



Teaching Quality
Assurance and
Review Office

Quality assurance at LSE and UK Higher Education

Thomas Hewlett

Teaching Quality Assurance and Review Office



Introduction

- Definition of quality assurance.
- The UK's national quality assurance (QA) framework, the revised Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework.
- LSE framework for assuring the quality and standards:
 - ['Towards a strategy for managing academic standards and quality'](#).
- LSE's Quality assurance framework and governance.
- Data driven QA processes: module evaluation.



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What is quality assurance?

There are various definitions for 'quality assurance' (QA) in education and elsewhere. The UK Quality Assurance Agency's describes QA as:

“the means through which an institution ensures and confirms that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by it or by another awarding body” (QAA 2004)

In the HE context academic standards are:

“the standards that individual degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of their academic credit or qualifications.” (QAA 2004)



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What is quality assurance?

Other definitions of quality include:

“Quality is fitness for purpose”

(Ball, 1985, p. 96)

*“Quality is determined by the degree to which
previously set objectives are met”*

(de Groot 1983, cited in Vroeijenstijn, 1992, p. 112).

QA is an important function within universities to ensure educational provision is designed, managed, delivered and reviewed in a manner which enables *all* students to achieve desired standards and outcomes.

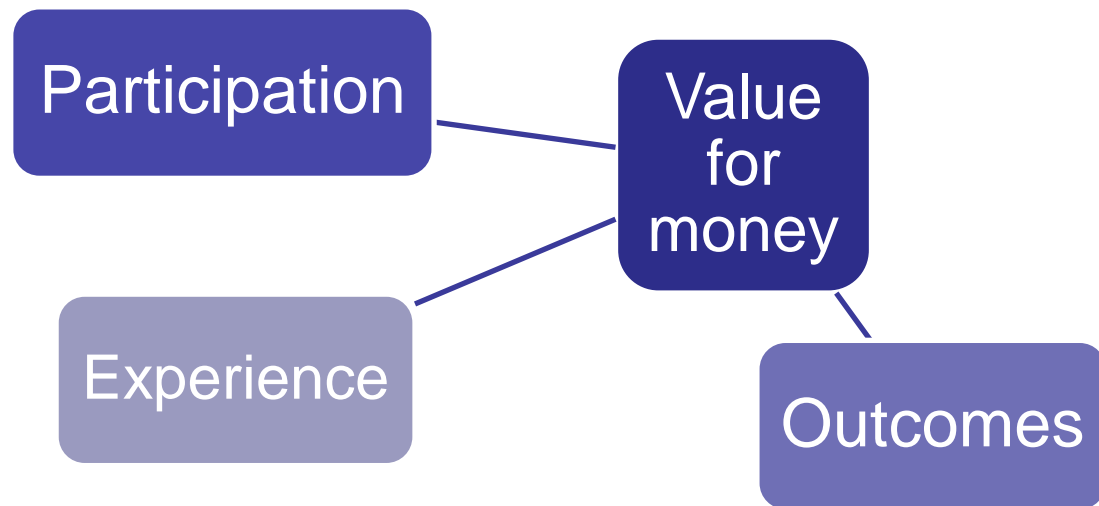


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UK QA: Office for
Students



- The **Office for Students** (OfS) regulates Higher Education in England (and the rest of the UK). It's a risk based independent regulator, guided by the Department for Education.
- OfS has four primary objectives





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UK QA:

Office for
Students



- Institutional autonomy remains, but the OfS sets general ongoing conditions of registration for all HE institutions which set the baseline for national QA requirements.
- These include:
 - A: Access and participation for students from all backgrounds;
 - B: Quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students;
 - C: Protecting the interests of all students;
 - D: Financial sustainability;
 - E: Good governance;
 - F: Information for students;
 - G: Accountability for fees and funding.



- The **Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)** is the ‘designated quality body’ and supports the OfS by “safeguarding standards and improving the quality of UK higher education”. QA requirements are defined by the QAA’s Quality Code for Higher Education.





