Student Voices
in Higher Education

Student Voice: A Journey from SSLC to Co-creation

Professor Osama Khan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Aston University

explorance

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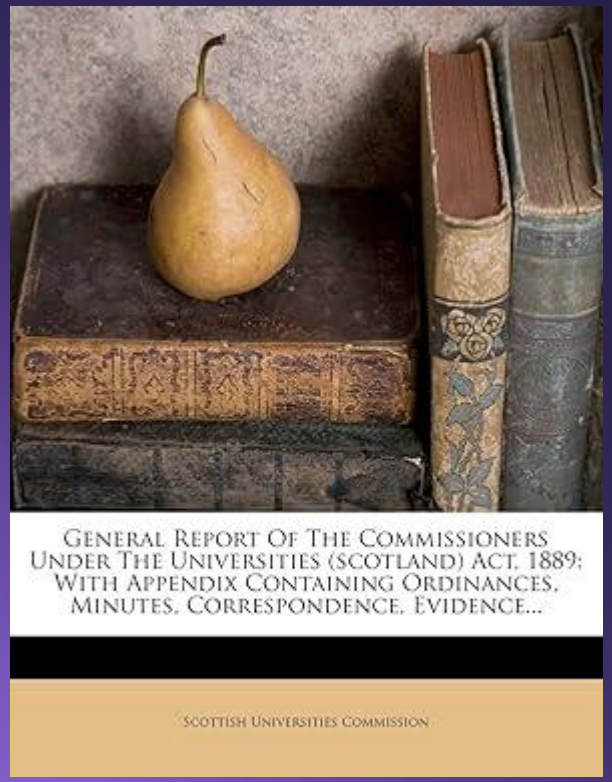
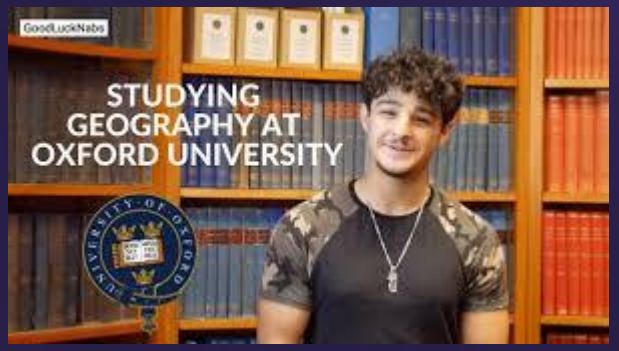
Student Staff Liaison Committee





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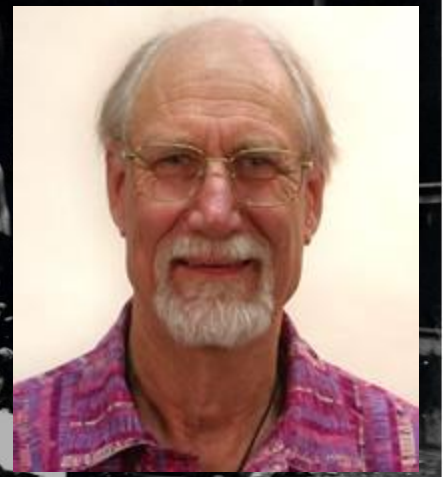
Cambridge University and Clare College since World War 2

Professor Volker Heine FRS



Perils of SSLCs

- Role ambiguity and weak efficacy for student reps
- Power imbalance and “partnership” rhetoric vs lived reality
- Tokenism risk: “voice” without action (politics of listening)
- Normative participation: the “tyranny of participation”
- Consumerism and governance tensions
- Termly cadence amplifies lag and weak follow-through (inference grounded in the literature)

Perils of SSLCs

1. Carey, P. (2013) 'Representation and student engagement in higher education: a reflection on the views and experiences of course representatives', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 37(1), pp. 71–88. doi:10.1080/0309877X.2011.644775.

2. Gourlay, L. (2015) '"Student engagement" and the tyranny of participation', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(4), pp. 402–411. doi:10.1080/13562517.2015.1020784.

3. Kehler, A., Verwoord, R. and Smith, H. (2017) 'We are the process: reflections on the underestimation of power in students as partners in practice', *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 1(1), pp. 38–52. doi:10.15173/ijsap.v1i1.3176.

4. Lizzio, A. and Wilson, K. (2009) 'Student participation in university governance: the role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental committees', *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(1), pp. 69–84. doi:10.1080/03075070802602000.

5. Little, B. and Williams, R. (2010) 'Students' roles in maintaining quality and in enhancing learning: is there a tension?', *Quality in Higher Education*, 16(2), pp. 115–127. doi:10.1080/13538322.2010.485740.

6. McLeod, J. (2011) 'Student voice and the politics of listening in higher education', *Critical Studies in Education*, 52(2), pp. 179–189. doi:10.1080/17508487.2011.572830.

