

Ensuring Student Satisfaction

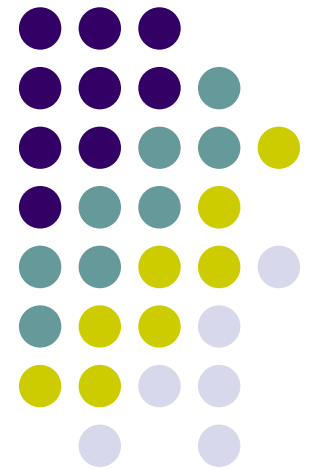
Closing the loop

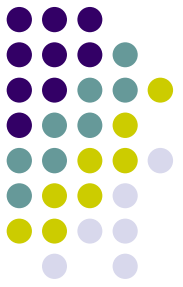
Simon Felton

National Postgraduate Committee

General Secretary

<http://www.npc.org.uk> npc@npc.org.uk

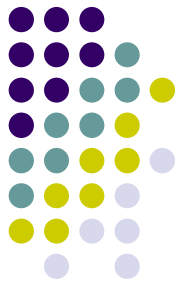




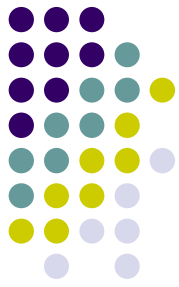
National Postgraduate Committee

- To advance in the public interest, the education of postgraduate students within the United Kingdom.
- Three Visions;
 - ability to learn not their ability to pay
 - environment which promotes and sustains equality of opportunity
 - financial, intellectual, pastoral and social support mechanisms.

Ensuring Student Satisfaction: Closing the loop

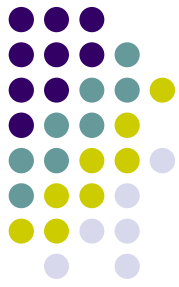


- Highlight the variety of postgraduate student experience.
- The holistic approach to creating student satisfaction.
- The importance of feedback and student involvement in creating satisfaction.
- Closing the feedback loop to stakeholders and enhancing quality management.



No typical Postgrad...

- Diversity in students – part time, full time, international, home, distance, mature.
- Staff and students integral parts of a learning community.
- Academic staff should treat postgraduates as professionals.
- Different expectations – different needs.
- Conception of research – successful postgraduate research has been associated with strategies to help both student and supervisor clarify their expectation early.



Student Satisfaction

- 3 in 10 PhD students don't submit thesis within seven years of starting.
- Therefore it is important to ensure student satisfaction by avoiding complaints, litigation but most importantly to enhance the student experience by generating, transferring, sharing, and disseminating knowledge and to develop the students career development and researcher development.



Holistic Support

- Central Graduate School – Cardiff: Offers bar, computing and library facilities, skills training and social events.
- One-stop shop or portal / one multidisciplinary school – cross fertilisation of research ideas.
- Issues – council tax, writing up, supervision, complaints, resources, information.



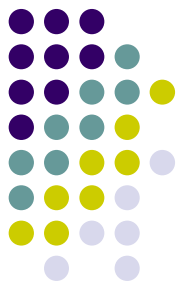
Holistic Support continued.

- If student not undertaken undergraduate at same institution they will need to rebuild social network – for master's programme in a year.
- For most postgraduate students - University as a workplace – expectation to be equipped in an appropriate manner as such.

Information – admin, academic and welfare.

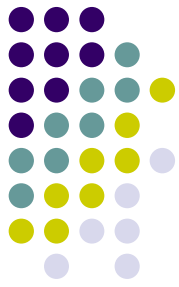


- Lack of information given to students relating to administrative and academic requirements.
- International students – particular support needed – disadvantaged by language and cultural differences.
- Induction programmes – covering full range of information affecting students experience.
- Intellectual property, plagiarism, regulations, complaints.
- Online Portal.



