

9. Student Survey Engagement Information and Data Management

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Introduction

Student feedback surveys are an essential part of RCSI's Quality Framework. In recent years, a significant decrease in the level of student engagement in feedback surveys was noticed. A multifaceted approach was needed to address this; therefore, various initiatives were taken to enhance the process of data collection. Igniting student engagement and preserving the quality of data is a continuous effort and ongoing steps are needed to sustain surveys as a reliable QA tool.

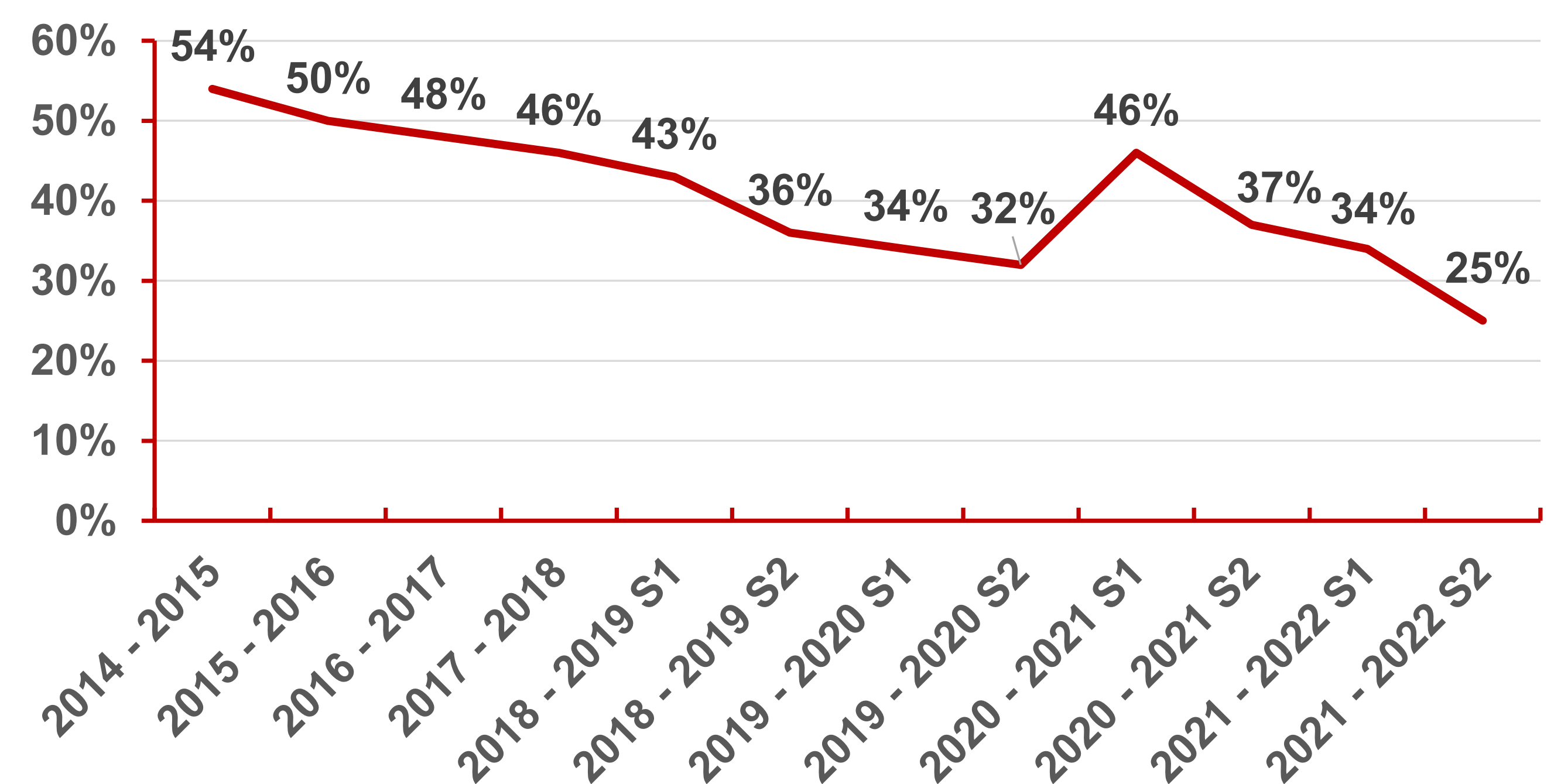


Figure 1. Response rates to end of Semester evaluations, 2014 - 2022

Initiative

The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) is responsible for collecting student feedback and led several projects to enhance the survey process. Working with students was considered critical. Therefore, two Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) projects were initiated to support enhancement. In the first of these projects, the QEO collaborated with students to develop a Moodle page to communicate the results of Student Pulse surveys and highlight examples where feedback had led to a specific action from professional services departments. Students were actively engaged in identifying best practice from other institutions and shaping the content of the page.

A further StEP project involved consultation with stakeholders (students, staff, Research Ethics Committee members) to develop a set of recommendations for the subsequent design of a processes to coordinate, promote and support better quality educational and institutional research. Stakeholders' needs and requirements, in relation to student data collection, were collated through a series of focus groups. A quality improvement project was undertaken in collaboration with the Quality and Process Improvement Centre (QPIC), to develop a centralised approach to closing the feedback loop. A significant consultation process underpinned this project. This included engagement with survey report recipients and quality colleagues in RCSI Bahrain and at other HEIs. While many formal and informal mechanisms were in place in schools and professional departments, it was concluded that an institutional level system would support a consistent approach to communication with students. As a repository was developed, presentations were made to key governance committees such as Academic Council and Quality Committee to secure cross-institutional engagement. As advocates of student engagement, the SU play a key role in communicating the benefits of student voice to the student body. SU officers collaborated with the QEO in promoting participation in surveys using their social media and informal influence, such as communication with class representatives.

