

## Teaching, Course and Programme Surveys Policy, Procedures and Principles

<b>Last Modified</b>	August 2025
<b>Review Date</b>	August 2026
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Senior Survey & Reporting Analyst Lead

### Introduction

This document outlines policy, current procedures and processes for administering course surveys.

### Definitions

**Course survey** – asks students to reflect on and comment on the delivery of the course, as a whole.

**LEARN** – the University's Learning Management System. LEARN makes it possible to add interesting, multi-media learning resources and student-centred activities (learning tasks) to make teaching more flexible, interactive and student-friendly.

**Programme survey** – asks students to reflect and comment on a group of courses which are related or mandatory.

**Survey coordinator** – a staff member from the Analytics & Institutional Research Team who is responsible for scheduling surveys and maintaining the survey calendar.

**Teaching Assistant (TA) Survey** – asks students to reflect on and comment on the teaching of a specialised staff member, including teaching assistants, tutors and lab demonstrators.

**Teaching Survey** – asks students to reflect on and comment on the teaching of an individual staff member.

## Policy

At the University, three separate types of survey are carried out, namely, course surveys, programme surveys and individual staff teaching surveys. A separate survey may also be requested for teaching assistants or tutors which is specific to their role.

Surveying is one of many mechanisms for gaining information that the University uses to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and the learning process. The results of the teaching surveys relate personally to the teaching staff member and accordingly the results are not published.

## Principles

- Care must be taken not to over-analyse quantitative measures – they are indicative only, as there are a number of issues which may compromise such data.
- In particular, caution is to be taken in interpreting low response rates and small class size surveys, and in setting the timing between successive surveys which should neither be too short nor too long.
- Similarly, courses with content that is challenging by nature (e.g., philosophically opposed to students' beliefs) may derive responses that do not evaluate the teaching and learning, but rather elicit the personal views of content or personal beliefs of the students.
- There is also a need to exercise caution when it comes to making possible comparisons of survey scores both across faculties and within similar disciplines.

## Procedures

### General

The survey system will be administered via LEARN and an electronic link will be triggered based on enrolment in courses.

The survey responses will be anonymous to teaching staff, but will be available to staff from the Analytics & Institutional Research Team to carry out institutional research. Only aggregated data without identities may be published by the Analytics & Institutional Research Team.

Students are to be made aware by express wording at the point they commence a survey online that the University has a [Prevention of Harassment and Bullying Policy \(PDF, 197KB\)](#) and [Behavioural Misconduct Regulations \(PDF, 41KB\)](#), and that offensive or threatening responses may lead to the survey respondent's identity being traced and consequent action being taken.

In responding to surveys, students are encouraged to provide constructive feedback rather than negative comments directed to the personal characteristics of staff or about content to which they personally object.

Lecturers are expected to contribute to the quality of surveys. They should take action to positively influence survey response rates by some or all of the following actions:

- Telling students about how previous feedback has been used and acted on;
- Early information about the purpose and process of surveys, whether in lectures or by class emails etc;
- Reminders of any specific issues lecturers would like feedback on;
- A personal reminder via a posting on LEARN or via email;
- Publishing on the web (e.g., the Course Information System (CIS)) summary of comments from previous years and how the feedback has resulted in change);
- Dedicating a specific period in class (e.g., ten minutes) when students are encouraged to log in to LEARN via their own device and complete the survey. This should be mentioned in the previous class to allow students to be prepared in advance. Surveys started in class may be completed at a later time.

## **Individual Staff Teaching Surveys**

### **A. Purpose**

Teacher-initiated teaching surveys can be a useful feedback tool for staff and are required by the University's academic promotions process. The purposes of individual staff teaching surveys are to:

- Ensure the University has a systematic process in place that enables students to provide feedback to staff in relation to student perceptions of
  - How a lecturer's use of different learning activities (e.g., lectures, readings, LEARN, etc.) helped the student learn;
  - How a lecturer's communication of ideas helped students understand the material;
  - The lecturer's attitude towards students.
- Enable teaching staff to identify specific areas of strength and areas that need improvement in relation to the quality of their teaching practices.
- Enable teaching staff to identify specific areas to focus on in their yearly individual professional development plan.
- Provide teaching staff with student teaching evaluation data that support promotion/teaching award applications.
- Enable Heads of Department/School (HoD/S) to identify specific areas of strength and areas that need improvement in relation to the quality of their Department/ School's teaching practices.

