

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT – QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that every student is represented in the College's decision making processes and that students are actively involved in shaping and improving the student experience at the RVC.
- 1.2 This policy supports the delivery of the College's commitment to student engagement and satisfaction as set out in its Strategic Plan and Quality Strategy:

'All students'...have a right to express their views about their learning experience, for those views to be listened to and for the College to respond where appropriate'.

[Strategy for Enhancement and Assurance of the Quality of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, 2013-21]

'At the heart of RVC life are our people; without them we are nothing and it is for this reason that this plan commits us as an organization to the wellbeing and satisfaction of both students and staff'.

[RVC Strategic Plan 2014-21]

- 1.3 This policy summarises the key elements of the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) procedures and arrangements which exist to support student engagement activities within the College. The individual QAE procedural chapters should be consulted for details of specific processes.

2. INTRODUCTION

DEFINITION

- 2.1 The RVC adopts the Quality Assurance Agency's definition of student engagement as:

'...the participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, which includes but is not restricted to representation of the student view through formal representation mechanisms...resulting in the improvement of their educational experience'.

[The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Quality Assurance Agency]

- 2.2 The College aims to involve all students in shaping and improving their experiences at the RVC. The College and Students' Union (SU) work in partnership to ensure that opportunities exist for students, both individually and collectively, to play a central role in quality assurance and enhancement activities.
- 2.3 The College has in place comprehensive procedures which set out opportunities for student engagement in the range of quality assurance and enhancement activities it undertakes. These activities include the validation of new programmes of study, programme monitoring, Periodic Reviews and External Examining.
- 2.4 All quality assurance and enhancement procedures relating to taught courses are defined and monitored by the Teaching Quality Committee whose membership includes two student representatives. Procedures relating to Postgraduate Research Degrees are overseen by the Research Degrees Committee.

PROMOTION

- 2.5 Opportunities for students to be involved in quality assurance and enhancement activities are promoted in partnership by the College and Students' Union. Information is disseminated through a range of methods including the student representatives system, Students' Union website, the Colleges virtual learning environment 'Learn' and campus TV screens.
- 2.6 The Vice Principal (Students) has a specific remit to develop and promote student engagement across the college.
- 2.7 The College and SU have identified the importance of fostering a culture of student engagement from the very start of students' time at the RVC. During 2014-15 briefing sessions were conducted by the College and SU at the start of the Autumn term to introduce all new undergraduates to what student engagement at the RVC encompasses and to encourage them to become involved. The impact of these briefings on student engagement, including the number of student rep nominations and responses to student surveys, will be reviewed.
- 2.8 Staff newly appointed as Curriculum Managers receive training by the Academic Quality Team which includes an introduction to the AQAE procedures supporting student engagement and highlights their responsibilities in actively supporting engagement activities.

3. STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Overview

- 3.1 Students providing feedback on the college, their course and members of teaching staff are a well-established part of the College's quality assurance and enhancement processes and are detailed in procedural chapter '*Student, Graduate and Employer Surveys*'.
- 3.2 Evaluations enable individual students to give feedback on their course and experiences at the RVC. The results of surveys are used to enhance teaching and learning and are taken into account in curriculum development; staff appraisal; promotion decisions and in judging nominations for the annual Jim Bee Educator Awards.
- 3.3 The College conducts internal surveys which enable students to give feedback on:
- individual modules/strands and rotations
 - the teaching of individual staff
 - their satisfaction at the end of Year 1 (and at the end of Year 3 for BVetMed)
 - their satisfaction one year after graduation (and 3 years after graduation for BVetMed)

