



# Durham University's Experience in Centralising the Evaluation of Teaching: Lessons Learned

SALON 3 - TUESDAY 6 AUGUST 1-1.50 PM

@JULIEMULVEY



Bluenotes **GLOBAL** 2019  
CONFERENCE



# Introduction

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Durham University

Located in North East of England (nr Newcastle)

Online Course Evaluations since 2005





# Durham University

*A globally outstanding centre of teaching and research excellence, a collegiate community of extraordinary people, a unique and historic setting – Durham is a university like no other.*





# Durham University

- ❖ A world top 100 University
- ❖ Nationally a top 10 university
- ❖ A record 18 of our subjects are in the world top 100
- ❖ Our researchers conduct world leading and world changing research
- ❖ Ranked in the world top 50 for employability of our students

❖ TEF Gold



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# Contents

- ❖ Decentralised system problems
- ❖ Drivers for Catalyst and Change
- ❖ Explorance as the solution
- ❖ Our First Two Years
- ❖ Lessons we are taking forward into the future
- ❖ Next Steps





# Some Definitions before we begin

Term	US	UK
Subjects	People	Units you study
Faculty	Teaching Staff	Collection of Departments
Unit Names	Courses	Modules
Dates	MONTH/DAY/YEAR	DAY/MONTH/YEAR

We also struggle with being on a time difference

# Problems with Decentralisation

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# Problems with a Decentralised System

- ❖ No set Policy or ownership
- ❖ Individual School/Department drive the system
- ❖ Decisions to rate teaching staff or not – drivers?
- ❖ Limits on staff rating questions
- ❖ Between 5 and 40 questions per 6 courses a year
- ❖ Data aggregation
- ❖ Administration overheads





# Problems with Decentralisation

- ❖ Administer half the modules one year and the other half the following year OR
- ❖ Administer a third of the modules every year plus a programme level questionnaire OR
- ❖ New module OR
- ❖ New member of staff is teaching OR
- ❖ Negative module feedback OR
- ❖ The Staff Student Consultative Committee decided it needed to be included



# The Drivers and Catalyst for Change

- ❖ What we had did not meet our needs
- ❖ Met Explorance in 2013
- ❖ We needed Explorance but there was no appetite at that time until a disaster fell\*
- ❖ A pilot of Blue in 2016
- ❖ Task & Finish Group looked at what Durham as an institution wanted
- ❖ A new change in Executive leadership looked at the outputs of both
- ❖ Explorance 5 year contract was signed (two years in)

# Our First Two years

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# Explorance as the Solution

- ❖ Had to pass our string Security/Private requirements
- ❖ Explorance willing to listen to our concerns and encrypted our database at rest
- ❖ Listening to issues about Explorance having access to our data
- ❖ The Task & Finish Group came up with our questionnaire and question structure
- ❖ Professional Support Services guided us through the process

# First implementation

DepartmentName ▾

Search:

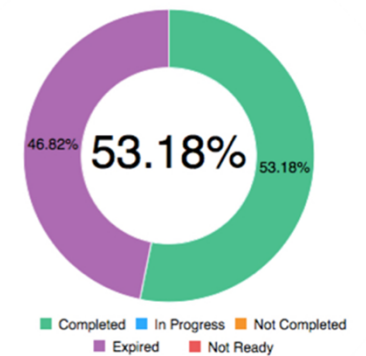
Previous 1

DepartmentName	Completed	Invited	Response Rate
Department of Classics and Ancient History	1130	1629	69%
Department of Music	635	970	65%
Department of Earth Sciences	914	1439	64%
Department of History	1912	2972	64%
Department of Archaeology	729	1164	63%
Foundation Centre			
School of Modern Languages and Cultures			
Department of Computer Science			
Department of English Studies			
Department of Philosophy			
Department of Psychology			

FacultyName ▾

Search:

FacultyName	Completed	Invited	Response Rate
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	10229	16690	61%
Faculty of Science	10566	19843	53%
Faculty of Social Sciences and Health	12729	26503	48%