- Enable HoD/Ss to identify specific areas of strength and areas that need improvement to focus on in their yearly individual interviews with staff as part of their professional development planning.

A separate survey may also be requested for teaching assistants or tutors which is specific to their role.

## **B. Process**

All individual staff teaching surveys are administered online.

The staff member must, as part of their Professional Development and Review (PD&R) meeting, discuss with their HoD/S a schedule of Individual Teaching Surveys.

The following process sets out how to obtain an individual teaching survey:

1. The staff member completes an online request form via LEARN  
Only one survey can be requested for each occurrence of the course; it is not possible to survey by topic for example.
2. The survey co-ordinator will automatically send surveys to students via LEARN at pre-determined times and ensure only one response per student. The survey system will automatically remind students that they have outstanding survey(s) to complete via Learn at login. Teaching staff are encouraged to inform students that a survey is waiting for their response.
3. Survey results are compiled by the survey co-ordinator. Courses will not be re-evaluated within an occurrence if there has been an error, to avoid over-surveying students.
4. Survey results will not be released to staff until after final course results have been released. At that time, the staff member will be able to log on to the survey system, via a LEARN interface to access the results. The relevant HoD/S, Dean, Executive Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will also be able to access the results. Staff who teach during semester one of a team taught, whole year course may apply to the survey co-ordinator to have their survey results released following the end of semester one.
5. Where there are five or fewer responses, individual comments will not be released to staff to avoid any perception that students could be linked to their responses.
6. Once survey results are received, the staff member and HoD/S should reflect on the results and identify specific areas to focus on in the next annual PD&R meeting.

## Teaching Assistant Surveys

### A. Purpose

Teaching assistant surveys can be a useful feedback tool for staff in a range of roles (teaching assistants, tutors, lab demonstrators) and for the course co-ordinator or team leader of the course concerned. The purposes of teaching assistant surveys are to:

- Ensure that the University has a systematic process in place that enables students to provide feedback to specialist staff in relation to student perceptions of:
  - How well-prepared staff were for the sessions;
  - How the staff member's communication helped students understand ideas/information;
  - The staff member's attitude towards students.
- Enable teaching assistants/tutors to identify specific areas of strength and areas that need improvement in relation to the quality of their practices;
- Enable course co-ordinators and HoS/D to identify specific areas of strength and areas that need improvement in relation to the quality of their overall course/School/Department's teaching practices.

### B. Process

All individual teaching assistant surveys are administered on-line via LEARN.

The following process sets out how to obtain an individual teaching assistant survey:

1. The staff member concerned or course co-ordinator/team leader completes an online request form via Learn. If the staff member does not teach all students in the course, details of the students in a particular stream will need to be emailed to the survey co-ordinator.
2. The survey co-ordinator will automatically send surveys to students via LEARN at pre-determined times and ensure only one response per student. The survey system will automatically remind students that they have outstanding survey(s) to complete via LEARN at log-in. Teaching staff are encouraged to inform students that a survey is waiting for their response.
3. Survey results are compiled by the survey co-ordinator. Courses will not be re-evaluated within an occurrence if there has been an error, to avoid over-surveying students.
4. Survey results will not be released to staff until after final course results have been released. At that time, the staff member and course co-ordinator will be able to log on to the survey system, via a LEARN interface to access the results. The relevant HoD/S, Dean, Executive Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will also be able to access the results. Staff who teach during semester one of a team taught, whole year course may apply to the survey co-ordinator to have their survey results released following the end of semester one.

