**University Policy for Unit Evaluation**

**Summary**

The policy sets out an institutional approach to taught unit level feedback and evaluation by students. This is a core strand of the University’s approach to developing our degree programmes in a partnership between students and academic staff.

**Scope - This document applies to:**

This policy applies to taught units at all levels of study and outlines both mid-unit and end of unit feedback/evaluation principles.

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**Related documents**

- Policy Annex A - Mid-unit feedback guidance
- Policy Annex B – End-of-unit evaluation guidance
- Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught programmes: Study Abroad in undergraduate programmes

**Keywords**

Unit evaluation; feedback; enhancement; feedback loop; student voice
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Purpose

Unit evaluation is part of the University's continuous process of evaluating and enhancing the quality of its units and programmes. Research has also shown that feedback, both to and from students, is "the single most influential factor in student learning" (Hattie 2009). Feedback from students helps teachers reflect on practice, consider unit design and adapt their teaching. Additionally, the reflection that students undertake during and at the end of each unit is a powerful tool in developing their own learning strategies. Bristol's unit evaluation policy is particularly geared to this goal.

Unit evaluation and mid-unit feedback provides a powerful means of responding to feedback quickly and supplements feedback collected from other sources designed to monitor and enhance unit and programme structures, curriculum teaching and assessment, such as External Examiner reports; internal and external (e.g. NSS) surveys; peer review; the outcomes of internal and external reviews. By listening, engaging in dialogue and agreeing appropriate actions, students can help shape units. This demonstrates that student voice is valued and acted on appropriately, and that students are partners in our education endeavour.

Mid-unit feedback will enable those staff delivering the unit to gather informal feedback from students to ensure any issues are raised early and, wherever possible, acted on promptly. For students, the gain is in reflecting on their own approach to learning within the unit.

End of unit evaluation outcomes should be used by the Unit Director to monitor and enhance the learning experience, and by the Programme Director, School Education Director (SED) and Head of School or their nominees/s to monitor and enhance provision across the school. Students also gain by reflecting on their development through the programme. The resulting dialogue contributes to a sense of academic community for students and staff jointly.

The SED (or equivalent role) should ensure the operation of this policy within the school.

Operational principles for unit evaluation

1. Each unit must carry out mid-unit feedback and end of unit evaluation each time it runs. The following exceptions will apply:

   a. Independent study units (e.g. project/dissertation/case study/portfolio) will only carry out end of unit evaluation;
   b. Placement units will only carry out end of unit evaluation;
   c. Fieldwork-only units will only carry out end of unit evaluation;
   d. Units with over 120 credits will be exempt from unit evaluation;
   e. Units delivered by a partner institution will be exempt from unit evaluation;
   f. Summer school/pre-sessional units will be exempt from unit evaluation.

   Any queries, please email: unit-evaluation@bristol.ac.uk

2. Students will not be asked to identify themselves in any feedback / evaluation and student confidentiality must be assured in line with the University’s Data Protection Policies.
3. Time should be allocated within a regular teaching session to collect feedback / evaluation, at both mid-unit and end of unit.

4. All students registered on the unit will have the opportunity to give mid-unit feedback and end-of-unit evaluation. Any student may choose not to participate.

5. Responses to mid and end-of-unit feedback / evaluation should be reviewed by staff and actions agreed with and communicated to students.

6. End-of-unit evaluation results should be shared with all students on the unit.

**Mid-unit feedback**

7. Mid-unit feedback should be undertaken approximately halfway through the unit; this will vary depending on the length of the unit. For example, it might be valuable to consult students after five or six weeks in a year-long unit.

8. Time within a regular teaching session following the completion of mid-unit feedback should be used to discuss responses with students and agree any immediate actions which could enhance the students’ experience of the unit.

9. Unit Directors should provide a written response to the feedback from students, summarising what has worked well, any issues and any actions to address them.

**End-of-unit evaluation**

10. End-of-unit evaluation should normally be undertaken in one of the last two regular teaching weeks. Exceptionally, where students are not involved in scheduled group teaching towards the end of the unit (e.g. some dissertation and placement units) the evaluation may be undertaken within a designated time frame at the discretion of the Unit Director.

11. A summary of the results from end of unit evaluations should be made available to students within 3 term time weeks of being completed in TB1 and by the end of the summer term for TB2/4 units; this should include any actions. The report should also be made available to students who may wish to take the unit in the following academic year, to help inform their choices.

12. The Unit Director should share the student evaluation responses and summary with the Programme Director and flag any issues and areas of best practice.

13. The annual programme review meeting should have an agenda item regarding end of unit evaluation and recommendations arising; actions should be captured in the School Education Action Plan (EAP).

14. The first teaching session of all taught units should include reference to the summary of feedback/evaluations received from the previous student cohort and outline how these have helped shape the unit, demonstrating that the student voice is valued and acted upon appropriately.