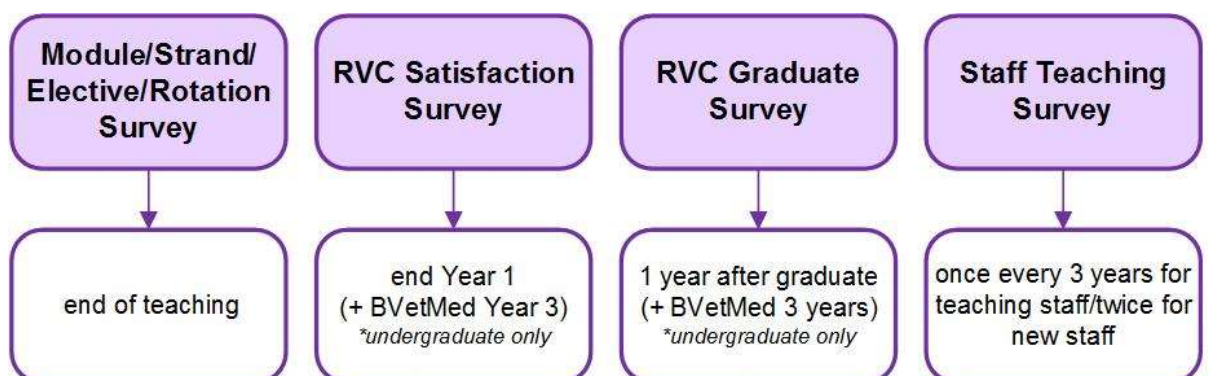


Fig 1. Internal Student Surveys

- 3.4 In addition, the College takes part in national student satisfaction surveys to enable both current and future students to compare the College with other institutions. These include the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

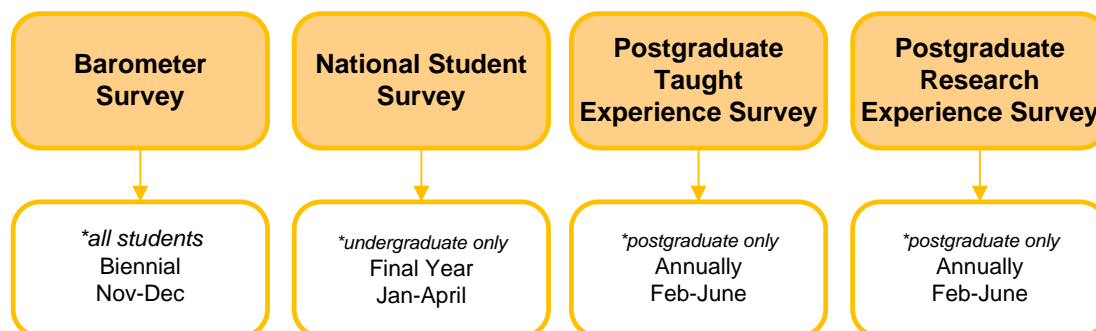


Fig 2: External Student Surveys

Administration

- 3.5 The College introduced an in-house online survey system during 2012-13 in order to ensure ease of access to surveys and their results for students and staff. The administration of student surveys is overseen by the “Student Survey Strategy Working Group” a sub-group of the Teaching Quality Committee.

Results

- 3.6 The results of student surveys are used, alongside other evidence including external examiner reports, to inform discussions between staff and students and prompt action.
- 3.7 The results of all student surveys, except those of individual members of teaching staff, are disseminated to student representatives and published on the Colleges’ intranet.
- 3.8 The results of Module/Strand/Elective/Rotation surveys must be responded to as part of the associated Module/Strand/Elective/Rotation Review. These responses are subsequently considered by the Course Management Committee and approved by the Teaching Quality Committee.
- 3.9 When the results of a student survey suggest that there may be scope for improvement, the responsible member staff and/or committee are required by the Teaching Quality Committee to make a satisfactory response as set out in the procedural chapter ‘*Student, Graduate and Employer Survey*’.

4. STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Responsibilities

- 4.1 RVCSU Course Representatives act as the voice of their fellow students and have 3 key responsibilities:
1. Be proactive in collecting students’ views.
 2. Contribute to improving students’ experiences by raising issues and achieving change.
 3. Report back to their year group/Students’ Union on issues raised and any decisions taken or changes made.

Elections

- 4.2 The Students’ Union is responsible for managing the election of Course RVCSU Representatives at the start of each Autumn term. At least one student representative

is elected for each year of each course. The RVCSU Course Representative term of office is for 4 terms in order to facilitate a handover to newly elected representatives during the Autumn term.