5. Where there are five or fewer responses, individual comments will not be released to staff to avoid any perception that students could be linked to their responses.
6. Once survey results are received, the staff member and course co-ordinator/HoS/D should reflect on the results.

## Course Surveys

### A. Purpose

Course surveys are designed to ascertain student perceptions of the delivery (including assessment) of courses. Surveying of all taught courses takes place every three years unless:

- a relevant programme survey (see [below](#)) is being conducted, or
- the course is one where more regular surveying is appropriate (e.g., the course is new, it is a low rating course (see [below](#)), or is under development or other review).

When a course is selected for review, every occurrence in that year will be evaluated.

Where appropriate, a programme survey may replace a course survey if the review is covering a series of related mandatory courses. Where a programme survey is chosen, caution should be exercised to ensure students are not over-surveyed. It may be unnecessary to administer individual course surveys.

The purposes of course surveys are to

- Ensure that the University has a systematic process in place that enables all students to provide feedback in relation to the quality of individual courses undertaken in their qualifications.
- Enable course co-ordinators and staff teaching into a particular course to
  - identify and act on matters relating to course cohesion, and
  - identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement in relation to the course content, curriculum, learning design and assessment methods.
- Enable HoD/Ss to identify courses that are considered to be at risk, as indicated by consistently low course ratings, in order to instigate an internal review process that leads to improvements in areas regularly identified by students as problematic.
- Enable HoD/Ss to identify courses that have received consistently high course ratings in order to invite course co-ordinators to share with colleagues aspects of the course design consistently identified by students as quality practices and, where appropriate, to investigate if there are factors which make a course popular as opposed to academically effective.
- Enable the Dean, in consultation with the relevant HoD/S, to ensure the quality assurance of the component courses of the awards of the Faculty.

## B. Process

All course surveys are administered online via LEARN.

The course survey process is as follows:

1. No later than the beginning of a course, the survey co-ordinator will inform the relevant HoD/S of the courses from their Department/School which have been randomly selected to be reviewed in that semester. Courses with fewer than five students enrolled are automatically excluded from the lists. The standard template questions will be used unless at this stage the course co-ordinator chooses to add up to three additional questions. The HoD will also be able to select additional courses for surveying. Only one survey can be requested for each occurrence of the course – it is not possible to survey by topic for example.
2. The survey co-ordinator will send surveys to students via LEARN at agreed times set out in the [\*Student Evaluation of Teaching \(SET\) Calendar \(UC Intranet-staff only\)\*](#) and ensure only one response per student. The survey system will automatically remind students that they have outstanding survey(s) to complete via LEARN at login. Teaching staff are encouraged to inform students that a survey is waiting for their response.
3. Course surveys should be online for a minimum of two weeks between survey start and closure dates.
4. Survey results will not be released until after final course results have been released. At that time, the relevant staff (course co-ordinator, designated teaching staff, HoD/S, Dean, Executive Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)) will be able to log on to the survey system via a LEARN interface to access the results (numerical and comments). Staff who teach during semester one of a team-taught whole year course may apply to the survey co-ordinator to have their survey results released following the end of semester one.
5. Where there are five or fewer responses, individual comments will not be released to staff to avoid any perception that students could be linked to their responses. Courses will not be re-evaluated within an occurrence if there has been an error, to avoid over-surveying students.
6. Once survey results are received, course co-ordinators, course teaching staff, relevant Deans and HoD/Ss should reflect on the results and, where appropriate, identify specific areas to focus on in annual PD&R meetings.
7. Course co-ordinators should inform students, through an appropriate mechanism, of how feedback provided by previous students has been used. Feedback on survey responses should be included on the course management system or on LEARN, within three months of the survey result release. See [\*Appendix 1\*](#) for examples of the kind of feedback that staff may provide.
8. Courses with scores that are lowly rated will trigger a report as set out in [\*Appendix 2\*](#). High performing courses will be acknowledged.



## Programme Surveys

### A. Purpose

Where a group of courses are related or mandatory, a programme survey may replace a course survey.