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- Expectations For Standards
 - The **academic standards** of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.
 - The **value of qualifications** awarded to students at the point of qualifications and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.
- Expectations For Quality
 - Courses are well-designed, provide a **high-quality academic experience for all students** and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed
 - From admission through to completion, **all students** are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.



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Teaching Excellence



The **Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)** is a national exercise conducted by OfS.

It assesses excellence in teaching at universities and colleges, and how well they ensure excellent outcomes for their students in terms of graduate-level employment or further study.

TEF assessments were first carried out in 2017 and awarded gold, silver or bronze ratings for excellence.

Assessment included consideration of **quantitative metrics** and **qualitative written submissions** judged by independent panels of students, academics and other experts.



TEF criteria cover a range of areas.

TEF currently assesses providers. In future it may also assess institutions at subject level.

Provider level	Subject level
Criteria defined at provider level:	Criteria defined at subject level:
<p style="text-align: center;">Teaching quality (TQ):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student engagement with learning (TQ1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing teaching (TQ2) • Rigour and stretch (TQ3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback (TQ4) • Student partnership (TQ5) <p style="text-align: center;">Learning environment (LE):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources (LE1) • Scholarship, research and professional practice (LE2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalised learning (LE3) <p style="text-align: center;">Student outcomes and learning gain (SO):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability and transferable skills (SO1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and further study (SO2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive outcomes for all (SO3) 	



TEF uses various sources of evidence to make initial judgements which are considered alongside the qualitative submissions.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider-level contextual data • Maps of provider-level geographic context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject-level contextual data • Maps of subject-level geographic context
<p>Provider-level metrics:</p>	<p>Subject-level metrics:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching on my course (NSS) • Assessment and feedback (NSS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student voice (NSS) • Academic support (NSS) • Learning resources (NSS) • Continuation (HESA/ILR) • Highly-skilled employment or higher study (DHLE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained employment or further study (LEO) • Above median earnings threshold or higher study (LEO) 	
<p>Where applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differential degree attainment data and grade inflation data • Additional data on part-time provision 	



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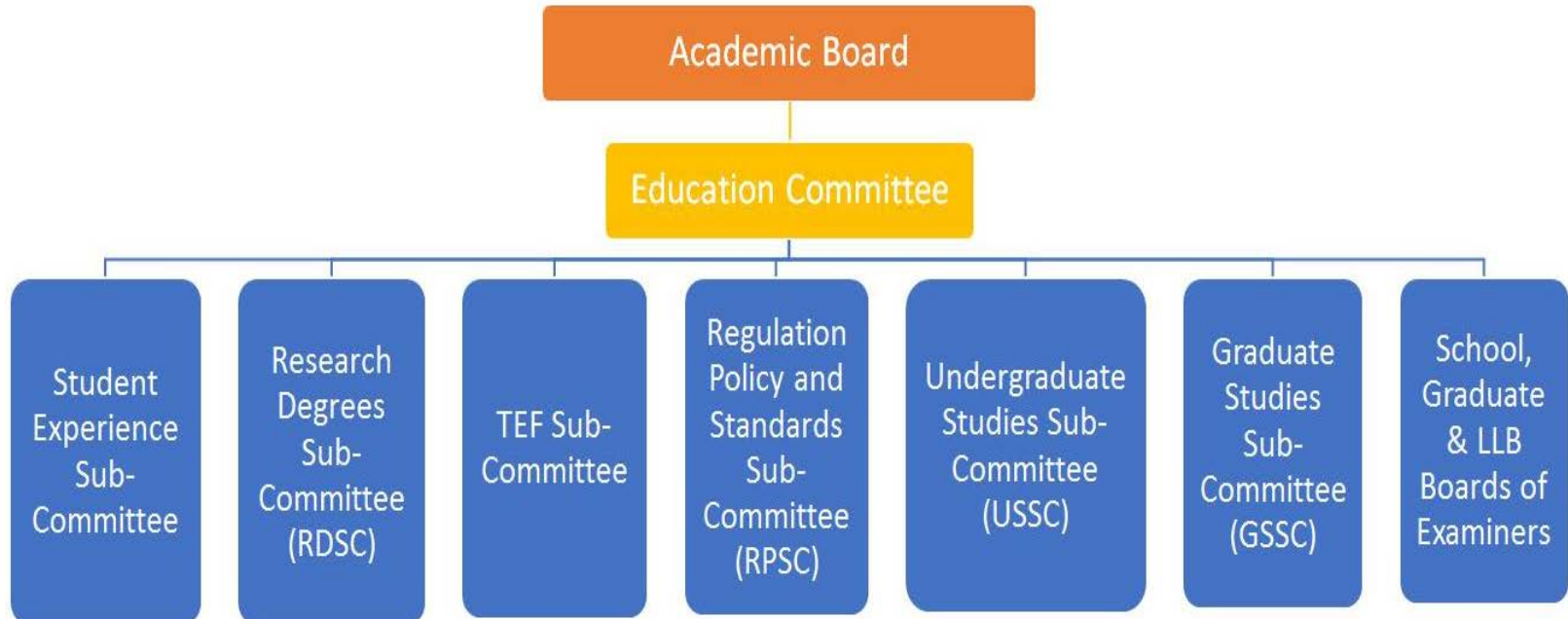
'Towards a strategy for managing academic standards and quality'

