



The Open College of the Arts

OCA Student Voice Strategy

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Introduction

This strategy outlines the overall framework for capturing student voice in a variety of ways, and outlines the mechanisms through which student feedback is analysed and acted upon across the Open College of the Arts (OCA) to ensure an inclusive, responsive, and supportive learning environment. It aims to embed student voices into decision-making processes at all levels of the organisation.

The strategy aims to improve the student experience by using feedback to enhance teaching, learning, and support services. Key principles include empowerment, flexibility, and accountability, with clear roles and responsibilities defined for staff and students. Success will be measured by increased student engagement and a reduction in complaints.

OCA values and vision

Our vision is to reach more students with life-changing creative arts learning that meets their needs, creatively responds to social and ecological challenges, and enriches society. The OCA is committed to making the student experience the very best it can be.

Academic frameworks

Relevant academic frameworks have informed and shaped the core principles of this Student Voice Strategy. These frameworks include:

- The [2024 UK Quality Code](#) for Higher Education. Drawing specifically on Principle 2: Engaging students as partners and Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality.
- [OCA's Strategy on a Page \(SOAP\)](#) – In line with OCA's SOAP, there are a number of key strands that run through all areas of activity at OCA and inform the thinking around this strategy. They are; Innovative, Open, Social, Sustainable, Practice-based, Inventive and Dynamic.
- The OCA Student Charter – The OCA Student Charter was developed as a partnership statement between OCA and our students, through discussion with the OCASA. It sets out expectations of OCA, OCASA and our students. [You can find the Student Charter here.](#)



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What do we mean by student voice at OCA?

Student voice describes the way in which feedback and dialogue between students and staff at OCA can be captured, shared, and acted upon. This feedback is used to enhance the learning and teaching experience. To maintain a high-quality student experience, it is essential that all students have opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their experiences of study and the wider OCA offering. To facilitate this, we intend to use a variety of mechanisms, with a view to learning from and responding to feedback individually, collectively and through the OCASA.

About

The student experience encompasses learning, teaching and assessment and the wider student experience, including student support services.

The student experience touches upon everything at OCA. From the academic, to the administrative, and the transactional, all activities at OCA have an impact on how students perceive their experience.

As an organisation, OCA values diversity in our student, staff, and tutor body and will work to ensure that each individual, whatever their background, can achieve their full potential and have a fulfilling experience of studying or working in higher education. We aim to build trust within the institution for tutors and students to be their authentic selves. Encompassing their voice in our course materials, policy, infrastructure and all elements that make the OCA what it is.

Students contribute valuable and diverse perspectives and are not a unified group. As such there will be a range of student voices within the OCA. All conversations with students should recognise that our student body diversity is a strength and that students will have varied views.

When seeking feedback from students, colleagues should ensure that conversations are inclusive and enable all students to participate so that as many student voices as possible may be captured.

Related Policy

- [Learning & Teaching Policy](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct](#)

Strategic Aims

The OCA is committed to working in partnership with our students to gather feedback through surveys, focus groups, consultations or workshops and user testing to help us identify trends, issues and to establish priorities for future developments.

Student voice activities are essential to:

- Ensure that students are active participants in governance and decision making;
- Ensure that students are active participants in quality assurance and enhancement;
- Provide opportunities for students to become active participants and co-creators in their learning;
- Foster collaboration between students and staff
- To encourage and celebrate student voice as a central part of OCA
- To enable a supportive culture, which encourages dialogue and feedback
- To capture feedback from across the student community, ensuring everyone who has something to say feels empowered to say it, and that the diversity of the student community is represented
- Transparent arrangements are in place for the collective student voice to be heard and responded to. (QAA statement)
- Provide an evidence base to inform decision making processes at OCA.

Principles for Student Voice

Inclusivity

- Design feedback tools and processes to ensure participation from students across diverse backgrounds, abilities, and circumstances.
- Prioritise accessibility for learners including disabled and neurodiverse



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students, and those in different time zones.

Transparency

- Communicate how feedback will be used and the outcomes of any resulting changes.
- Close the feedback loop by sharing insights and actions with students.

Empowerment

- Foster a culture where students feel their input is valued and impactful.
- Enable students to co-create solutions to identified challenges.

Flexibility

- Use a variety of tools and formats to meet the diverse preferences of students.
- Adapt processes based on the needs of different cohorts or disciplines.

Accountability

- Assign clear ownership for acting on feedback within the organisation.
- Regularly evaluate and report on the effectiveness of feedback initiatives.

Student Voice Framework

A Student Voice framework sets out to provide a way of understanding how different mechanisms for gathering the student voice can provide different vantage points on the student experience and can assist the OCA in identifying areas of achievement and improvement. This is a formal process which ensures all students have the opportunity to provide feedback in an inclusive way.