# Blue Implementations @ Durham

2017-18

- Undergraduate – 53%

2018-19

- Undergraduate – 43%
- Postgraduate – 46%



# Future Implementations @ Durham

- ❖ Term 1 (Michaelmas) – Undergraduate evaluations short modules (Late December)
- ❖ Term 2 (Epiphany) – Postgraduate evaluations for short modules (Early January)
- ❖ Term 2 (Epiphany) – End of Programme Level questionnaires for Year 1 and Year 2 (March)
- ❖ Term 3 (Easter) – Undergraduate evaluations for year long modules (April/May)
- ❖ Term 4 (Summer) – Postgraduate evaluations for year long modules (June)

# Lessons Learned

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# Policy

Decide on a Policy:

- ❖ Who actually owns the Policy
- ❖ Who takes control over the direction of course evaluations
- ❖ Communication (all stakeholders)
- ❖ Set up a dedicated email for evaluations
- ❖ Set boundaries for Admin, Teaching Staff and Students



POLICY

# Privacy

- ❖ Who is providing the data
- ❖ Who checks that you only use what is needed
- ❖ Are you able to ensure anonymity/confidentiality
- ❖ How to control who sees what
- ❖ Ensure that the data handled securely
- ❖ Is there a policy for removing data?





# Staffing

- ❖ Who is going to do the technical running of Blue?
- ❖ Who is going to liaise with Departments/Schools?
- ❖ Who is going to collect the data you need?
- ❖ Who is going to analyse the data?
- ❖ How many staff, what grade and what is the cost implication of this





# Data Sources

Where does the data come from:

- ❖ Student Registry provide us with student data
- ❖ Human Resources provide us with staff data
- ❖ Student Registry provide us with course data
- ❖ Who provides the data for who teaches what?
- ❖ Who provides the data for who needs to see what?

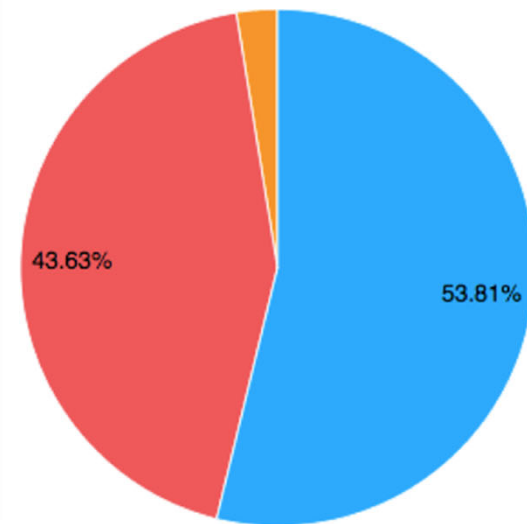
# Return Rates – Dedicated Tab & Heading

The screenshot displays the Durham University online portal interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Durham University logo on the left and a user profile for 'Fred Bloggs' on the right. The main navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Files', 'Library', 'Employability & Skills', 'LTT', and 'MEQs'. Below this, a secondary navigation bar shows 'Home' and 'Notifications Dashboard'. The main content area features a prominent announcement: 'The MEQ process is currently live for **undergraduates**. Find out which modules you can evaluate via the [MEQ tab](#).' Below the announcement is a progress bar showing '22.0% of MEQs have been completed' and a timestamp 'Figures last updated at 4:51 PM on the 27 April'. The interface is divided into several sections: 'My Courses' (listing '2017-18' with sub-items like 'Chemistry and Society (17/18)', 'Collaborate Ultra Training', and 'DULTA - Fundamentals of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (17/18)'); 'My College' (displaying the University College crest and name); 'Student Services'; 'Help with duo' (with links for 'Answers to FAQs', 'How To Guides', and 'The LTT Blog'); and 'Tools' (with a link for 'Announcements').



