Using NSS data around assessment and feedback to enhance practice: engaging students and staff as partners in the process.

Case study by: Claire Taylor, Bishop Grossteste University College (2010)

Activity

Bishop Grossteste University College has used NSS data to highlight areas for enhancement across the full range of learning and teaching activity. This case study focuses particularly on assessment and feedback and an approach that has sought to engage both staff and students concurrently in enhancement activity. The strategies used since 2007 have included:

1. Conference-style poster displays of assignment feedback proformas from across the University College to stimulate discussion, constructive comment and understanding of 'best practice' across the academic staff body.
2. A variety of accessible staff development resources, eg a VLE-based 'assessment toolkit' showcasing assessment feedback proformas and covering issues such as student self-assessment and peer assessment/feedback; drop in 'bite size' lunchtime sessions covering feedback issues; whole-staff learning and teaching conference focus upon assessment and feedback.
3. Student focus groups, seeking to unpack more specific issues related to NSS scores around assessment and feedback, with student comments presented to staff as 'What our students say about...'
4. Study skills guides for students focusing upon 'How to use assignment feedback'.

By seeking to engage both students and staff in enhancement activity, the aim has been to develop a shared understanding of key issues around assessment and feedback.

Impact

- Bringing student perspectives to staff has been powerful in highlighting the issues that students care about most (such as feedback that is explicitly matched to the assessment criteria, feedback tutorials, more use of self and peer assessment). Furthermore, flexibility of developmental support for academic staff has been very important in ensuring engagement with enhancement activity across the academic staff community. In addition, working with students to help them to understand issues faced by staff (particularly around the manageability of assessment and feedback) has brought balance to the enhancement strategy. NSS scores for assessment feedback in 2010 are higher than in 2007, although the rising profile has not been without dips along the
Reflections

Working concurrently with staff and students is the first step towards working more collaboratively with staff and students. This is being developed at Bishop Grosseteste University College through student engagement with learning and teaching committee and through student presentations at staff learning and teaching conferences. There is no doubt that staff ‘hearing’ the student voice has a clear impact upon enhancement activity. Truly shared endeavour around the enhancement of assessment and feedback practice is something we aspire to develop further.