The purposes of programme surveys are to:

- Ensure that the University has a systematic process in place that enables all students to provide feedback in relation to their perception of the quality of their overall programme of study within a qualification.
- Enable programme/qualification co-ordinators to identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement in relation to students' overall programmes of study or qualification.
- Evaluate the combined offering of related or mandatory courses for consistency, cohesion, broader overarching learning outcomes and to identify academic issues beyond the course level (e.g., bunching of assessments).
- Enable the Dean to ensure the quality assurance of Faculty programmes and qualifications.

### B. Process

All programme surveys are administered via LEARN online.

The process is as follows:

1. At the beginning of each academic year, the relevant Dean, HoD/S and programme co-ordinator should consult one another as to the appropriateness of a programme survey.
2. If it is agreed that a programme survey is appropriate, the programme co-ordinator or HOD/S contacts the survey co-ordinator to request an appropriate survey template.
3. The survey co-ordinator will
  - automatically send surveys to students via LEARN at pre-determined times and ensure only one response per student, and
  - automatically remind students that they have outstanding survey(s) to complete via LEARN at log-in.
4. Programme surveys should be online for a minimum of two weeks between survey start and closure dates, but the commencement date is at the discretion of the requestor.
5. Survey results are compiled by the survey co-ordinator
6. Survey results will not be released to staff until after examination results have been released. At that time, the staff member will be able to log on to the survey system, via a LEARN interface to access the results. The relevant HoD/S, Dean, Executive Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will also be able to log on to LEARN to access the results (numerical and comments).
7. Where there are five or fewer responses, individual comments will not be released to staff to avoid any perception that students could be linked to their responses.



8. Once survey results are received, the Dean, programme co-ordinator and HoD/S should reflect on the results and identify specific areas to focus on, such as, consistency, cohesion, broader overarching learning outcomes and academic issues beyond the course level (e.g., bunching of assessments). This reflection process should involve the relevant course co-ordinators and teaching staff

## Related Documents and Information

### UC Regulations

- [Behavioural Misconduct Regulations](#)

### UC Policy Library

- [Prevention of Harassment and Bullying Policy](#)
- [Student Community Online Survey Policy](#)

### UC website and Intranet

- [Student Evaluation of Teaching \(SET\) Calendar \(UC Intranet-staff only\)](#)

## Appendices

### Operational Information

- [Appendix 1](#): Guidelines on Feedback to Course Evaluations
- [Appendix 2](#): Courses with Low and High-Rating Evaluations

Document History and Version Control Table			
Version	Action	Approval Authority	Action Date
<i>For document history and versioning prior to 2013 contact <a href="mailto:ucpolicy@canterbury.ac.nz">ucpolicy@canterbury.ac.nz</a></i>			
1.00	Converted document onto current template. Removed reference to 2012 review. Updated hyperlinks.	Policy Unit	Oct 2013
1.01	Document review date pushed out.	Policy Unit	Feb 2014
1.02	Review date pushed out.	Policy Unit	Sep 2014
2.00	Scheduled review by Contact Officer.	Policy Unit	Feb 2015
2.01	Contact Officer updated.	Policy Unit	Apr 2015
3.00	Major review. Document retitled from Teaching and Course Surveys Policy, Procedures and Guidelines.	DVC(A)	Oct 2016
4.00	Scheduled review by CO, policy rolled over for 12 months as substantive review pending. Approval Authority changed to DVC.	DVC	Oct 2017
4.01	Scheduled review date pushed out for 6 months, hyperlinks updated.	Policy Unit	Oct 2018

4.02	Minor changes & scheduled review date extended. Updated links to <i>Survey Policy and Application Procedures for Online Student Surveys</i> renamed <i>Student Community Online Survey Policy</i> .	Policy Unit	Apr 2019
5.00	Scheduled review by Contact Officer, change of Approval Authority from DVC, minor changes to content	AVC(A)	Jun 2019
5.01	Minor changes by Contact Officer including updating hyperlinks.	Policy Unit	Aug 2025

**This policy remains in force until it is updated**

## APPENDIX 1

### Guidelines on Feedback to Course Evaluations

Research has shown that telling students about how previous feedback has been used and acted on is the single action that most positively influences students to undertake surveys. The following points may be useful to consider:

#### Respond in a timely way to students' comments

- Your responses should be within three months of the results being released and should help inform those who responded to the survey as well as future students.
- You may choose to summarise the main points covered in student comments and provide information alongside (see examples below). Your feedback could be uploaded into the course management system or LEARN.