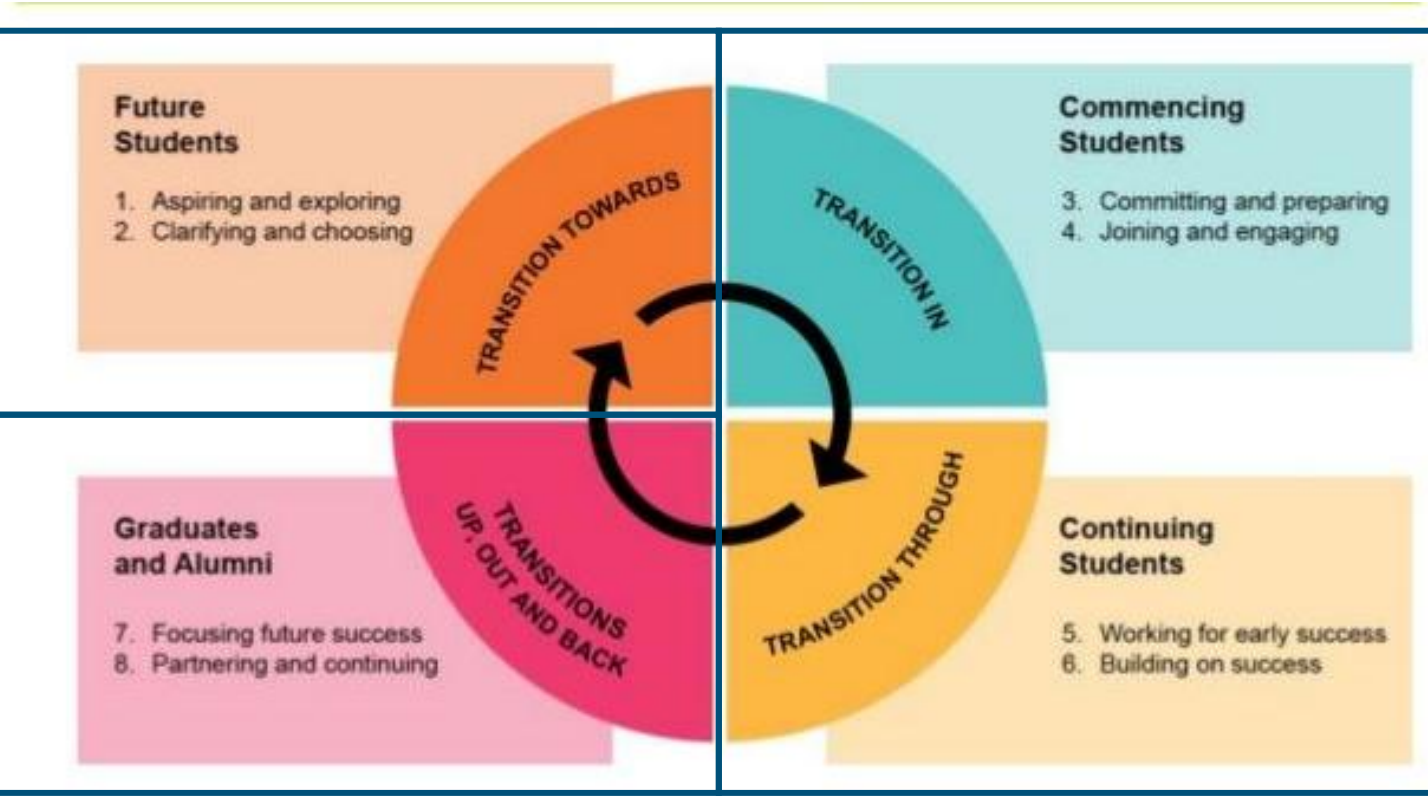
7. Nottingham Trent University (2025) *Quality Handbook Supplement 1B: Course committee requirements (QHS 1B)*. September. Nottingham: Nottingham Trent University. (Accessed: 10 February 2026).

8. Seale, J., Gibson, S., Haynes, J. and Potter, A. (2015) 'Power and resistance: reflections on the rhetoric and reality of using participatory methods to promote student voice and engagement in higher education', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 39(4), pp. 534–552. doi:10.1080/0309877X.2014.938264.

