

Use of data in academic quality management

Review finding (July 2015)

De Montfort University (DMU) received a commendation for the enhancement of its student learning opportunities. QAA identified as a feature of good practice: 'the effective use of data and management information to identify, monitor and evaluate enhancement activities' (Quality Code, *Chapter B3, Chapter B8, Part C and Enhancement*).

About the good practice

Drawing on a staff consultation, DMU has made significant improvements to its information management systems and reporting software - changes that have led to more effective academic monitoring and strategic planning.

The Department of Academic Quality (DAQ) has worked from a relatively low baseline to replace out-of-date and ineffective reporting software with a new data visualisation tool. This redevelopment project has been delivered by the Strategic Planning Service, consulting colleagues from across the institution. An iterative process of reflecting evaluations and reviews back into the work undertaken has ensured that the end product meets users' needs.

The project has culminated in the launch of a new suite of self-service reports. At the implementation stage, the Department of Academic Quality provided a comprehensive schedule of hands-on briefing and training sessions attended by over 400 colleagues. With suitable support and guidance, staff have been enabled to use the new systems and software to evaluate the curriculum, student performance and strategic initiatives. To date, more than 630 staff (around 480 of whom are academics) are actively using this reporting system within quality management.

Evaluation and development

Overcoming negative perceptions and achieving buy-in from staff disaffected with the previous system was one of the main challenges faced, but the approach outlined above has received universally positive feedback. Rather than remaining mere consumers of data, staff have been empowered to take ownership of the underlying issues with a genuine appetite for more information.

Key success factors and strengths of this practice are that the end user has been engaged at every stage and that, just as staff views were sought in developing the new systems and software, mechanisms are in place to elicit feedback and inform future enhancements. There are ongoing opportunities for staff to feed back on their experiences.

The system has since been extended to the university's external examiners and collaborative partner institutions.

Contact for further information

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