

Student voice in Annual Provider Review: pilot programme briefing for applicants

[The Student Engagement Partnership \(TSEP\)](#) has been commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) to pilot a range of student voice mechanisms to assess their effectiveness and usefulness as a permanent component of quality assessment arrangements. We are looking for higher education providers and students' unions or equivalent student representative bodies (where applicable) in England to join this unique pilot programme to test and evaluate these mechanisms.

Why are we undertaking this pilot programme?

HEFCE's [revised operating model for quality assessment](#) recognised that the ways in which each funding body gathers intelligence to develop its understanding of providers and the context in which they operate do not currently capture the views of a provider's students in a systematic way. HEFCE wish to plug this gap in their understanding of a provider's activities, and establish effective ways to capture the views of a provider's students.

HEFCE have commissioned TSEP in 2016/17 to pilot a range of mechanisms to effectively capture the views of students through the intelligence gathering aspect of Annual Provider Review. At the end of the pilot programme, HEFCE will publish a summary of the approaches tested, and an evaluation of the effectiveness and usefulness of each as a permanent component of quality assessment arrangements.

About TSEP

TSEP is a specialist unit hosted within the National Union of Students with a focus on championing and developing student engagement practice in the English higher education sector. We are a hub of expertise and insight, bringing together established and emerging knowledge and practice in order to equip professionals and decision-makers in providers and students' unions with the skills they need to create new ways of thinking about and doing student engagement at a local level.

Our work is supported by a sector-wide steering group of representatives from sector bodies, institutions and students' unions, including QAA, HEA, GuildHE, AoC, LFHE, OIA and Jisc.

What are the benefits for participating institutions and students' unions?

There are various reasons why participating in this pilot programme will be advantageous for the providers and students' unions involved, such as:

- This pilot programme will establish which student voice mechanisms will become a permanent component of quality assessment arrangements beyond 2016/17. Participants will therefore have a head-start in preparing to implement these mechanisms on an annual basis.
- Giving participants a unique opportunity for planning, testing and reflection in relation to student voice in their own context, within a structured programme and with expert support from TSEP staff.
- Giving providers and students' unions or equivalent student representative bodies (where applicable) a structured opportunity to consider how they will work together on quality assessment arrangements and how student voice can contribute to continuous improvements and innovation at a local level.
- Contributing to a national programme, the outcomes of which will be widely disseminated across the sector.
- Supporting participating providers and students' unions to establish and promote sector-leading practice on student voice in quality assessment.

Which student voice mechanisms will be piloted?

There is a variety of individual and collective student voice mechanisms which contribute to continuous improvement and innovation at provider level, and for which there is an established body of practice in the sector, that could be utilised or repurposed for intelligence gathering as part of Annual Provider Review.

Through this programme we will be seeking to pilot the following mechanisms in the context of Annual Provider Review:

- Student-led annual written submissions (often referred to as Annual Quality Reports)
- Structured meetings with students and student representatives
- Web-based gathering of student views

However, the programme will be flexible in its approach in order to incorporate existing student voice mechanisms being undertaken by the participating providers, which could be repurposed for the context of Annual Provider Review. There will be a common evaluation framework in order to provide a shared understanding of the effectiveness and usefulness of the different mechanisms piloted.

How will the pilot programme work?

The programme will run throughout the 2016/17 academic year and is made up of three stages:

Planning phase: September- November 2016

We are seeking to recruit between 10- 15 providers, representing the breadth and diversity of the HE sector in England. Buy-in from across the provider and from the students' union (if applicable) is essential in order to ensure full and continued involvement throughout the 2016/17 academic year. Therefore, we will be asking providers to identify a **programme team** at the application stage who will have responsibility for managing the delivery of the programme internally. This can be made up of as many people as you consider relevant, but we will be asking for the details of:

- A programme lead to act as a main point of contact for TSEP staff throughout the pilot programme and coordinate activity relating to the programme within the provider
- A senior member of staff from the provider
- A senior member of staff or officer from the students' union or equivalent student representative body (if applicable)

We anticipate the planning and piloting phase will be most effective if providers and their students' union or equivalent student representative body work in partnership. Therefore, we are asking for representatives from both the provider and students' union or equivalent student representative body to be part of the programme team, with the programme lead derived from either as you see fit. There will be space in the planning phase to carefully consider the division of responsibilities between the provider and the students' union for the pilot phase.

