Kingston University Creates a Culture of Continuous Improvement Supported by Analytics with Blue

Institution:
Kingston University

Location:
South-West London, UK

Details:
~16,499 students

Solution:
Blue Course Evaluation Software

Challenge:
The University re-introduced Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) to feed into its quality assurance and quality enhancement processes but needed supporting module evaluation software to deliver its objectives.

Kingston University London

blue

explorance.

Key Benefits

→ Institution-wide MEQ follows a single, consistent approach

→ Tailored versions of survey results are immediately available for staff and students

→ Outcome reports are discussed in class, thus encouraging student voice

→ Integration with multiple sources of evidence to inform decision-making

→ Culture of continuous improvement supported by analytics

Kingston University is ranked as one of the top 50 universities in the UK by The Guardian University Guide 2020 and in the top 250 in the world for Business & Economics by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2019. In 2017, the University won The Guardian University Award for teaching excellence.

In 2017 the University re-introduced Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) through Blue, which is integrated with the institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and student information system. Initially, they conducted their MEQs via paper but within 18 months these became online-only.

A single institution-wide MEQ is used with the resulting student and staff reports published to each module, and aggregate reports produced at multiple levels. Additionally, this data is fed into the University's annual monitoring and enhancement process. "The use of student feedback is part of an institution's quality assurance and quality enhancement processes," said Dr Tim Linsey, Head of Academic Systems & Evaluation at Kingston University. "How this feedback is used to support course teams through a process of continual improvement by delivering effective course design and enhancing students' experience of learning, teaching

and assessment is a key area of discussion within the UK Higher Education sector."

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>
> **Dr Tim Linsey,** *Head of Academic Systems & Evaluation*

At Kingston, MEQs are an important component of an approach designed to be consistent, to ensure development and decision-making is guided by evidence, and that good practice is recognised and shared. "We use 12 standard questions – including two text response questions – University-wide to ensure consistency

for students across multiple modules and to spotlight change over time, with Blue as the MEQ environment," Dr Linsey explained. "Students have flexible access to the surveys and can complete them in their own time using their personal devices (47% of our 2018-19 surveys were completed on mobile devices). Within hours of the survey closing, reports summarising the feedback are automatically generated and published in our VLE with tailored versions of the report available for both staff and students. The scheme is supported by trained course representatives and an explanatory video has been created by our Students' Union."

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Dr Tim Linsey, Head of Academic Systems & Evaluation

Through the institutional journey – and its continuing aim of achieving a primarily automated system – Dr Linsey highlighted the importance of timing, which is made possible by the Blue software. "MEQ outcome reports are published to students and staff while the module is still running which allows the outcomes to be considered in class," he said. "This discussion adds value and generates further insight. The automatic scheduling and publishing of surveys to students by email and through our VLE helps to facilitate this process. We also recognise that making high-level decisions on the outcomes of a single, or a small number of MEQs would be problematic, particularly in the absence of 'local' module-level knowledge. We therefore ensure

our decision-making is informed by multiple sources of evidence and metrics including MEQ outcomes over time, module information such as progression rates, and additional sources such as external examiner reports."

Summary reports which show module data are carefully presented by the University team overseeing MEQs. For instance, comparisons and rankings provided to senior University committees compare like-for-like modules (e.g. by level and Faculty) and include an additional indicator of statistical significance based on the response rate and sample size. "To ensure that student feedback is effectively embedded in our quality assurance and enhancement processes, the MEQ data – along with other institutional surveys, our own Kingston student survey and the National Student Survey (NSS) are also automatically published in University dashboards which are available to all staff," Dr Linsey explained. "The MEQ dashboard allows members of staff to view the quantitative data at both module and aggregate levels and also look at comparisons with previous years' data."

Additional dashboards summarise other such key module and course metrics as progression rates, completion rates and value-added scores. This ready access to metrics and student feedback significantly supports the reflection, planning and decision-making carried out by module and course teams and at a strategic level within the University. "This process is further enhanced through the automatic pre-population of data in the annual monitoring and enhancement process plans completed at module and course level," Dr Linsey revealed. "The module enhancement plans are automatically populated with MEQ quantitative responses and progression data, for example. The module leader completes their pre-populated plan by reflecting on the performance of the module and identifying actions for the current academic year which are informed by this pre-populated data and other sources of evidence."

The course enhancement plans are also pre-populated with NSS data, Kingston student survey data and other metrics, meaning that course leaders can then develop action plans citing the evidence used including the individual module enhancement plans. In this way the University uses student feedback and other key metrics to address issues such as student retention and to ensure all students achieve their full potential. Dr Linsey added: "Our original objectives through the Blue MEQ project were to create a culture of continuous improvement supported by analytics, a consistent approach embedded in quality assurance and evaluation processes, and effectively engage students throughout the curriculum – closing the feedback loop and valuing the student voice. As a lead indicator for our institutional teaching quality KPI, the value we have had from Explorance has been huge."

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