

Access and Participation Plan (APP) Student Consultation: Collaboration and co-creation when accessing student voice

Access and Participation Policy, Research and Evaluation team

The Office for Students (OfS) Access and Participation (APP) regulatory guidance (2023:45) states that a '*credible plan is one that has been developed, in consultation with students, and in collaboration with the student's union and the wider student body.*' In response, the University of Derby (a wave 1 APP provider) conducted a participatory three-month mixed methods student consultation project, led by the Union of Students.

The overall aim of the project was to identify the risks to equity perceived by and experienced by our own students. To fully inform the development of the plan, the consultation looked beyond the identified risks and explored proposed solutions to the challenges faced by the participants.

Planning

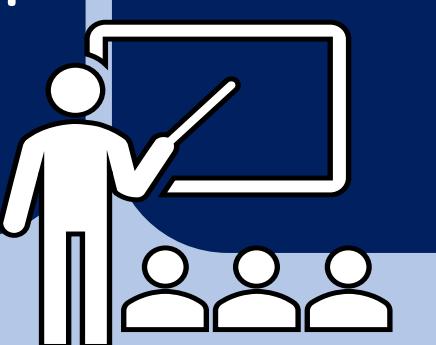
Aims of the Project

Introductions. Research team membership; APP Policy Lead, Evaluation Manager and Research Assistant, Student Union President, Head of Membership Engagement and Student Voice Co-Ordinator. Overview of the OfS guidelines and timelines.



Consultation Method

Confirmation of a mixed methods approach. Use of existing consultation mechanisms/data (University and Union). Building on the student led Teaching Excellence Framework consultation. Incentivisation and research team areas of responsibility and delivery.



Resource Development and Implementation

Survey development. Designing polling questions and focus group planning. Dissemination of survey and polls and recruitment to focus groups.

Challenges

- Lower than anticipated response and recruitment rates due to consultation timelines as dictated by APP submission dates and timing of guidance publication.
- Clashing with assessment periods/end of term.

Method and Methodology

Research resources disseminated through Union of Student channels. Part-time officers including ethnic minorities, disabilities, mental health awareness, mature students and LGBTQ+ and society Facebook group pages. Also, flyers, stands in communal spaces, and existing student panels.

Thursday Thoughts

First Instagram poll with five open ended questions on general risks to successful study. Second Instagram poll with five closed questions based specifically on the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR).

Focus Groups

Open discussion allowing participants to share experiences and views on risks to equity and opportunities across the student lifecycle. Inviting participants to offer solutions to the challenges they identified. The EORR, polling and survey results informed the discussion but did not limit it. Allowing potentially unforeseen risks and to be identified.

Survey

Lines of enquiry : what issues and challenges impact on respondents' ability to be successful in their studies? What skills and experiences do they require in order to be successful? How effective is the University in addressing the challenges and supporting them to succeed?



Analysis

Intersectional analysis of survey and focus group findings was conducted.

Findings

Four emerging themes:

- Academic Support - assessment support and support for students with learning differences.
- Wellbeing Service - waiting times and frequency of contact.
- Community - sense of community across programmes.
- Finances - impact of financial challenges on University experience

Solutions

- Contact guidance - having a place where it is easy to find who to contact in specific situations.
- More awareness amongst academic staff on how to support people who have a disability, learning difference or support plan.
- Specific careers and employment guidance for students with a support plan.