As suggested by the SU, in October 2022, the QEO organised a quality event for students that promoted student voice and its benefits while making students more aware of the remit of the office.

Requesting feedback multiple times was essential during the pandemic. However, this may have led to survey fatigue. For 2022-23 the number of internal surveys was decreased to two per semester. The survey platform used by QEO was also enhanced to create a more engaging interface. In addition to surveys, other data collection methodologies such as focus groups were utilised for some projects, providing a suitable alternative, particularly where the research question is more qualitative in nature.



Outcome

A new VLE page was created to provide "You Said, We Did" feedback to students. This page was shaped by feedback from student brainstorming sessions. The page was launched in April 2021 and now provides students with clear information regarding how professional support departments respond to student feedback. The second StEP project resulted in several recommendations for further discussion and development by either the QEO, HPEC or Research Ethics Committee. It acknowledged that the current level of survey activity is unsustainable and a clearly defined process to guide the development of data collection projects is needed.

As a result of collaboration with QPIC, a Quality Enhancement Repository was developed and will be implemented in 2022-23. Year leads and heads of professional departments will now report to a central location on good practice and enhancements implemented in response to feedback. The QEO will use this information for an institutional "You Said, We Did" campaign that will demonstrate to students that their feedback has an impact on the University. This central repository will support other quality processes as such quality reviews, accreditation, programme review and will enhance internal and external reporting.

Thanks to increased collaboration with the SU, the QEO became more recognisable as data collectors and the "go-to people" for any survey related projects or queries. The SU officers regularly reach out to students to encourage them to participate in surveys. Alternative approaches, such as focus groups, are being used to gather feedback e.g., for gathering feedback on support for learners and on the QA of teaching and learning for this ISER. As the QEO staff become more experienced in facilitating focus groups, the possibility of offering them as an alternative to surveys will be explored. All the activities described in this case study have enhanced the student survey processes. Unfortunately, response rates remain on a downward trajectory and it is becoming more difficult to collect quality data and recruit students to respond to surveys. Further activities to increase engagement now need to be explored e.g., moving some survey activities to the classroom, and conducting surveys as a timetabled activity.