

Measuring teaching quality with student feedback



Royal Holloway, University of London is ranked among the top ten research-led university institutions in the country. Bringing together talented students in departments where academic staff are working at the frontiers of their subjects, Royal Holloway is home to a vibrant community of 6,600 undergraduate and postgraduate students of all ages and backgrounds from more than 120 countries.

Measuring teaching quality

Royal Holloway is proud of its excellent reputation for teaching and research. Its degree programmes reflect the latest thinking, and its teaching is undertaken by staff with a real command of their subject. In recent assessments and audits by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), Royal Holloway's departments have been awarded excellent ratings, while the College's internal mechanisms for teaching quality and maintaining standards were strongly commended. Consistent with this commitment to quality, a decision was taken to introduce a College-wide questionnaire for gathering feedback from students on course units.



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Standardised questionnaire

Prior to this decision student feedback questionnaires were designed and administered manually at a departmental level. However, after the release of some research commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on collecting and using student feedback, it pointed to the benefits that can be gained from greater standardisation.



Extensive benefits

Royal Holloway perceived these benefits to be:

- The possibility of ensuring that a common standard of information is collected across the College
- The option to centralise the collection of data, so that staff in individual departments could spend their time more profitably in reflecting on the data, so that the College could provide a common standard of statistical analysis

Following a strict tender process, Royal Holloway chose data capture specialists DRS to assist in the management and delivery of 30,000 standardised questionnaires. With no margin for error and with data quality at a premium, DRS demonstrated the breadth and width of knowledge and experience in the education sector and proved to be the preferred supplier capable of undertaking this complex task.



Fast and accurate course evaluation in Higher Education

Implementation

Once the questions had been set, DRS were tasked with designing and printing the questionnaires at its secure Print facility. As well as 20 generic course questions, academic departments can add up to five specific questions of their own that are also electronically captured.

Following receipt of the printed forms the central Registry team at Royal Holloway distribute them to the departments. The collated questionnaires are then sent to the DRS Bureau to be electronically scanned using its own range of data capture technology, in this case the sophisticated DRS PhotoScribe® PS900 imaging mark scanners, capable of reading, imaging and validating data at a rate of up to 130 forms per minute.

Not only are digital images of the forms supplied back to Royal Holloway along with all of the qualitative data, but where a student has written a comment in the box provided on the form, it is highlighted in the returned data and simply by clicking on it, an image of the comment is supplied.

Results

The new automated system is faster and more accurate than ever before. Errors made through manual keying are eliminated and the collated results can be analysed and implemented much earlier. Specific data and digital images of responses are much easier to archive, sort and find, and the Registry team are now able to produce comprehensive cross-departmental statistics to help individual departments to benchmark against other areas of the College.

DRS has well over three decades experience of working with the national and worldwide education market and has over 10,000 large and small scale systems in UK schools, colleges and universities. It produces over 200 million specially designed forms annually in-house, scans over 25 million sides of A4 data and provides a complete data capture solution for a wide range of educational establishments.

“The service provided by DRS allows us to collect the results of the student feedback questionnaires in a more structured and much faster way than ever before. The data and image files provided are accurate and the team are always forthcoming in suggesting ways in which we can improve this system - they have consistently exceeded our expectations.”

*Jonathan D Morgan
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(Academic Development)*

For further information on the full range of DRS products and services, please contact:

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