# Return Rates Increased

Switched from  
■ Email to ■ Portal



# Question Bank

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# Question Bank

- ❖ Individual department spreadsheets
- ❖ Departments choose three core questions from a drop down list
- ❖ Then write 3 questions per module (if they want them)
- ❖ At the moment am only allowing Likert Scale questions
- ❖ No Question Personalisation





# Question Bank

- ❖ We have to collate all the spreadsheets together and create two spreadsheets
  - ❖ A Question Bank file
  - ❖ A Question Mapping file
- ❖ We use these two files along with the **Institutional Hierarchy**
- ❖ Duplicated questions with different identifiers
- ❖ Looking to streamline this and provide questions each with own identifier



# Question Bank

## View Mapping

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⊖ UNIVERSITY - Durham University	▼ Questions Mapped: 6
⊖ DEPARTMENT - ANTH	▼ Questions Mapped: 3
MODULE - ANTH1041	▼ Questions Mapped: 1
MODULE - ANTH1061	▼ Questions Mapped: 2
MODULE - ANTH1091	▼ Questions Mapped: 2
MODULE - ANTH1101	▼ Questions Mapped: 3



# Question Bank

- ❖ Could we automate this in DIG?
- ❖ DIG is all about checking data
- ❖ If I could feed the questions into DIG OR
- ❖ Ask the DIG Admins to choose questions at that point from a list
- ❖ Then I think this would save time

# Staff Ratings

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# Staff Rating Question

- ❖ In the first year we only rated the Lecturer
- ❖ This year we wanted to rate staff who have multiple roles in a course
- ❖ Used the new Secondary Subject Selection question with demographic (role)
  
- ❖ We have three main roles

## Staff

Lecturer

Support Teacher

Supervisor



# Staff Rating Question

However, the new question only allows you to have ONE role in a course, either a Lecturer OR a Support Teacher OR a Supervisor

- ❖ We need a combination of them
- ❖ A lecturer may teach AND support a tutorial group
- ❖ A Lecturer may teach AND supervise 2 or 3 student for their dissertations

## Staff

### Lecturer

- Support Teacher
- Supervisor



# Staff Rating Question

New University Decision:

- ❖ The rating of any staff has been optional for departments until now and from 2019/20 all Lecturers will be rated
- ❖ Support teachers will be optionally rated and chosen by students
- ❖ Supervisors – this is mandatory although students will have to choose their supervisors

Staff

Lecturer

- Support Teacher
- Supervisor



# Setting this up in DIG

Moving from having a Courses file, a Lecturers File and a Students file in DIG – last year I added a Module Leader file because I don't know who Leads on the course.

Module Leaders file is to find out WHO gets the full course report – they may or may not be rated in the questionnaire

## DIG FILES

COURSES

Module Leaders

Lecturers

Support Teachers

Supervisors

Students



# Setting this up in DIG

## Secondary Subjects

	Secondary Subject	Relationship Datasource	Display Name	Automatic Update	Automatic Relationship Sync
<input type="radio"/>	10_LEADERS_2019T3UG_DIG ▼	5_COURSE_LEADER_2019T3UG_DIC ▼	Module Leader	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/>	2_TEACHERS_2019T3UG_DIG ▼	6_COURSE_TEACHER_2019T3UG_D ▼	Lecturers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/>	11_OTHERS_2019T3UG_DIG ▼	7_COURSE_OTHER_2019T3UG_DIG ▼	Support/Teaching Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/>	12_SUPERVISORS_2019T3UG_DIG ▼	9_COURSE_SUPV_2019T3UG_DIG ▼	Dissertation Supervisors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/>	3_STUDENTS_2019T3UG_DIG ▼	4_COURSE_STUDENT_2019T3UG_D ▼	Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# Setting this up in DIG

- ❖ I thought this was the right way but ...
- ❖ It allowed staff to choose the same people and give them multiple roles
- ❖ Remember I was not using the Module Leader for anything other than reporting
- ❖ Students was only really to give the number which did highlight any groups of students missed off

The screenshot shows the Durham University DIG interface for the 'DIG Preparation UG 2019 Easter Term'. It displays a table with columns for 'Status', 'Group', and 'Name'. The 'Tort Law' course is listed with a status of 'Valid'. Below the table, a form shows the course details: Object ID (LAW1051), Name (Tort Law), and DepartmentName (Law School). A list of roles is shown below the form, with a red box highlighting the 'Module Leader', 'Lecturers', 'Support/Teaching Staff', 'Dissertation Supervisors', and 'Students' roles. The 'Students' role is highlighted with a red box.