Finger on the “student voice” pulse

Support for Student Lifecycle

Support for Access and Admission, A1

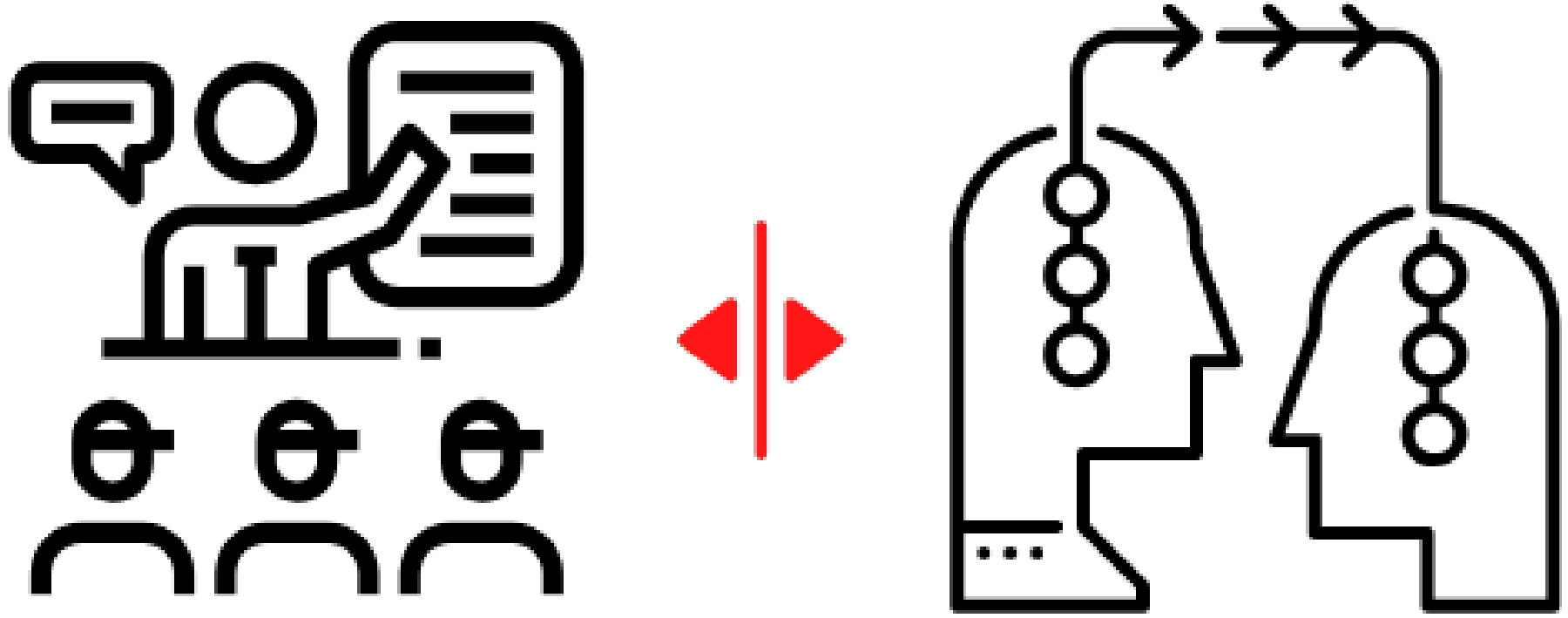


Support for Graduate Outcomes, A1 & B3

Support for success: progression, continuation and Student Experience A1, B1- 6