Supervision

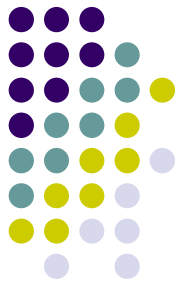
- Postgraduate research education predicated on good supervision.
- *The most important influence on supervisors' supervision approach is how they themselves were supervised (see Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2001).*
- Supervisors with experience – but be careful of vagueness '*experience in research*' and '*experience of successful supervision*'.



Supervision continued.

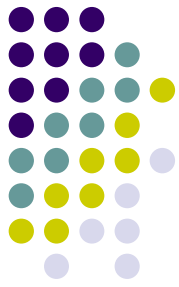
- Supervisor contract – an initial meeting with agreed obligations, responsibilities and expectations on student and supervisor.
- Supervisor training – RMIT Australia: Supervisors attend 2 training workshops out of 15 per year to be on university supervisor register.
- Freely available feedback on supervision – if environment does not invite it.

Supervisor-Student Contract



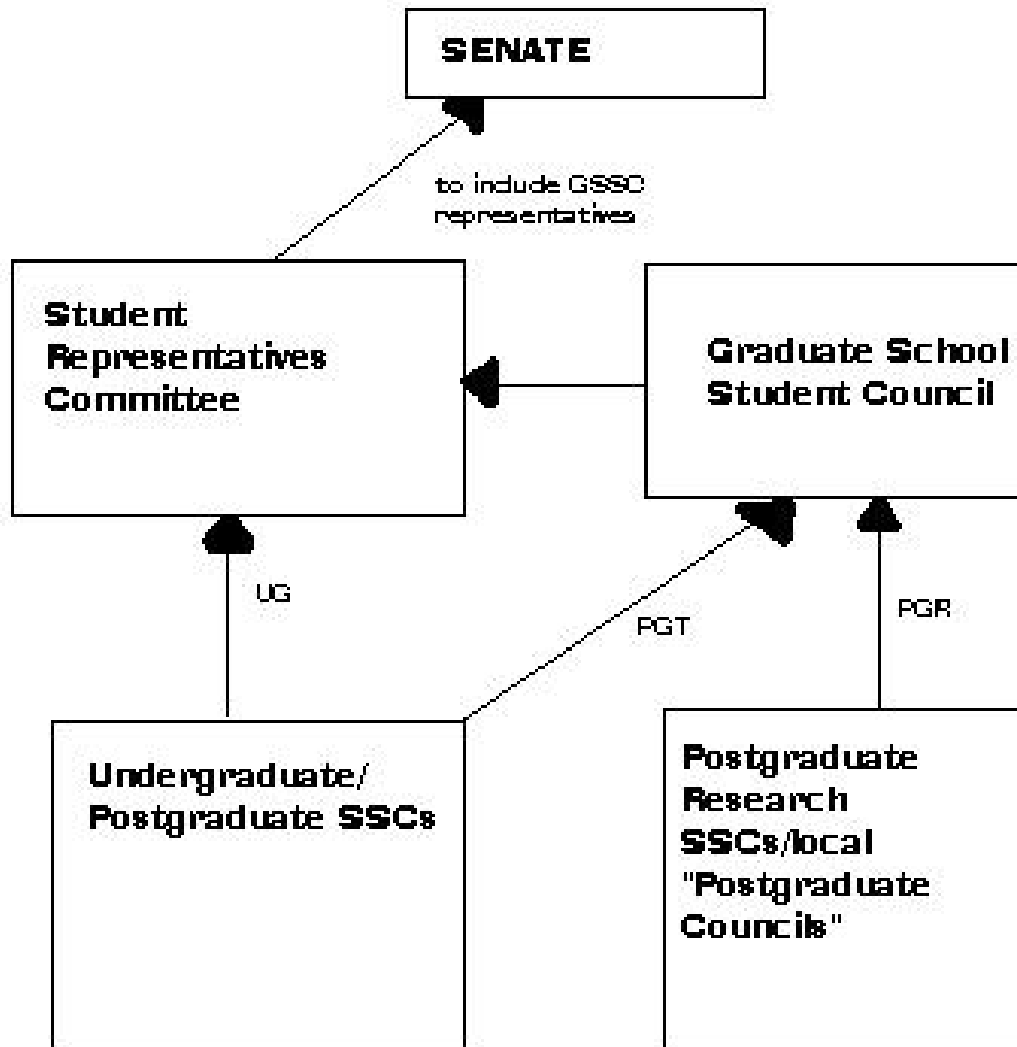
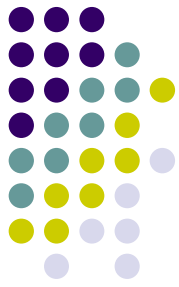
- Completed by Students and their Supervisors and returned to the Research Degrees Administrator within 1 month of enrolment or as soon as possible thereafter. Copies to be authorised and re-issued to both supervisor and the student.
- Outlines expectations, obligations, responsibilities, routes for complaint and appeal, meeting frequency - can be changed and amended by seeking all party approval.
- Similar practice used by Australian universities alongside Bolton Institute in the UK.

