

Title: Chasing metrics: crisis, compromise or opportunity?

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- a) Improve NSS scores by taking a participatory and developmental approach;
- b) Use ideas and approaches to engage students in reflecting on both how they approach learning and how their course is assessed and taught;
- c) Gain insight into successful approaches to bringing about educational change;
- d) Use metrics as a catalyst for educational development.

Session Outline

Improving National Student Survey scores has become a national sport in UK higher education (Buckley, 2012). In many universities, naming and shaming low performing courses are routine practices, and often trigger managerial knee jerk reactions to improving metrics (Temple *et al.* 2014). This session showcases a student-centred, developmental and participatory approach to addressing 'problem' scores on the NSS.

Drawing on the outcomes of an appreciative inquiry (Bushe, 2007) involving fifteen programmes of study at Solent University, we demonstrate the value of educational developers working in partnership with students and academics to analyse what is (and what is not) working well within courses and using this to shape pedagogic enhancements.

Central to our approach is the premise that students are active participants in their learning and therefore require spaces, within the curriculum, to critically reflect on the learning process (and their role within it). In this session we illustrate the techniques used to generate student reflections on their learning experience and discuss how we used these to foster meaningful discussions with courses teams to bring about educational change.

We conclude the session by highlighting the potential of using appreciative inquiry to improve NSS metrics as well the unexpected risks in doing so.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The session will intersperse tools and techniques used in student workshops and course team debriefings to engender discussion about why particular strategies have resonance for staff and students. The outline of the session is as follows;

- Introduction and overview of Solent University NSS enhancement project (15 minutes)
- Activity 1: Short questionnaire from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement with written reflection (15 minutes)

Reflection and discussion

- Activity 2: Card activity involving identifying good and less good features of courses (15 minutes)

Reflection and discussion.

- Activity 3: Nominal Group Technique Activity with a focus on learning, teaching and assessment (15 minutes)

Reflection and discussion

- Activity 4: Course debriefing with participants acting like a course team (15 minutes)
- Group discussion: Priorities and challenges of future NSS enhancement work (15 minutes)

References

Buckley, A. (2012) *Making it Count. Reflecting on the National Student Survey in the process of enhancement*, Higher Education Academy.

Bushe, G. (2007) Appreciative Inquiry Is Not (Just) About the Positive, *OD Practitioner*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp.30-35.

Temple, P., Callendar, C., Grove, L., and Kersh, N. (2014) *Managing the student experience in a shifting higher education landscape*, Higher Education Academy.