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE CSE

Teaching Vs. Training

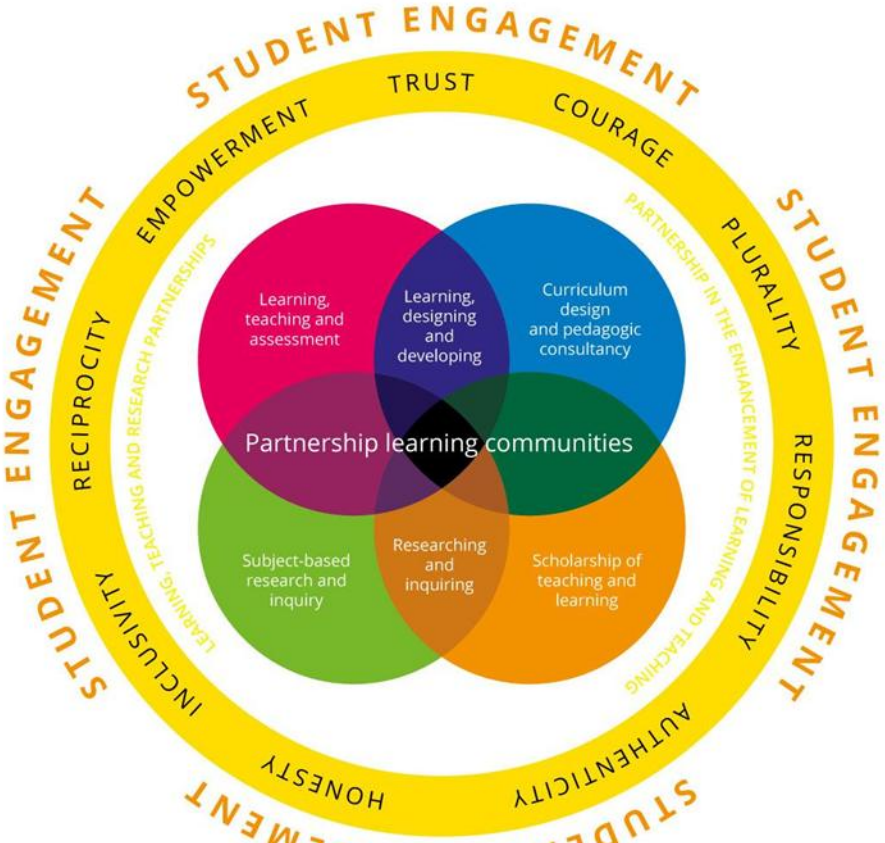


Curriculum Review Principles

TRANSITION to HIGHER EDUCATION

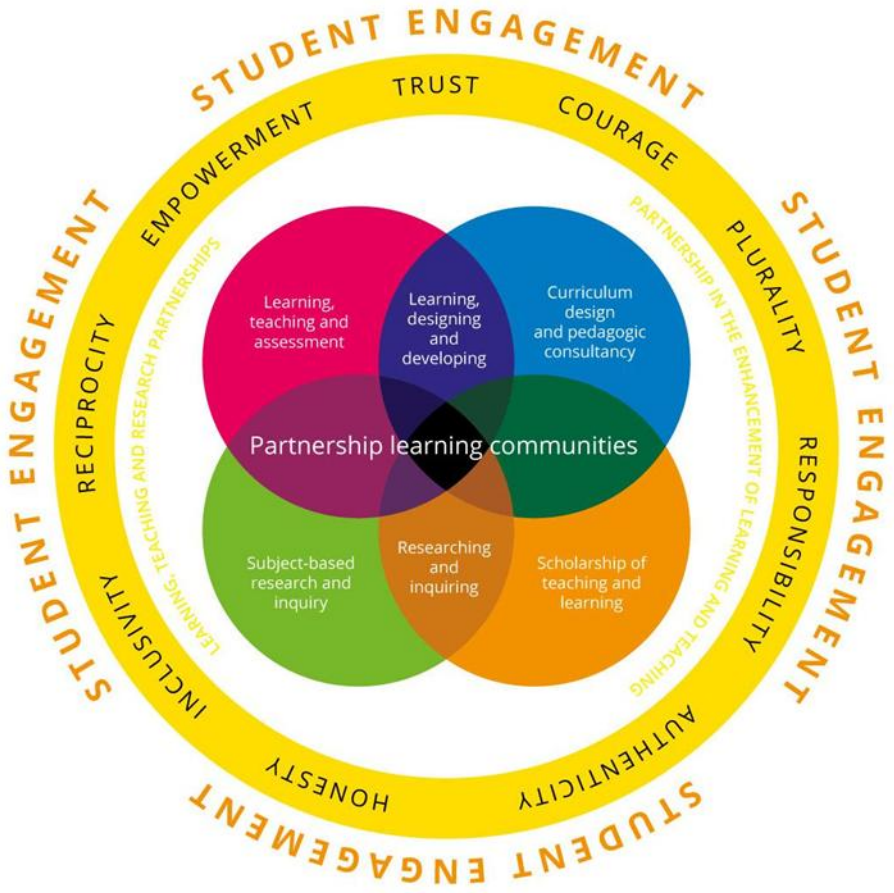
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

(Dyck 2015, Goralnik et al 2012)