Principles:

- Quality assurance should not detract from or become a substitute for quality.
- ...quality assurance belongs at the Departmental level.
- the exercise of Departmental responsibilities is collective through Department Teaching Committees (DTC).
- ...quality assurance is important, but more energy and resource should be devoted to enhancement.



Governance - School:



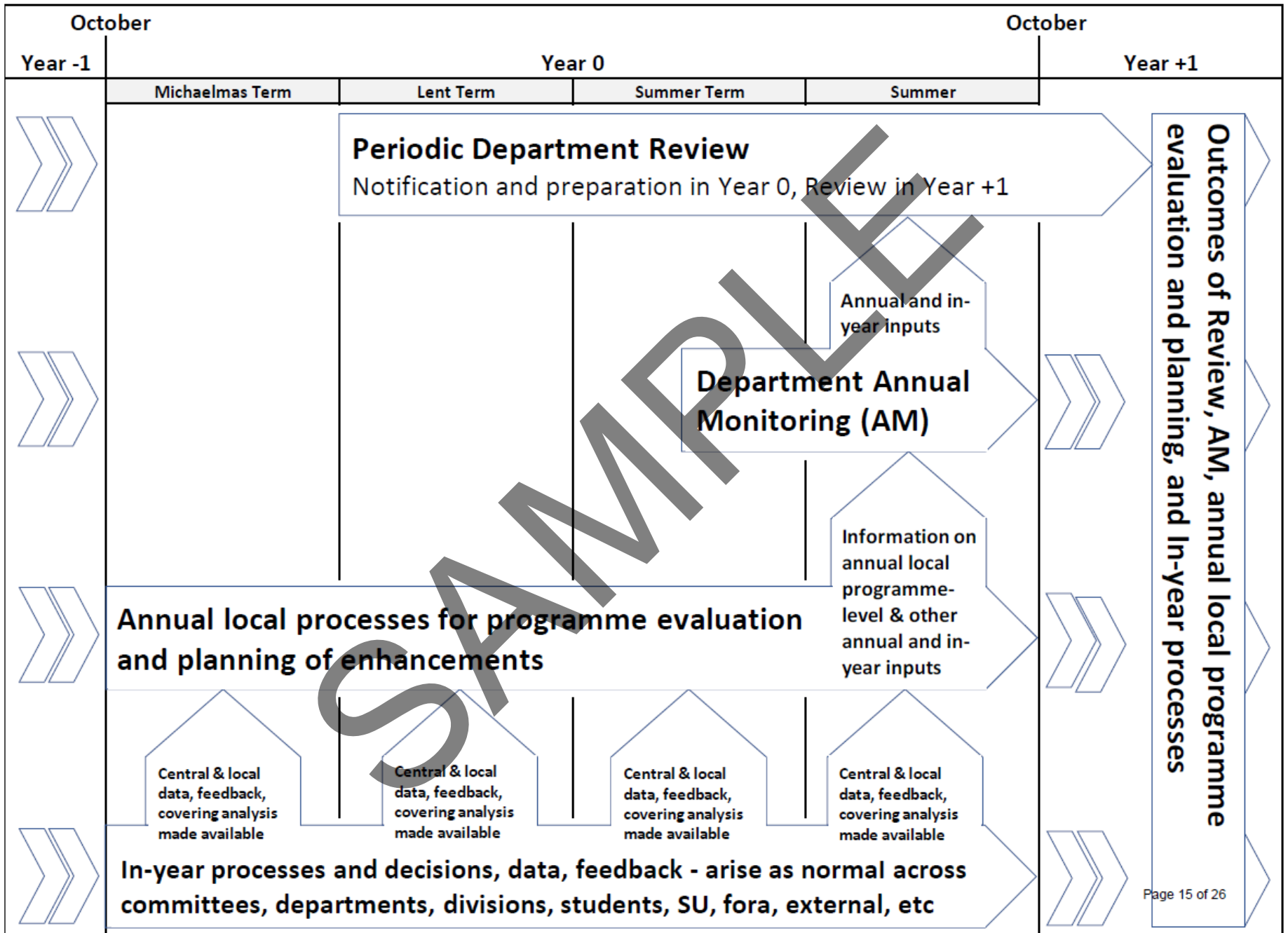
- Resource-based services (Academic Planning and Resources Committee, Timetables, Library, Data & Technology Services, Student Services).
- External assessment.