We do acknowledge that students informally provide feedback to Programme Leaders, Tutors, HQ staff and their peers, whilst this is valuable and we encourage dialogue, it doesn't allow us to capture information to inform development and change and may inadvertently create barriers for equitable feedback opportunities for example those in varying time zones or with specific accessibility needs.



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We will conduct an annual review of the strategy's effectiveness including our core surveys and adjust tools and processes based on student feedback and evolving needs.

The table below outlines the ways in which we collate feedback and we will take a deeper dive into each mechanism.

Collating Feedback	Retrospective	Current	Future
Aim	To provide a reflective voice	To capture current issues & feedback	To provide feedback and input for developments
Mechanism	• Surveys	• Representation • Focus Groups	• Consultation • User testing

The views of OCA students are important to shape the decisions that OCA takes. To assist in this OCA uses qualitative methods such as focus groups to identify issues, and inform the student community surveys that OCA runs. This enables OCA to more readily quantify the impact of current issues and ensure that this is fed into decision making processes.

Surveys

The OCA participates in a number of college wide student experience surveys each year. These demonstrate our commitment to listening to the student voice and the results are used to promote quality enhancement, thus ensuring we deliver the best possible experience for our students.

We endeavour to

- Develop inclusive surveys tailored to the needs of OCA students.
- Use accessible design principles, including mobile-friendly formats and plain language.
- Include open-ended questions to allow students to express unique

perspectives.

How students share their views with surveys

Induction, Cancellation and Withdrawal

There is a short survey that students are invited to take upon completion of induction. It is not mandatory but the feedback is collated on a quarterly basis and an action plan and review is developed which is then reported to OCA's Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC).

If students choose to cancel their enrolment or withdraw their will be sent a relevant form collating information on their decision and experience. Relevant information will be shared to Academic and Operational teams.

Undergraduate

- The National Student Survey (NSS) asks qualifying undergraduate students across the UK to reflect on their university experience. It's run by an independent agency, Ipsos Mori on behalf of the Office for Students.
- Stage Survey – The Stage Survey aims to gather information relating to students' experiences across their whole stage of study (HE4, HE5, or HE6). Questions are based on the NSS survey.
 - Students will be surveyed upon completion of their relevant stage of study. The survey is sent out by the OCA Assessment team.
- Unit Evaluation Survey – Students are surveyed once per course unit for their experiences when they have completed it.
 - The survey is embedded within their course unit on OCA Learn.
- Early Unit Evaluation Survey – The early unit survey is completed by students upon submission of their first assignment, it is an early indicator of their motivation and expectations of study so far.
 - The survey is embedded within their course unit on OCA Learn.
- [Graduate Outcomes Survey](#) – All graduates who completed a higher education course in the UK after August 2017 will be asked to take part in the survey 15 months after they finish their studies. The survey is delivered by [HESA](#) (Higher Education Statistics Agency).

Postgraduate

- The MA Survey is mapped against the questions asked in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), run by the [Advance HE](#), and which the majority of UK universities take part in. This permits OCA to match itself and the MA against equivalent or similar courses and providers. It is sent to students upon completion of their MA by the OCA Assessment team.

OCASA

- Student Experience Survey – annual survey used to inform the Student Voice Festival.

Student Consultation

What does this look like at OCA?

- Students may be consulted on developments within OCA on topics across the student experience. Whilst this is most likely to be related to changes in academic provision, we welcome student input in student support design.
- In circumstances where major changes are proposed and/or where any change may significantly affect the Unit or a student's ability to complete it (for example, changing the Unit structure, addition or removal of optional Units, or changes to learning outcomes), we will consult with affected students on the proposed changes to the extent practicable, acknowledging that where such a change is required by law or by an accrediting, commissioning or regulating body, we may not be able to do so before the change is made.

Student Representation

We will draw on **Principle 2 – Engaging students as partners** of the UK Quality Code. This Principle sets out key practices around the deliberate steps providers take to engage students as active partners in assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. Engagement happens individually and collectively to influence all levels of study and decision making.

Enhancements identified through student engagement activities are implemented, where appropriate, and communicated to staff and students. OCA

will:

- Facilitate opportunities for students to be representatives, advocates or course champions.
- Partner with student representatives to gather insights from their peers.
- Host an annual Student Voice Festival to provide a safe space for feedback.
- Ensure there is student representation on various Governance groups such as;
 - Board of Trustees
 - Academic Board
 - Curriculum & Quality Committee (CQC)
 - Learning & Teaching Committee (LTC)
 - Curriculum Development Group (CDG)
 - Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Group (EDIG)

Focus Groups

Focus groups represent the first rung of consultation processes and surveying techniques and are the core feedback mechanism in use. Focus groups will be established across OCA, in each subject area, and in specific areas of institutional focus, for example within induction, equity and diversity, and sustainability among others.