Training and Support Programme

- 4.3 A Training and Support Programme for RVCSU Course Representatives is delivered in partnership between the Students' Union and College. The programme is designed to help students develop skills relating to their role and provide them with ongoing support during their term of office. All elements of the Programme are supported, and as appropriate attended, by the Vice Principal (Students)
- 4.4 The Training and Support Programme consists of 3 core elements:
1. Induction Training: held early during the Autumn term. The training aims to equip Reps with the skills and information they need to start their role. It includes specific sessions to enable existing representatives to hand over to the new reps through the use of "Handover Forms" and discussion of Committee business from the preceding year.
 2. Skills Training: designed specifically for RVCSU Course Representatives and Officers, to support the development of valuable skills which will help students in their role as reps and in their future working lives.
 3. Socials: held throughout the year to enable Reps to catch up, discuss key issues and meet with senior College staff including the Vice Principal (Students)

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES – TRAINING AND SUPPORT PROGRAMME

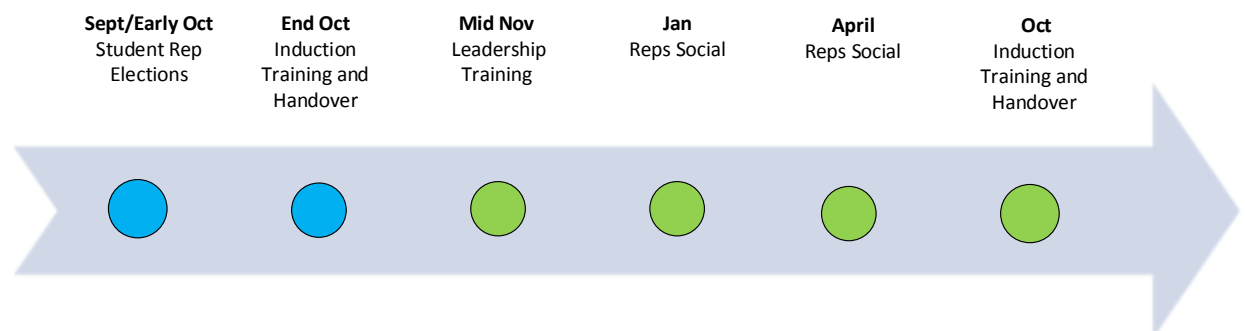


Fig 3. Student Rep Training and Support Programme

- 4.5 RVCSU Course Representatives are provided with resources designed specifically to support them in their role, including the Student Representative Handbook, Handover forms completed by existing representatives and relevant committee minutes.

5. COLLEGE COMMITTEES

- 5.1 The College's committee structure provides a formal opportunity for the student voice to be heard at all levels. The College's *'Academic Committee Handbook'* provides full details of committee procedures.
- 5.2 RVCSU Course Representatives act as the primary link in communication between staff and students and count as full members of relevant committees (right to vote and count towards the quorum). As members of committees they present students' opinions and concerns, provide a student perspective on College activities and report back to their year group on issues raised and decisions made.
- 5.3 The Committee Secretary should alert student representatives to agenda items on which student input is most essential, so they can seek views more widely among their

year. The Chair should encourage student participation in meetings in order to identify what is working well and make suggestions for improvements.

5.4 The constitutions of RVC academic committees in Fig 3 include student representative members. All elections and appointments are managed by the Students Union.