In order to ensure the mechanisms are appropriate for the diversity of HE provision, we will consider applications from providers that do not have an independent students' union or equivalent student representative body. If this applies to you, please consider involving a student in the programme team, if possible.

The deadline for applications is 17.00 on Friday 30th September and we will notify the providers we have selected w/c 3rd October. At this point, we will ask you to identify availability for **a half-day workshop to be delivered at each individual participating provider in October or early November** by TSEP staff and associates. The workshop will need to be attended by the programme team and any other relevant staff and student representatives you identify. The workshop is designed to catalyse the programme and achieve the following:

- Discuss and identify the local context of each provider, potential challenges and key considerations for the pilot phase.
- Identify the student voice mechanism(s) each provider will pilot and the specific approach for each mechanism.
- Establish an approach to planning, roles and responsibilities for the pilot phase (including the bespoke support provided by TSEP) and identify key milestones for delivery and evaluation.
- Share and critique the evaluation framework TSEP will be using to assess the effectiveness and usefulness of each mechanism.

Pilot phase: November 2016- April 2017

Following the workshop, TSEP will provide **an analysis of the discussions, as well as identified actions**. The pilot phase will then begin, with the participating providers undertaking the mechanisms they have identified with **ongoing support and guidance from TSEP staff**.

Evaluation and dissemination phase: May- July 2017

Evaluation methods will be agreed with each participating provider during the planning phase and informed by an evaluation framework which will be applied across the programme to provide some shared criteria to assess the effectiveness and usefulness of the mechanisms piloted. Throughout the pilot phase, TSEP will **gather information from the participating providers to inform the evaluation**. We will also contact participating providers in the evaluation and dissemination phase to inform the summary and evaluation of the mechanisms piloted for publication.

What are the costs and resources involved?

There is no fee for participating in the pilot programme. However, given that all participating providers will be expected to fully pilot at least one student voice mechanism, there may be internal resource implications, such as staff time. The initial workshop will help you to plan the time and resources needed to pilot your chosen mechanism(s) accordingly, factoring in the support provided by TSEP staff throughout the pilot stage.

The resources TSEP provide to participating providers will be in the form of expert support and guidance from our staff and networks. We are not able to provide financial assistance to providers or students' unions for participating in the pilot programme.

How to apply

If you would like to apply to be part of the pilot programme, please complete this [short online application form](#). **The deadline for applications is 17.00 on Friday 30th September 2016.**

Please note that providers that had been scheduled for QAA Higher Education Review in 2016-17 will not be included in this pilot programme as students and student representative bodies at these institutions will have the opportunity to contribute to review visits being undertaken by QAA.

The survey questions are listed below to assist with your considerations. If you have any queries or would like to discuss your potential involvement in the pilot programme, please email tsep@nus.org.uk and a member of our team will be in touch with you shortly. **We will notify the providers we have selected w/c 3rd October.**

Application questions

1. Provider name
2. Programme lead details- operational member of staff from the provider or students' union (if applicable) and first point of contact for the programme:

Name
Role
Email address
Phone number
3. Programme team details- senior member of staff from the provider:

Name
Role
Email address
4. Programme team details- senior member of staff or officer from the students' union or equivalent student representative body (if applicable) or a student:

Name
Role
Email address
5. Please briefly outline why you are interested in being part of the pilot programme
6. Please indicate which of these student voice mechanisms you currently have in place
 - Student-led annual or termly written submission (often described as an Annual Quality Report)
 - A student representative or champions system that operates at course and/or department level
 - A students as researchers scheme (often referred to as a students as change agents scheme)
 - A mechanism for students to analyse results from surveys, such as the National Student Survey
 - None of the above
7. Would you like to provide any additional information or context on your answers to the previous question? (optional)
8. Please indicate which of these types of provision your provider currently undertakes
 - Qualifications delivered via distance learning
 - MOOCs

- Transnational education
 - Franchise or validation arrangements with partner colleges or providers
 - None of the above
9. Would you like to provide any additional information or context on your answers to the previous question? (optional)
10. Do you envisage any challenges or have any concerns about participating in this programme, and if so please briefly outline what these are?
11. Would you like to add any further details to support your application? (optional)