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Governance - Department:

- **Staff-Student Liaison Committees** for all students;
- **Departmental Staff meetings** that involve all staff;
- A **Department Teaching Committee** that involves appropriate departmental staff and students;
- A system for ensuring the effective participation in School-level **periodic monitoring and review** exercises;
- A system for:
 - considering **course and programme results** and **feedback** from student survey results, and revising taught provision as needed;
 - considering **external examiners' reports**;
 - monitoring compliance with baseline requirements to build on teaching standards, academic support, and assessment and feedback as defined by the **Academic Code**.

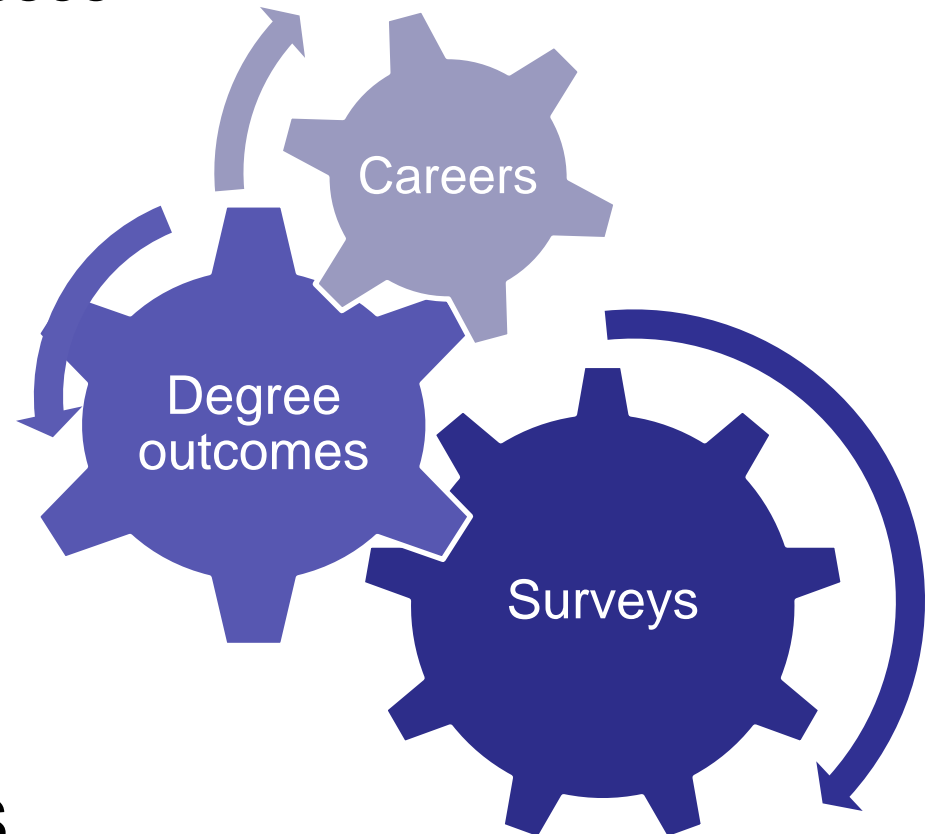




Data driven QA:

Various data sources underpin in-year, annual and periodic review and monitoring processes.

- LSE uses four main surveys of taught provision, three internal:
 - Module-level;
 - 1st & 2nd year Undergraduate;
 - Postgraduate Taught.
- And one external:
 - National Student Survey.
- Plus one research – PRES





Data driven QA:

Module-level survey:

- Student feedback is collected termly for all staff (faculty and teaching assistants) teaching five or more sessions.
- It is reported to Heads of Departments as line managers and to individual teachers only, as it is considered personal information.
- Results include quantitative scores on a scale of 1 to 5 and qualitative comments grouped as +/-.
- Selected scores are published in module descriptions for some courses.

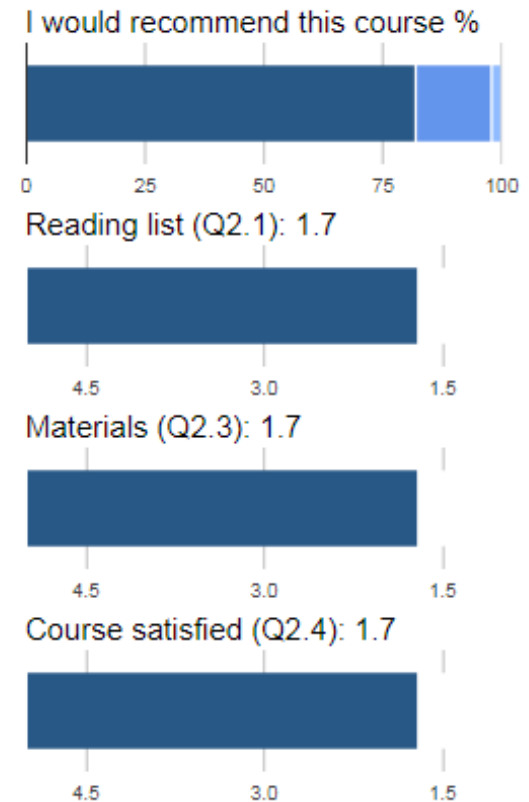
Course survey results

(2015/16 - 2017/18 combined)

1 = "best" score, 5 = "worst" score

The scores below are average responses.

