback is a powerful tool for identifying strengths and weaknesses in academic delivery and student experience. Analysing this feedback helps you:

- Highlight recurring issues.
 - Present evidence-based concerns to staff.
 - Develop practical recommendations for improvement.
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Analysing Quantitative Feedback

Quantitative feedback usually comes in the form of numerical scores or ratings collected through surveys or polls.

Steps to Analyse Quantitative Feedback:

1. Review the Data

- Look at the overall scores or averages.
- Identify trends, such as consistently high or low scores.
- Compare results across different groups (e.g., modules, lecturers, or years).

Example:

If the majority of students rate the clarity of lectures at 3 out of 5, this indicates a moderate issue worth investigating further.

2. Identify Outliers

- Look for any scores that are unusually high or low compared to the average.

- Consider why these outliers exist—was there a specific event or issue that might have caused them?

3. Group and Categorise

- Organise the data into themes, such as teaching quality, course content, or resources. This helps you focus on areas needing improvement.

4. Calculate Percentages or Trends

- Calculate the percentage of students who rated a particular item positively or negatively.
- Look for changes over time if you have multiple sets of data.

Example:

“70% of students rated access to lecture materials as ‘good’ or ‘excellent,’ but 30% rated it as ‘fair’ or ‘poor,’ suggesting room for improvement in resource accessibility.”

Presenting Quantitative Feedback:

- Use graphs or charts to visualise trends (e.g., bar charts for scores or pie charts for percentages).
- Focus on the key statistics that support your points.

Analysing Qualitative Feedback

Qualitative feedback includes open-ended comments, suggestions, or opinions. While this type of feedback is rich in detail, it requires careful interpretation.

Steps to Analyse Qualitative Feedback:

1. Read Through All Comments

- Read the feedback thoroughly to understand the range of opinions.
- Avoid making judgments on individual comments—focus on overall themes.

2. Identify Recurring Themes

- Look for patterns in the feedback. For example, do many students mention the same issues, such as unclear instructions or lack of support?

3. Categorise Comments

- Group feedback into categories, such as:
 - Positive feedback (e.g., “The lecturer was very engaging.”)

- Constructive criticism (e.g., “The assignment deadlines were too close together.”)
- Suggestions (e.g., “Could we have more practice sessions before exams?”)

4. Highlight Actionable Insights

- Focus on feedback that suggests specific actions or changes. Comments like “I didn’t enjoy the lectures” are less useful than “The lectures need more examples to explain key concepts.”

5. Acknowledge Minority Opinions

- While recurring themes are a priority, ensure that minority opinions are not ignored. A unique suggestion might offer valuable insight.

Presenting Qualitative Feedback:

- Summarise the main themes in bullet points or short paragraphs.
- Use direct quotes sparingly to illustrate key points, ensuring anonymity.

Example:

“Many students appreciated the interactive seminars, with one noting, ‘The group discussions really helped me understand the topic.’ However, several students found the lecture pace too fast, suggesting ‘a brief recap at the start of each session.’”

Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Feedback

To present a comprehensive analysis, integrate both types of feedback:

- Use quantitative data to highlight trends or general perceptions.
- Support these trends with qualitative comments to provide depth and context.

Example:

“While 85% of students rated the course structure as ‘good’ or ‘excellent,’ several commented that the weekly readings were too extensive. One student remarked, ‘The readings are valuable, but there’s not enough time to complete them all before seminars.’”

Tips for Effective Feedback Analysis

- **Stay Objective:** Avoid letting personal opinions influence your interpretation of the feedback.

- **Maintain Anonymity:** Ensure student comments remain confidential to foster trust.
 - **Prioritise Issues:** Focus on the most common or significant concerns.
 - **Look for Solutions:** When presenting feedback, suggest practical steps for improvement.
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Presenting Feedback to Staff

When presenting your analysis to staff:

1. Start with a summary of the key findings.
2. Highlight the most significant issues, supported by data and examples.
3. Offer constructive recommendations based on the feedback.

Example Presentation Structure:

1. *Introduction:* Brief overview of the feedback process and response rate.
2. *Strengths:* Highlight what is working well.
3. *Areas for Improvement:* Use evidence to support concerns.
4. *Suggestions:* Present actionable recommendations.