

Gathering Learner Voice

Dudley College (GFE) A Student Union at the centre of Learner Voice



Background

When learners are empowered to engage with and change their learning environment, and when organisations know how to listen to feedback and embrace student involvement, there is great potential for cross-organisational change.

This section provides examples of innovative and effective mechanisms for generating and capturing learner feedback.

About Dudley College

Dudley College is a further education college in the West Midlands. The college provides education and training that both underpins economic regeneration and up-skills the local workforce and industry within the locality. It commits to the community by extensive partnership working with local schools, the voluntary sector and local businesses.

Their Story: What has Happened and How

When new students arrive at Dudley College, learner representation is very visible and is a prominent asset to the learning experience the college offers. As part of formal induction process, students will learn about the SU, class reps and wider student voice opportunities. Class Reps are elected at this point. The Students' Union write to all successfully elected Class Reps and invite them to participate in training. On successful completion of the training, the SU send a certificate and a different coloured lanyard for the reps, so that they stand out from the rest of their class. An up-to-date list of trained reps is also sent to Centre Managers.

Termly Centre Management meetings are coordinated by the SU. Minutes are taken and actions are followed up at every meeting. Class Reps are kept up-to-date and reminded about engagement opportunities via text and email.

The Sabbatical President conducts regular campus visits to support clubs and societies, the promotion of SU activities and to find out about students' experience at Dudley College. This is also supported by a dedicated Vice President for each Campus on the SU committee, and an open-door policy for the union more generally.

There are termly Student Council meetings, QandA sessions with the principal, and dedicated SU newsletters and website. The SU have also identified groups of students who traditionally do not engage with union activities and have looked at ways of reaching these students to find out more about their experience in college. For example, coming into college before lessons start was an opportunity to meet with some work-based learning students.

Impact, Successes and Ideas for Action

The students' union is at the heart of Learner Voice at Dudley College but it's success comes from the open, working relationship with the college. Acknowledging who and *where* students are has also helped to ensure wide engagement and participation in Learner Voice activities. Learners identify themselves as part of a vibrant, active student body and trust that when they share their views and opinions, they are taken seriously and will impact on the decision making in the college. It is important for the students' union to be visible throughout the college, taking responsibility for engaging all students and seeking their views to improve the learning experience for everyone.