#### Consider carefully what students say

- First, look over the positive things your students have said about the course. This is important because it is too easy to get swayed by negative comments. Then read their suggestions for improvement and consider
  - what you can change immediately (for example the online course information),
  - what you can change the next time the course is offered (for example the order of classes), and
  - what you either cannot or, for pedagogical reasons, will not change (for example the amount of coursework required).
- For team taught courses, you will need to consult with your colleagues to identify options for making changes.

#### Let students know what, if anything, will change as a result of their feedback

- Thank students for their comments. They will appreciate knowing that a lecturer has carefully considered what they have said. Clarify any confusions or misunderstandings about your goals and their expectations.
- Give a brief account of what you will act on in the short term, what you intend to change in the longer term and what you will not act on and why (see examples below).
- Keep your tone and attitude neutral; avoid being defensive, indignant or unduly apologetic.

## Examples:

### Course Survey Feedback (action/response indicated in bold)

“In the research workshop, it would make more sense to give an overview of the three topics to be covered and then introduce the examples to work through – this would help with finding a topic.”

**Thanks – we will think about the arrangement of the research workshop for 2017.**

“It was a shame that there was not more time between the field trip and the hand in for the write up. I understand this was because of the way the terms worked out this year and the desire to get the work handed back to us before we did the exam, etc., however I believe that it was perhaps not as necessary as thought to have the marks and feedback returned to us.”

**In 2016 we are pushing back the final deadline for submission by three weeks, but also including a process of draft pre-submission and peer-feedback to help you improve your work.**

“Reading papers is something that I personally did not have time for! And if the tutorial discussions are not worth anything, they are not going to get me to do extra work that will take away time from my other courses!”

**The discussion sessions are for the benefit of student learning and we will be continuing with them. At 300 level you do need to make time for extra reading.**

**You may wish to use a template form for recording feedback and responses to it which is [available online on the intranet](#).**

## APPENDIX 2

### Courses with Low- and High-Rating Course Evaluations

#### 1. Goals

The aim of the processes contained in this Appendix is to help courses that might have difficulties to improve, and to acknowledge and encourage good practice by providing feedback to departments.

As part of the review, it may be necessary to

- provide advice and consultation to help teaching staff improve these courses, and
- support Heads of Department/School (HoD/S) who must be involved if departments are to take responsibility for these courses.

#### 2. Process

The survey co-ordinator in the Analytics & Institutional Research Team will administer and monitor all survey results. Courses that fall significantly above or below the norm at the last survey will be assessed as either potentially needing improvement or for acknowledgement of good practice. A report of these assessments will be provided to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

At the beginning of each semester, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will inform Executive Deans of the courses requiring surveys in their Faculty.

The Learning and Teaching Committee will establish reference levels from time to time which are unambiguous and relatively stable. Several different approaches were considered before adopting the present procedure which is initially based on scores +/- 2 Standard Deviations.

Reference levels are based on the overall average score from across all the 2016-2017 survey results on the standard course survey: Response scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

The Learning and Teaching Committee has set reference levels as follows. For action in respect of courses that receive low ratings the reference level is 3.3. For action in respect of courses that receive high ratings the reference level is 4.8.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will acknowledge staff involved with high scoring courses. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will send a reminder of the University's measures for addressing such courses identified as potentially needing improvement to the Executive Dean. The Executive Dean will contact the course convenor and the HoD/S to discuss the particular circumstances and context relating to the course. The course will automatically be re-surveyed the following year.