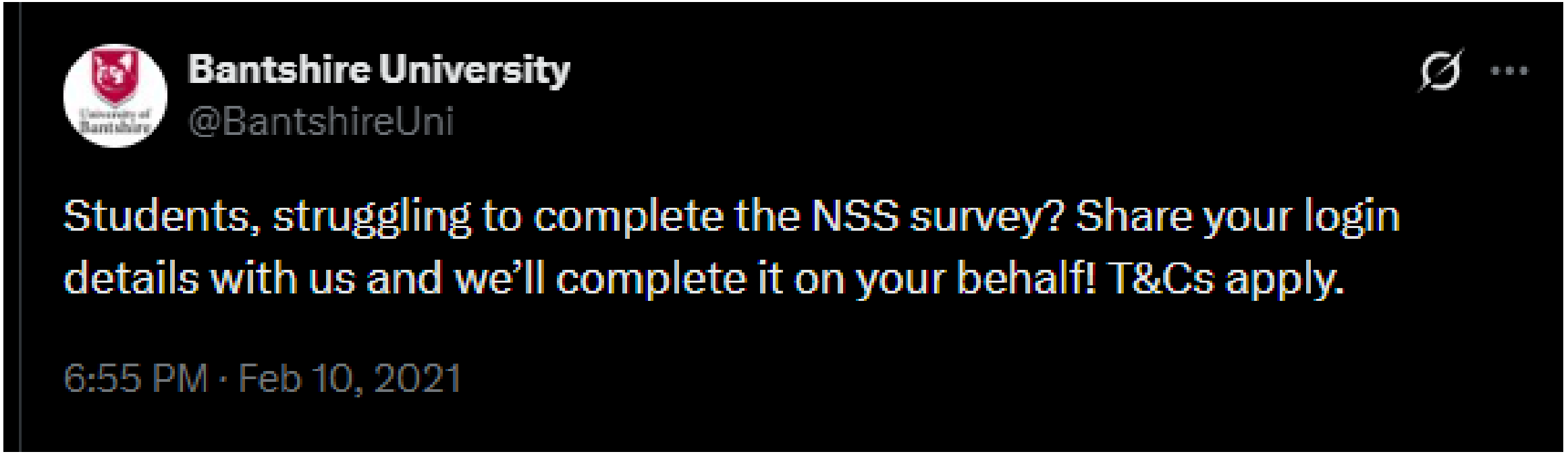
Student Staff Partnership

Student Staff Partnership



Visibility of Partnership Model

Student Voice since NSS



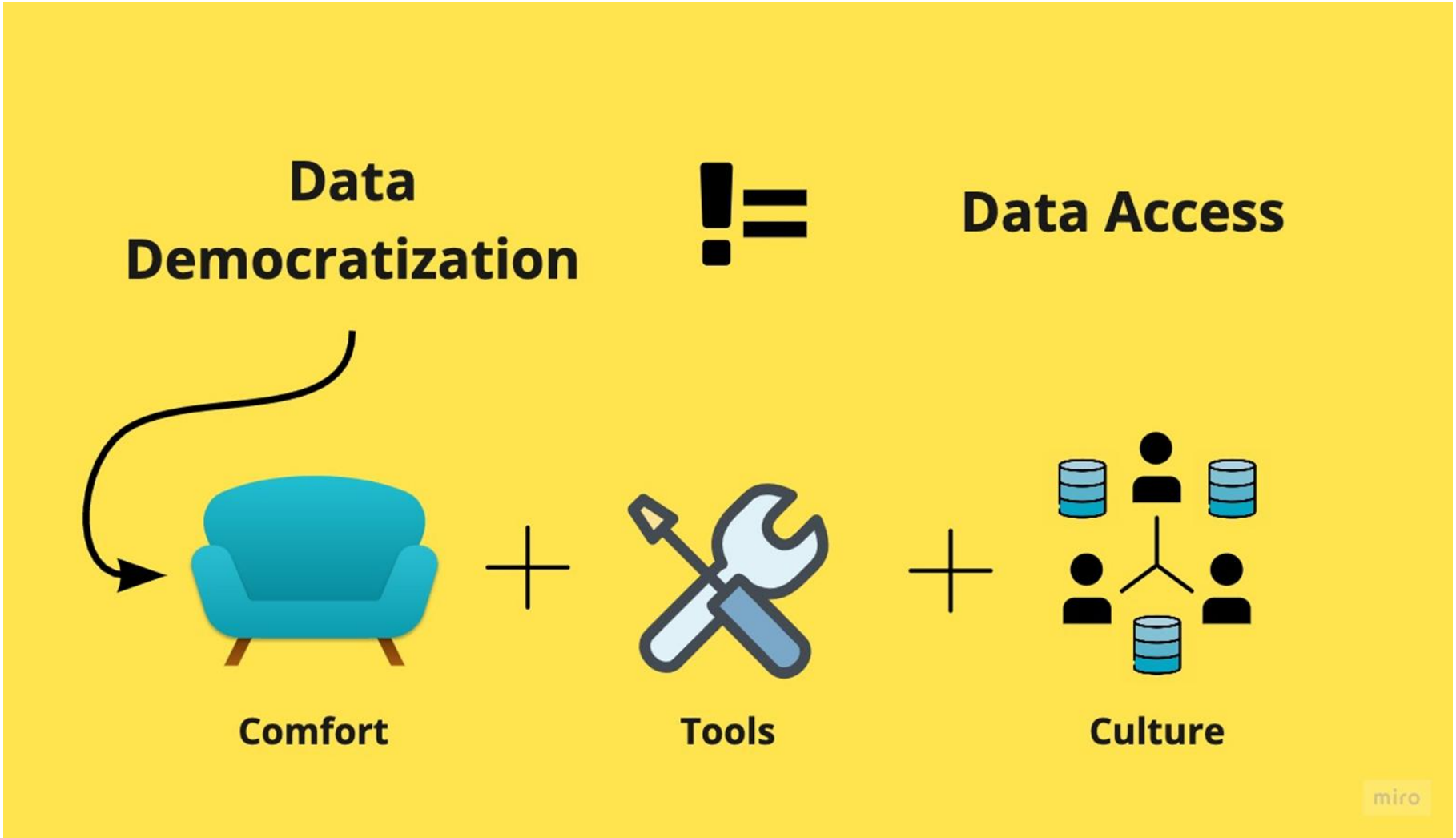
Module Evaluation by Students

- Scalable “student voice” at module level (breadth & speed)
- Reliable lead indicator for stage evaluation, NSS, PTES
- Good psychometric teaching performance when aggregated
- Formative feedback can improve teaching
- Potential (context-dependent) link with academic achievement
- Utility as one of the inputs in a wider evidence set for enhancement

Perils of Module Evaluation by Students

- Often weak (or nil) relationship with measured learning
- Systematic bias (fairness problem)
- Halo and “irrelevant” influences (looks, accent, identity cues)
- Incentive distortion (grade expectations/rigour)
- Statistical fragility in small modules & low response rates
- Comparability problem across disciplines/modules