Student Representation.



- Students involved in all levels of institution governance.
- Semi-autonomous association or union – central to institution-wide discussion and representation.
- Creation of institution ‘postgraduate community’.
- Student council in graduate school – Graduate School Student Council – partnership to develop research and learning environment.

Student Representation continued.



**University of
Birmingham Graduate
School Feedback
routes.**



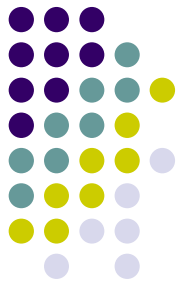
Feedback

- Disjuncture between policies and practices of postgraduate education.
- Postgraduates are from generation where social interaction and peer support is important.
- Information, results and recommendations of surveys and audits should be incorporated into the institutions quality management.



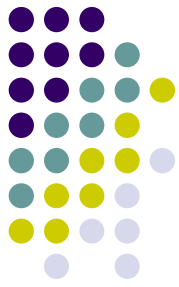
Feedback continued.

- “recognition of postgraduate researchers as a cohort ... the most powerful thing [graduate schools] can do” (Janet Metcalfe, UKGRAD).
- Mapping different expectations and outcomes and how to match expectation and need to outcome.



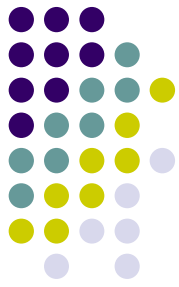
Principles for use of Feedback

- (Bean G 2005 p268). Does Feedback From Postgraduate Students Align with the recommendations of Academic Auditors?
 1. Obtain student input into quality process.
 2. Obtain staff buy-in
 3. Ensure quality assurance process supported by VC and embedded in central planning.
 4. Triangulate results using several sources.
 5. Report the results of the quality assurance process and actions taken to key stakeholders. Comprehensive feedback to postgraduates through representative body.



Conclusion

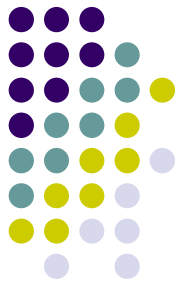
- Feedback that is correctly gathered, interpreted, reported back offers meaningful input to management.
- Feedback – Ensure that it is used to guide the provision of appropriate university structures, management oversight and support. Stakeholder buy in.
- Students are stakeholders, partners and professionals – they need to be treated as such with facilities, representation and support.



Further References

- Bean, G. (2005) Does Feedback From Postgraduate Students Align with the Recommendations of Academic Auditors? *Quality in Higher Education* 11, No. 3, 261-272.
- Kandlbinder, P. & Peseta, T. (2001) *In supervisors' words: an insiders view of postgraduate supervision* (Sydney, Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Sydney).
- <http://www.npc.org.uk/essentials/publications> - NPC guidelines.
- <http://www.auqa.edu.au/gp/search/index.php> - Australian Universities Quality Agency Good Practice Database.

Further References continued.



- <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1123186316> - NPC Guidelines on Including Postgraduates in the Institutional Audit Process.
- <http://www.missendencentre.co.uk/> - Missenden Centre for the Development of Higher Education offers support to academic and administrative staff to examine concerns on topical issues such as supervision to prepare academic staff for supervision work.