

RCSI Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) Privacy Policy

The RCSI Quality Enhancement Office's mission is to support RCSI decision making by collecting survey data from students, employees, surgical trainees and other respondents as required. We are committed to protecting the privacy of all survey participants, this policy describes the types of data that is collected and stored by the QEO, the purposes for which this data is collected and how this information can be managed by survey participants.

What information is collected

The QEO uses respondents' email address in order to send invitations to participate in surveys. Student's email addresses are sourced from the student record system Quercus and are used only for the purpose of gathering student feedback. Email addresses are uploaded to the Survey Monkey platform and are used to distribute the survey to participants, to track response rates and send reminders for those who haven't responded.

In general, all surveys conducted by the QEO are anonymous unless otherwise stated, by anonymous we mean that responses email addresses, names or other identifiable information are not recorded with the survey data. Email addresses are stored in a separate database (called Collector) that is not linked to the survey responses. Once the data collection is finished, respondent's email addresses are deleted from the platform, unless a respondent opts out from receiving surveys from the QEO – email addresses of those who choose to opt out are retained in the platform to keep the record of those who do not wish to receive communications related to surveys.

For the end of Semester Pulse surveys the QEO also collects and processes information on student's gender and geographic location – this information is obtained from the student record system along with an email address and it is recorded together with anonymous survey responses. This means that for an individual survey response the QEO is able to identify the geographic location and gender of the participant, but not their identity, so the survey responses remain anonymous. This additional information is used for classification purposes and further analysis.

From time to time the QEO conducts bespoke surveys that use additional data that is stored together with the survey responses. If any additional information is recorded, the respondents are informed about this process in the survey invitation. The survey invitation specifies what additional data is being recorded and the purpose for which it is collected.

How the survey data is used

The QEO serves as a data controller for all survey data collection activities and acts on behalf of RCSI and other partners (e.g. APPEL, IIOIP). Survey data is collected for the following purposes:

- To capture and monitor students' learning experience – students are asked to share feedback on their learning experience throughout the Semester. For other audiences, like employees or surgical trainees the data is collected to capture their employee/ training experience and opinions.
- To give students a platform to share feedback on their learning experience – students are given an opportunity to express their opinions in an anonymous format on the learning experience and services provided to them
- Quality assurance – regular survey data collection is part of the RCSI Quality Framework, that sets out tools and processes for quality enhancement of RCSI Programmes

- To support decision making to enhance student learning experience – detailed survey reports are provided to the Heads of Schools, Year Leads and Senior Management Team to support the planning and delivery of teaching activities for the following Semester. Feedback on various students’ services (e.g. CoMPPAS, IT, Library) are also provided to the Heads of these units to support planning and delivering the services.

All QEO survey reports are based on anonymous, aggregated data and are provided to a limited number of recipients, usually the key stakeholders. Care is taken when processing free-text comments – if an individual person is mentioned in a comment, the name is removed and anonymised (replaced with <Name Removed> tag). As standard the QEO produces three levels of reports – full report with all free-text comments (Unfiltered), filtered report with all names of individuals removed and anonymised and quantitative report, where the free-text comments are removed.

For the RCSI Student Pulse Surveys, the full, unfiltered report has a limited circulation and is only made available to the Heads of Schools and Year Leads. Filtered reports are made available via Year Leads to all teaching staff and heads of service units. Finally, the quantitative reports are published on the QEO Moodle Page and are available to students.

How the survey data is stored

The QEO is committed to storing the data safely. Data is downloaded from the Survey Monkey platform and prepared for analysis. In most cases data is anonymous or is anonymised or pseudomised by the QEO. Survey data is stored on an encrypted hard drive and processed reports are stored in a separate folder in the same location. Periodically, survey reports are copied to the QEO servers and stored there indefinitely (in case of end of Semester feedback reports) or in case of research data, stored according to the periods specified in the research ethics documentation.

Managing and updating your information

With every survey invitation participants are given an option to opt-out from receiving surveys from the QEO via the Survey Monkey platform. If they choose to do so, no other surveys administered by the QEO will be sent to them and their email address will be stored on the platform in the opt-out database in order to prevent them from getting surveys. Participants can change their mind and opt in again to receive surveys.

In most cases, when survey data is anonymous, the QEO are not able to pinpoint individual’s responses, therefore it is not possible to update or delete individual responses.

In case of research surveys when consent is given to participate in research, participants have a right to withdraw their consent at any stage and have their data updated or deleted, if the research design allows for that. This is normally communicated in the Participant Information Leaflet at the start of the survey. Updating or deleting your data is possible if the survey is not anonymous.

Should you have any questions about this policy you are encouraged to email the RCSI Quality Enhancement Office quality@rcsi.ie