Democratising Business Information



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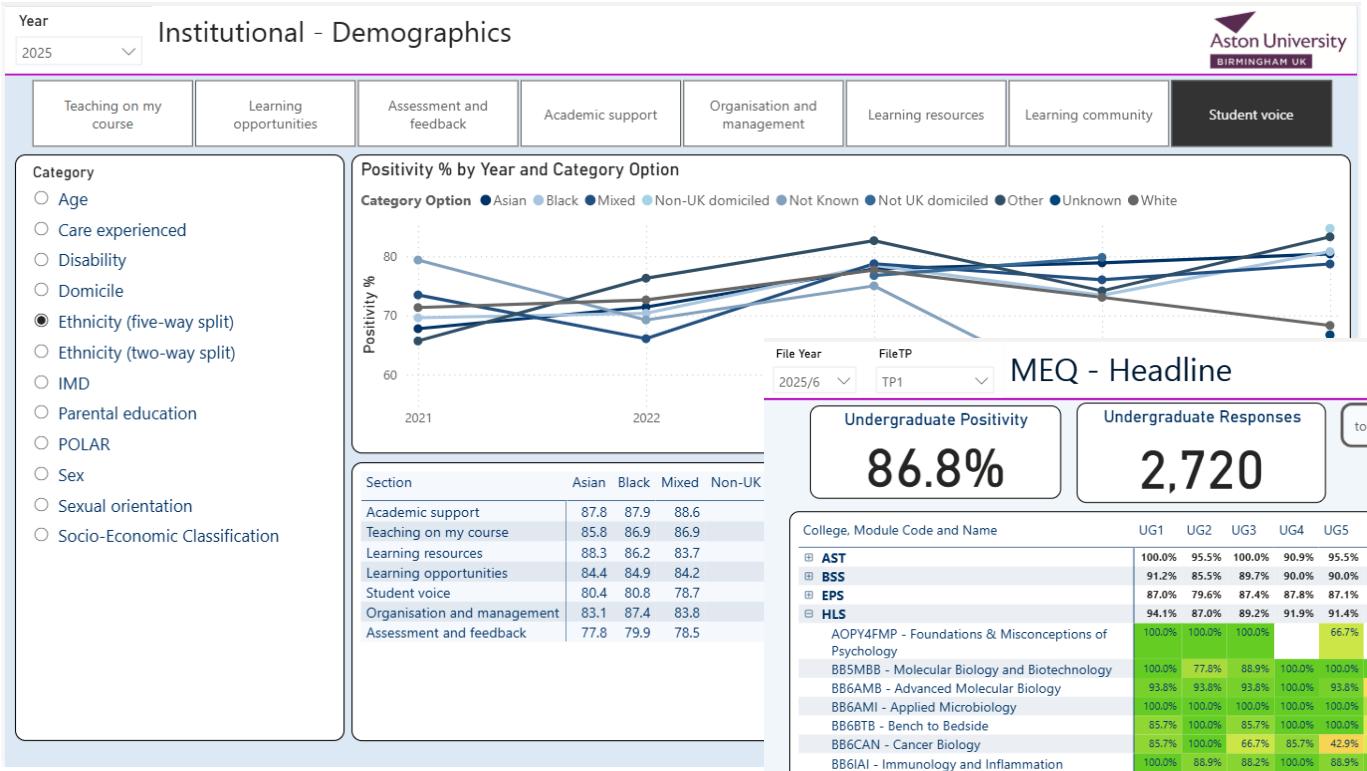
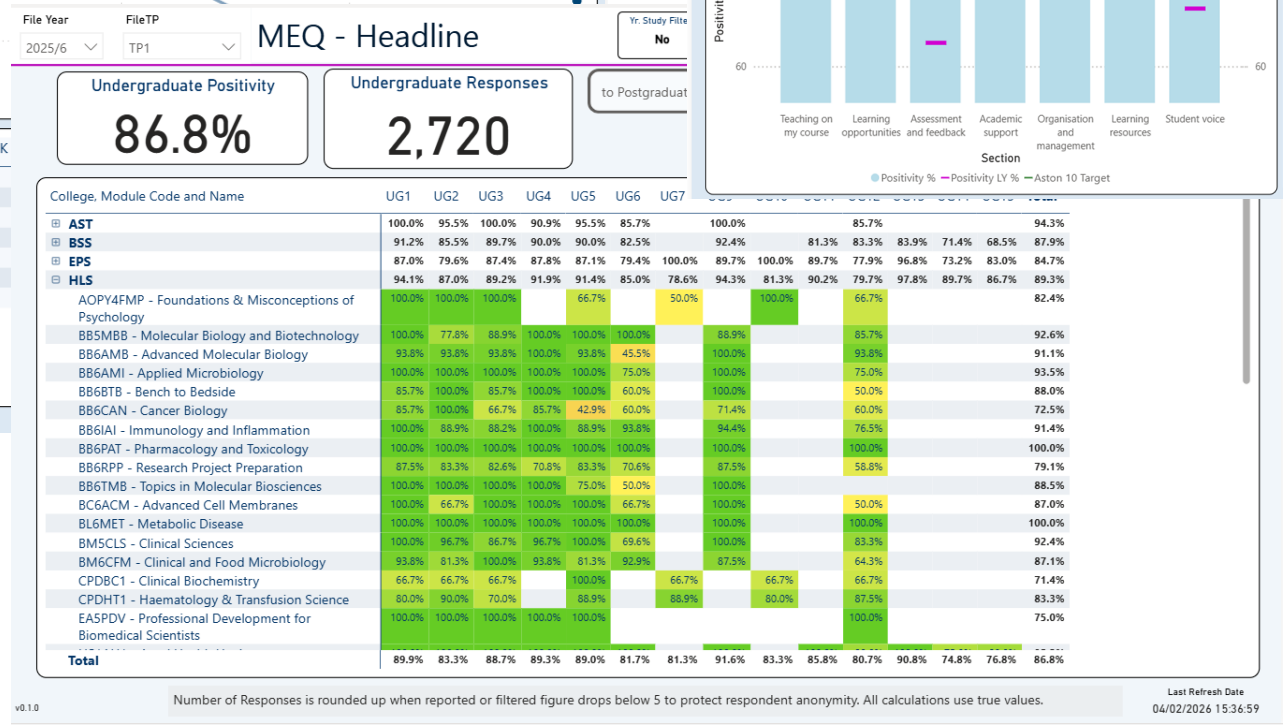
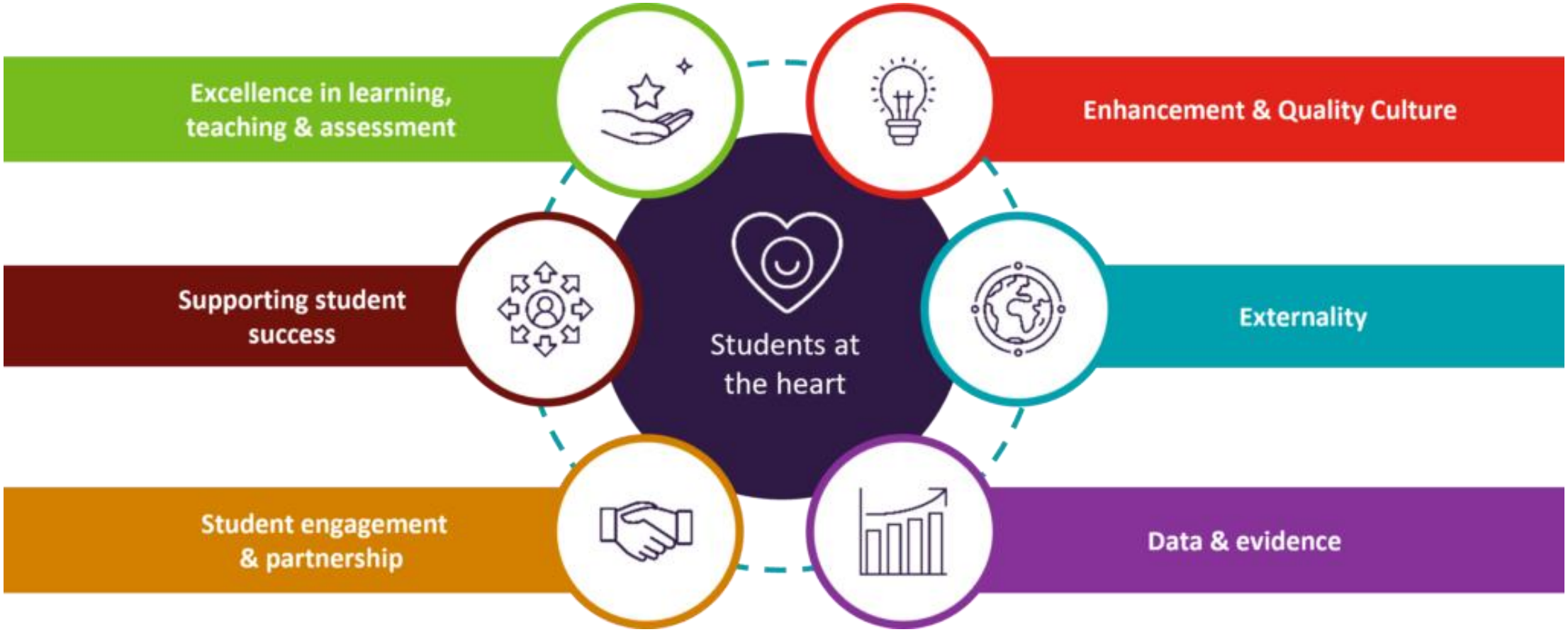