OCA will use focus groups to capture current issues and feedback at a local level, informing the shape of questions and consultation on a wider scale to build an evidence base.

- Virtual focus groups can offer deeper insights.
- We will endeavour to use creative facilitation methods for example; visual brainstorming, polls and use of the chat function to engage students.

In addition to Focus Groups being used as mechanisms to gather feedback, they can also be used bilaterally to talk to students about improvements that are planned, and how OCA is operating on feedback received.

Focus groups will be open to all students to apply to join, with a selection process to be used to ensure, as far as possible, that a broad representation of students is utilised.

User testing

From time to time OCA may do callouts for students to test usability and accessibility of its websites, services, activities and resources. This is to ensure that inclusivity is at the forefront of developments. Teams exploring user testing are required to complete an [Equality Impact Assessment](#) to support change and new initiatives.

Promoting Student Voice

Completion of the surveys is promoted throughout the academic year, targeted to the relevant audiences by relevant OCA teams and OCASA. It will offer a simple message that student feedback is essential and will have a real impact on the student experience including retention and attainment.

A key element in encouraging feedback is by demonstrating how OCA has listened to past responses and used them as ways of making tangible differences to OCA Students – You Said/We Did/We will. This will be done through the Student Voice Festival annually and through Annual Programme Evaluations (APEs). We will also share any relevant progress updates via newsletters, OCA Learn, and social media.

Developing a student voice component OCA Learn

We have embedded early unit surveys and end of unit surveys to glean the student voice within each Department space on OCA Learn. We will further enhance our commitment to student voice through clear signposting to discussion forums, community groups, OCASA and any irregular opportunities to provide feedback such as focus groups and user testing.

- Leverage discussion forums, polls, and virtual suggestion boxes within online learning platforms.



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- Integrate real-time feedback mechanisms during online sessions.

How are students contacted?

Students are surveyed via various tools depending on the survey and contacted via Mailchimp to their OCA email accounts. Other surveys using google forms are embedded within OCA Learn and OCA google mail (gmail) is also used to contact students.

Can students opt out?

Surveys and other mechanisms to provide feedback are not mandatory, however we do encourage students to participate.

Security & Confidentiality

OCA surveys are confidential and will not ask for personal identifiable information. Depending on the platform that is used for the survey, certain electronic information may be captured and stored (cookies). This information is used to track engagement with both emails and surveys by OCA. All OCA survey results are stored securely, are only available to authorised individuals to use for analysis and reporting purposes and are handled in compliance with Data Protection legislation and OCA best practice.

What do we do with the results

We will draw on **Principle 4 – Using data to inform and evaluate quality** of the UK Quality Code. This states that providers collect, analyse and utilise qualitative and quantitative data at provider, departmental, programme and module levels. These analyses inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience.

The OCA Quality team will collate survey responses to review and use the qualitative and quantitative data to identify trends and patterns in student feedback. We will do this quarterly, segregating data for department and operational teams, making recommendations for change and highlighting areas of success. with relevant input from colleagues. Collective responses from the survey will be made available to key OCA staff members who help us to enhance



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the quality of the student experience. Key findings will also be included within OCA's Annual Programme Evaluations. [See Fig.1 Closing the Feedback Loop – Undergraduate Surveys.](#)

We will look to prioritise "quick wins" for immediate impact and establish timelines for implementing systemic or long-term changes.

Those involved in organising and carrying out focus groups and user testing will review data inline with the purpose of the activity and share findings to relevant stakeholders.

We treat all individual responses to our surveys in confidence so we are unable to pass on any queries raised in completed surveys. Students should report any issues to OCA support teams or Department Programme Leaders.

At OCA we do everything we can to ensure you have a positive learning experience. But we recognise sometimes things go wrong. The Student Complaints and Non-Academic Appeals Procedure sets out two processes you can use if something goes wrong; Complaints and Non-Academic Appeals. [You can find out more about our complaint's procedure here.](#)

Your survey answers and comments will never be used in a way that can identify individuals.

Anonymised quotes from comments received may be used to illustrate the survey findings in internal reports and external publications. However, if students would rather their comments were not used in this way they can tick the box on the final page of our questionnaires.

How do we measure success?