15. Relevant University staff and students will be given access to aggregated data reports from end-of-unit evaluations (e.g. SEDs, Faculty Education Directors, University Quality Teams - including Student Quality Reviewers) for use in internal quality assurance and enhancement activities.
Blue – Bristol Live Unit Evaluation

16. During 2021/22, the University will implement a system known as Blue, provided by Explorance, to operate unit evaluations. Blue is managed centrally by the Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO) based in Education Services and operated by the Unit Directors and School Administration Teams in each School. School Education Directors are responsible for the operation of unit evaluation in each School. Blue is integrated within the University’s virtual learning environment (Blackboard) to allow easy access for students. General queries about Blue can be addressed to unit-evaluation@bristol.ac.uk. Information of how to use Blue can be found in the Bristol Education Administration Manual (BEAM).

17. There is an expectation that Blue will be used by all units within standard programme structures. However, some units (potentially units on non-modular programmes) may not be able to use the tool during the initial implementation. These units will be notified prior to implementation and should continue to use the evaluation methods previously in place. Further information about the alternative tools that can be used to support unit evaluation can be found here: https://www.bristol.ac.uk/digital-education-guides/unit-evaluation/. We recommend that, wherever possible, the principles and question types which operate in Blue (see Annexes A and B) are also used where units are unable to use Blue.

18. In the first year of operation, 2021-22, Blue will be used to gather mid-unit feedback from students from w/c 25 October. Units which need to use mid-unit feedback before this date are advised to use other approaches.

19. Annex A to this policy provides guidance on using Blue for gathering mid-unit feedback. Annex B to this policy provides guidance on using Blue for end of unit evaluation.

Annex A - Mid-unit feedback guidance
Annex B - End of unit evaluation guidance
2. Mid-unit Feedback Question Sets

2.1. Mid-unit feedback will be collected using Blue. For further information about how to use Blue, please visit: https://uob.sharepoint.com/sites/beam/SitePages/unit-evaluation.aspx

2.2. Mid-unit feedback will be based on one of the standard question sets below (see Section 6). School Education Directors will consult with Programme and Unit Directors to determine which set is most appropriate, and to decide which optional questions might be added. Normally, the owning school will specify the same set of questions for all units in the same year of each programme. Where units are shared across multiple programmes, the unit’s owning school determines which question set applies to the unit.

2.3. The University-wide question sets can be supplemented by optional questions, one set quantitative question and up to two questions which can be specific to the school, discipline or programme; these can be quantitative or qualitative.

2.4. It is the responsibility of the Unit Director or administrators in the school that owns the unit to implement the agreed question set and add any agreed additional optional questions.

3. Timing

3.1. Mid-unit feedback should normally be undertaken around the mid-point of the unit; this will vary depending on the length of the unit. School Education Directors will consult with Programme and Unit Directors to determine the most opportune timing, aiming for consistency across each programme.

3.2. Some units may have a structure which would suggest earlier operation of mid-unit feedback, for instance if there is a natural division based on activity type or content coverage. Where, for example, units have taught sessions in early weeks before students move to independent or placement work, the mid-unit feedback should be undertaken before the end of the taught element. In year-long units, it may be useful to operate mid-unit feedback around the midway point of Teaching Block 1.

3.3. Students will be emailed the mid-unit feedback link to encourage higher response rates. Ideally, time should be allocated within a regular teaching session to allow student to complete their mid-unit feedback. Unit Directors should advise students that the feedback from mid-unit evaluation cannot alter fixed elements of the unit specification in-year (e.g. timetable, assessment arrangements, etc.).

4. Reviewing mid-unit feedback

4.1. The Unit Director will review the feedback via standard reports provided within Blue. They should discuss this with other unit teaching staff where appropriate and agree any appropriate actions.

4.2. A teaching session following the completion of mid-unit feedback (where practical, normally the next session) should be used to review the light touch summary of student responses and agree any actions. In smaller or medium-size units where this is practical, teachers should run this as a group discussion to agree any immediate actions; this dialogue provides a significant benefit of mid-unit feedback and encourages active reflection about learning for all participants – students and tutors.
larger units, it may be possible to include a similar discussion in smaller parallel groups, though the focus of mid-unit feedback is essentially at the level of the unit overall.

5. Responding to students

5.1. A pro-forma is available within Blue for the Unit Director to add a light touch summary of student responses from the survey and the class discussion, and any appropriate actions on to share with students. For further information about this please visit: https://uob.sharepoint.com/sites/beam/SitePages/unit-evaluation.aspx. This will be made available to students within Blackboard, and students are automatically notified when it is available.

5.2. The pro-forma should be completed within 2 weeks from the date of the survey closing (normally one week from the class discussion).

5.3. Sometimes colleagues will need to be clear with students that certain requests cannot be implemented quickly or in-year for practical reasons beyond the tutors’ control (e.g. dissatisfaction with a teaching room, request to change the assessment format beyond the approved unit specification, etc.), but can be reflected in proposals for change in the following academic year.