| Committee name | Purpose | Student membership |
|---|---|--|
| Academic Board (AB) | To consider and advise the Council upon all academic matters and questions affecting the educational policy of the College, the organisation of teaching and research and courses of instruction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SU President • 2 SU Officer/SU Course representative (at least 1 postgraduate) |
| Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC) | To develop and oversee the provision of a comprehensive range of excellent taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SU President • 2 SU course representatives/SU Officers (at least 1 postgraduate and 1 undergraduate. There should be 1 student from each campus) |
| Student Development Committee (SDC) | To ensure that specialist student support services meet the needs of students' development and complement the formal taught or research provision for all students. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SU Vice President Welfare • 4 SU course representatives/SU Officers (to represent both campuses and if possible a student from each undergraduate programme – Vet Nursing, BVetMed, Biological Sciences, and a postgraduate programme). |
| College Services Forum (CSF) | It provides a forum for the discussion of matters pertaining to College services, both existing services and proposals to change or provide new services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SU Vice President Representation and Communications • SU Vice President Welfare • SU Vice President Activities and Campaigns • 1 SU course representative from each year of each course (as appropriate) |
| Teaching Quality Committee (TQC) | To assure the consistent and excellent quality of the RVC's courses and the standards of the College's awards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SU Vice President Representation and Communications • 2 SU course representatives/SU Officers (1 undergraduate and 1 postgraduate taught) |
| TQC sub-group: Student Survey Strategy Working Group (SSSWG) | Develop effective processes for administration of all student surveys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SU Vice President Representation and Communications • SU Postgraduate Officer • 3 SU course representatives/SU Officers |
| TQC sub-group: Annual Quality Improvement Group | Review Annual Quality Improvement Reports (AQIR) for all courses and ensure Course Management Committee members fully scrutinise their AQIRs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least one undergraduate SU course representative/SU Officer at the undergraduate meeting (autumn) • at least one postgraduate SU course representative/SU Officer at the postgraduate meeting (spring) |
| Research Degrees Committee (RDC) | To assure the quality and standards of the College's Research Degrees and to make recommendations on their award. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SU Postgraduate Officer • 3 postgraduate research student representatives who together reflect the different modes and location of study |
| Course Management Committees (CMCs) | These are operational committees that manage the College's courses and ensure that College policies and procedures are put into practice at course level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 1 SU representative for each year of each course, as set out in the committee's constitution. |

Fig 4. RVC Academic Committees, Student membership

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT PROCEDURES

- 6.1 The College seeks the involvement of students through other specific quality assurance and enhancement activities.
- 6.2 Students play a vital role in Course Validation and Periodic Review as full members of both Validation and Periodic Review panels. Students are provided appropriate training and induction in order to be fully effective as members of the panels.
- 6.3 Student representatives are invited to participate in the meetings of the TQC sub-group responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the College's responses to External Examiners' reports. In addition, during 2013-14 the College piloted meetings between External Examiners and students from the relevant course. This pilot was warmly welcomed by both students and External examiners and where possible is now conducted each year.
- 6.4 Students are involved in the development of the College's responses to reports from relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies and the Quality Assurance Agency.

7. DISSEMINATION – 'CLOSING THE LOOP'

- 7.1 Through 'You Said...We Did...' the College recognises enhancements made to the student experience as a result of listening to feedback from students.
- 7.2 Actions taken in response to feedback from students are disseminated to students and staff through publication on the 'You Said...We Did...' pages of the College intranet. They are consequently promoted through Learn (the college's Virtual Learning Environment); the screens in public areas; promotional campaigns; announcements by staff or student representatives in lectures and termly dissemination campaigns.
- 7.3 Each item is attributed to a specific course and new items are sent to Student Reps to enable them to disseminate the results of student feedback to their year group and celebrate their involvement as partners in bringing about change.



8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 8.1 One of the core objectives of the College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy (2013-21) is to amplify the impact of student engagement in quality enhancement. The strategy contains pre-defined performance indicators against which this can be measured. Performance against these indicators is reviewed annually by the College's Teaching Quality Committee and other relevant committees.
- 8.2 Most of these performance indicators measure the extent of engagement, rather than impact itself, but we hope that they will be indicative of the impact which will be ensured through QAE procedures. The number of YSWD entries is also a performance indicator and gives a useful measure of the volume of changes published as responses to student feedback.
- 8.3 As set out in the RVC Quality Strategy, the College regularly monitors its quality assurance and enhancement procedures to ensure that they are working effectively.

Student Engagement

1. Percentage of available student representative positions filled
2. Percentage of reps attending training events
3. Percentage of reps attending catch-up/social events
4. Attendance rates of reps at committee meetings
5. Number of items on which comments are made by students at committee meetings
6. Response rates to student evaluation surveys
7. Response rates to graduate surveys
8. Student attendance at feedback events, e.g. rotation forums
9. Response rates on NSS, PTES and PRES

Closing the Loop

1. Number of YSWD entries
2. Percentage of student module/strand surveys with low scores not receiving response through module/strand review
3. Percentage of action points from each committee meeting with no response
4. Scores on NSS, PTES and PRES

Fig 5. RVC Quality Strategy 2013-18, Key Performance Indicators