We'll measure our success using both internal and external methods:

- Improved engagement and participation with OCA student voice activities
- Increased number of students volunteering to be Reps, user testers etc
- Decrease in the number of student complaints

- External measures such as NSS

How feedback makes a difference

- Academic – Within course materials, Library, group work, tutor feedback
- Wellbeing – Access to support teams, feeling heard
- Resources – Better resources and increased learning opportunities
- Community – Fostering community through increased opportunities to meet, collaborate and discuss. Partnership opportunities between staff and students

Roles and responsibilities

Academic Teams

- Make students aware of how to contribute feedback
- Participate in the Student Voice Festival
- Promote mechanisms for feedback
- Listen to student feedback and let students know how their feedback has or has not been acted on and why

Operational Staff

- Make students aware of how to contribute feedback
- Participate in the Student Voice Festival
- Facilitate mechanisms for feedback
- Commit to closing the feedback loop

OCASA

- Facilitate opportunities for students to be representatives, advocates or course champions
- Host the Student Voice Festival
- Promote student voice activities
- Commit to closing the feedback loop

Students

- Provide open, honest and constructive feedback

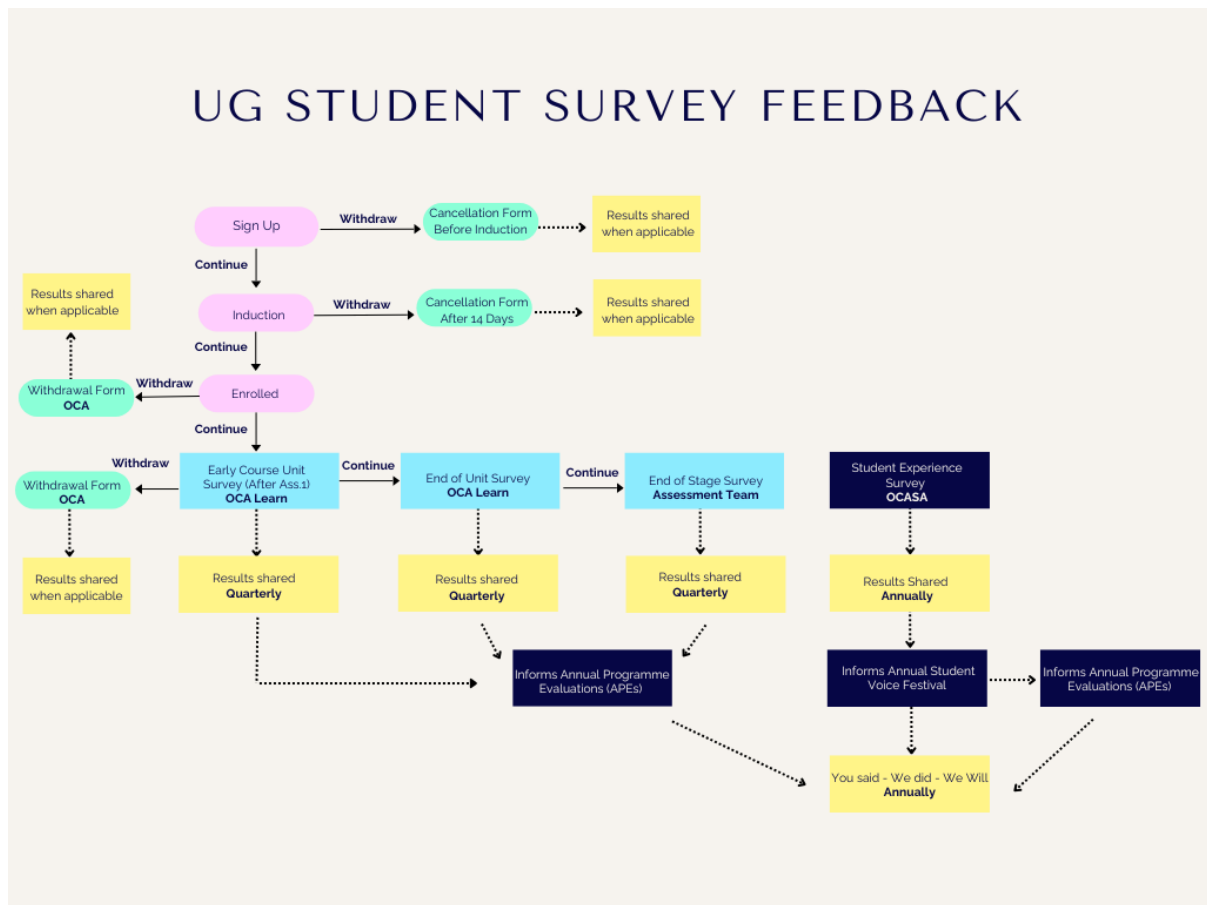


Fig 1: Closing the feedback loop – Undergraduate Surveying