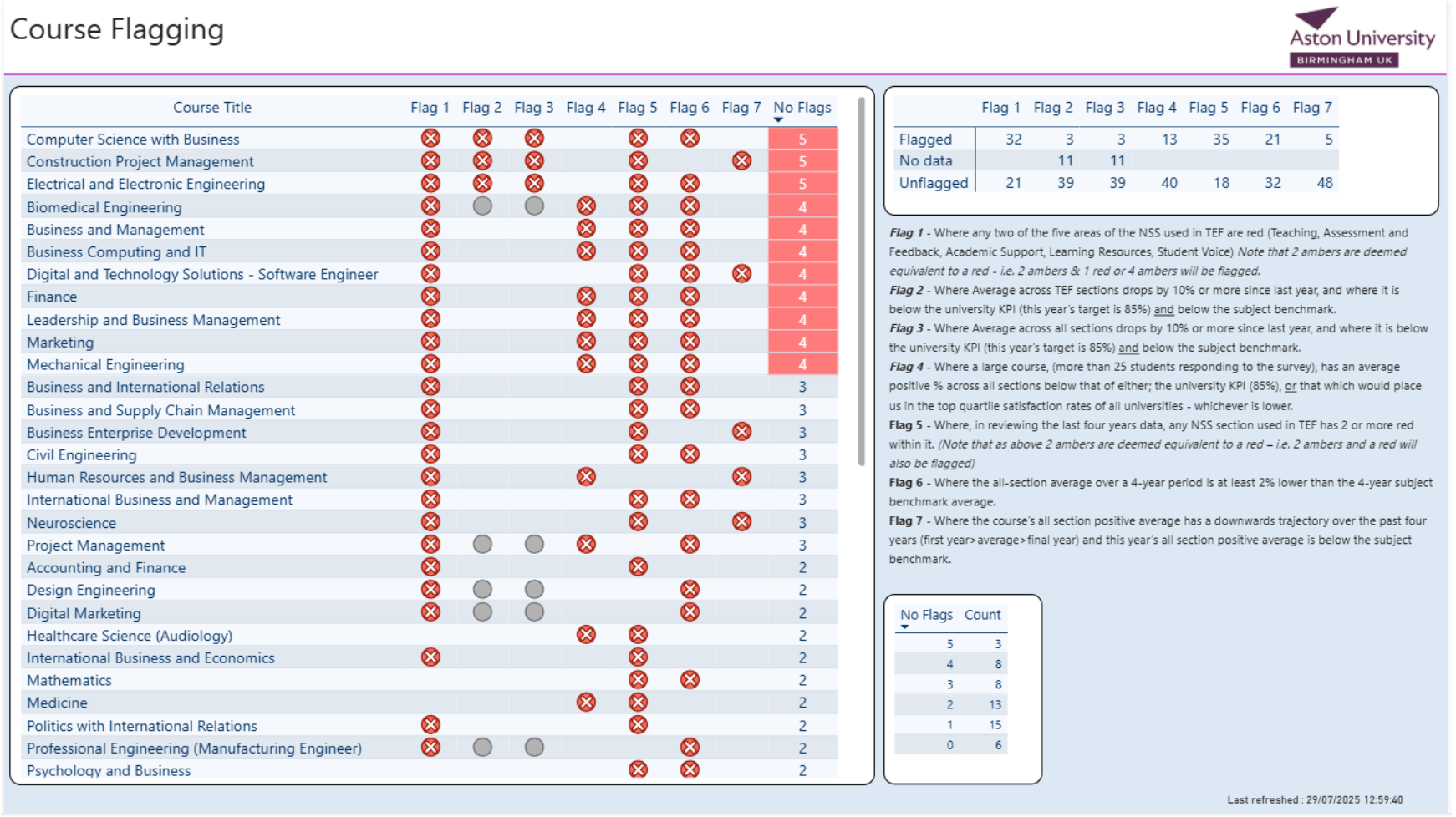


Risk based enhancement led assurance



Scottish Funding Council

Risk based enhancement led assurance



Course Flagging

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Course Title	Flag 1	Flag 2	Flag 3	Flag 4	Flag 5	Flag 6	Flag 7	No Flags
Computer Science with Business	⊗	⊗	⊗		⊗	⊗		5
Construction Project Management	⊗	⊗	⊗		⊗		⊗	5
Electrical and Electronic Engineering	⊗	⊗	⊗		⊗	⊗		5
Biomedical Engineering	⊗	●	●	⊗	⊗	⊗		4
Business and Management	⊗			⊗	⊗	⊗		4
Business Computing and IT	⊗			⊗	⊗	⊗		4
Digital and Technology Solutions - Software Engineer	⊗				⊗	⊗	⊗	4
Finance	⊗			⊗	⊗	⊗		4
Leadership and Business Management	⊗			⊗	⊗	⊗		4
Marketing	⊗			⊗	⊗	⊗		4
Mechanical Engineering	⊗			⊗	⊗	⊗		4
Business and International Relations	⊗				⊗	⊗		3
Business and Supply Chain Management	⊗				⊗	⊗		3
Business Enterprise Development	⊗				⊗		⊗	3
Civil Engineering	⊗				⊗	⊗		3
Human Resources and Business Management	⊗			⊗			⊗	3
International Business and Management	⊗				⊗	⊗		3
Neuroscience	⊗				⊗		⊗	3
Project Management	⊗	●	●	⊗		⊗		3
Accounting and Finance	⊗				⊗			2
Design Engineering	⊗	●	●			⊗		2
Digital Marketing	⊗	●	●			⊗		2
Healthcare Science (Audiology)				⊗	⊗			2
International Business and Economics	⊗				⊗			2
Mathematics					⊗	⊗		2
Medicine				⊗	⊗			2
Politics with International Relations	⊗				⊗			2
Professional Engineering (Manufacturing Engineer)	⊗	●	●			⊗		2
Psychology and Business					⊗	⊗		2

	Flag 1	Flag 2	Flag 3	Flag 4	Flag 5	Flag 6	Flag 7
Flagged	32	3	3	13	35	21	5
No data		11	11				
Unflagged	21	39	39	40	18	32	48

Flag 1 - Where any two of the five areas of the NSS used in TEF are red (Teaching, Assessment and Feedback, Academic Support, Learning Resources, Student Voice) *Note that 2 ambers are deemed equivalent to a red - i.e. 2 ambers & 1 red or 4 ambers will be flagged.*

Flag 2 - Where Average across TEF sections drops by 10% or more since last year, and where it is below the university KPI (this year's target is 85%) and below the subject benchmark.

Flag 3 - Where Average across all sections drops by 10% or more since last year, and where it is below the university KPI (this year's target is 85%) and below the subject benchmark.

Flag 4 - Where a large course, (more than 25 students responding to the survey), has an average positive % across all sections below that of either; the university KPI (85%), or that which would place us in the top quartile satisfaction rates of all universities - whichever is lower.

Flag 5 - Where, in reviewing the last four years data, any NSS section used in TEF has 2 or more red within it. *(Note that as above 2 ambers are deemed equivalent to a red – i.e. 2 ambers and a red will also be flagged)*

Flag 6 - Where the all-section average over a 4-year period is at least 2% lower than the 4-year subject benchmark average.

Flag 7 - Where the course's all section positive average has a downwards trajectory over the past four years (first year>average>final year) and this year's all section positive average is below the subject benchmark.

No Flags	Count
5	3
4	8
3	8
2	13
1	15
0	6

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Aston 10: Core Elements

1.

2.

3.

4. LIFE READY
WORK READY

Student Life and Lived Experience

Leadership and Advocacy