Response rate: 44%





Data driven QA:

Module-level survey questionnaires:

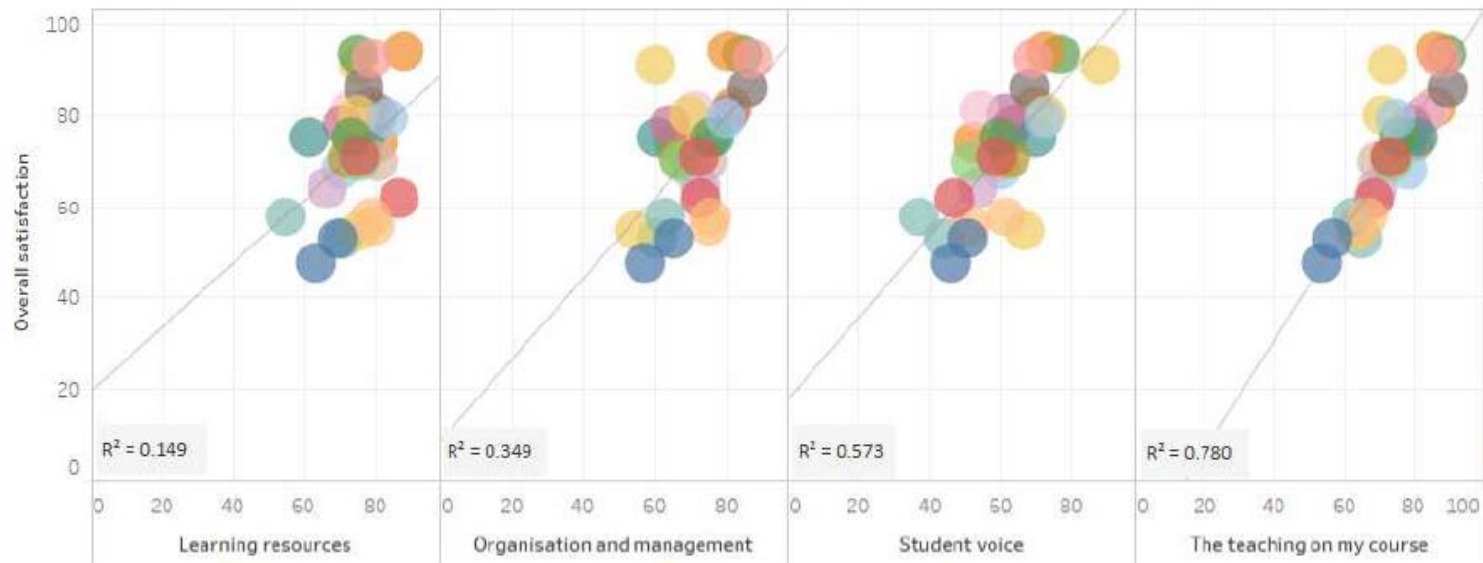
- The survey mirrors the National Student Survey in some questions on teaching, and assessment and feedback.
and

	Definitely Agree	Mostly Agree	Neither	Mostly Disagree	Definitely Disagree
1.1 The teacher communicated ideas and concepts effectively.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2 The teacher has improved my understanding of the course content.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5c I have received helpful comments on my work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5d I was able to seek further clarification on feedback from the teacher where needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Data driven QA:

- The surveys are **anonymous** and quantitative module-level results released to departments are aggregated.
- The survey is **completed online**. Responses can be linked to individual students to analyse results by protected characteristics.
- As national QA requirements have become more outcomes focussed and data driven, so too have internal processes. **Analysis using Tableau** has improved data visualisation and insights.





Data driven QA:

- Aggregated module-level results are used in **annual monitoring & enhancement** activities for degree programmes and Departments.
- **3-year averages** are reported to Education Committee each year, with poorly performing modules required to report action taken in response to low scores.
- Headline **KPIs** are reported to senior management.





Data driven QA:

- Module-level scores are also used in **promotion and review processes** for faculty, including:
 - Headline survey results on selected questions over four previous sessions.
- This data is considered alongside other feedback including:
 - A Teaching Observation Report produced by the Teaching and Learning Centre; and
 - A comprehensive account of the candidates overall teaching performance from their Head of Department.



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Data driven QA:

Round table discussion:

How do you use student feedback at module and/or programme level to monitor and enhance teaching and student experience?



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Further information and feedback

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