Status	Group	Name
● Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Module Leader</li><li>2 Lecturers</li><li>5 Support/Teaching Staff</li><li>0 Dissertation Supervisors</li><li>300 Students</li></ul>	Tort Law

● Valid

Object ID  
LAW1051

Name  
Tort Law

DepartmentName  
Law School

- 1 Module Leader
- 2 Lecturers
- 5 Support/Teaching Staff
- 0 Dissertation Supervisors
- 300 Students

# Setting this up in DIG

- ❖ In the outcomes I combined all the spreadsheets together and removed any duplicate roles to produce one relationship file
- ❖ I decided what role they could have based on the type of module so
- ❖ Lecturer AND Supervisor – I made the decision to remove the duplicated Lecturer role

	A	B	C
1	CourseID	UserID	Role
2	BIOL1011	Hidden	Lecturer
3	BIOL1011	Hidden	Support Teacher
4	BIOL1011	Hidden	Support Teacher
5	BIOL2021	Hidden	Lecturer
6	BIOL2021	Hidden	Lecturer
7	BIOL2021	Hidden	Supervisor
8	BIOL2021	Hidden	Supervisor
9	BIOL2022	Hidden	Supervisor
10	BIOL2023	Hidden	Supervisor
11	BIOL2024	Hidden	Supervisor
12	BIOL2025	Hidden	Supervisor
13	BIOL2026	Hidden	Supervisor
14	BIOL2027	Hidden	Supervisor
15			

# For the Questionnaire

- ❖ Lecturer rating questions set to required
- ❖ Students to choose using tick boxes those they wanted to rate
- ❖ When they click on the next button they then start the staff rating questions
- ❖ But remember I said that I needed to rate people of different roles and I wanted different questions for each so ...

## Course Evaluation Winter 2018 for 401791 African Cultures and Societies

### ? Select your instructor(s) and one TA

Jeremy VAN DAM (Teaching Assistant)



Marianne OLSEN (Teaching Assistant)



Dr. James Earl SCOTT (Main Lecturer)



Jeannie TAYLOR (Guest Speaker)



[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

# For the Questionnaire

<input type="checkbox"/>	14	Please click "Next" to continue...	Section Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	15	Page Break	Section Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	16	Please select any Support/Teaching staff you wish to rate OR if this is a Dissertation Module please select the name of your Supervisor to rate	Section Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	17	Please click "Next" to continue...	Section Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	18	Page Break	Section Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	19	Overall I am satisfied with the quality of teaching provided on this module.	Single Selection
<input type="checkbox"/>	20	Lecturer Rating	Section Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	21	Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the teaching provided by: [C\$FN] [C\$LN]	Single Selection
<input type="checkbox"/>	22	Support/Teaching Staff Rating	Section Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	23	Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the support teaching provided by: [C\$FN] [C\$LN]	Single Selection
<input type="checkbox"/>	24	Supervisor Rating	Section Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	25	Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the supervision provided by: [C\$FN] [C\$LN]	Single Selection



# For the Questionnaire

Current Question Type: Single Selection

Item 15 of 21

**Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the support teaching provided by: [C\$FN]  
[C\$LN]**

- Definitely Agree
- Mostly Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Mostly Disagree
- Definitely Disagree
- Not Applicable



# Staff Rating Questions

- ❖ Need a solution for different roles
- ❖ All Lecturers across the institution will be rated which is an issue when we don't have a database for this
- ❖ Support Teachers rating questions will be optional but will be a large list to choose from
- ❖ Dissertation Supervisors – required to choose 1-2 from a list

# Reporting

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# Dynamic Viewers

- ❖ A great option to map staff to units within a structure of your institution
- ❖ Very easy to drop a member of staff into the Dynamic Reviews record management – highly recommended!

## HIERARCHY

Institution (Durham)

Faculty (Science, Arts, Social)

Departments/Schools

Year Level \*\*\*



# Report Viewers

Module Leaders view a FULL report including all free text responses and all lecture, support teacher, supervisor ratings

As I don't know who these people are – I asked departments to tell me who the Module Leaders are

But

Then I had other staff, who for management reasons, need to see these reports but only a limited number so therefore not a dynamic viewer so added these to the Module Leader listing.

## REPORT ACCESS

Blue Admin

University Executive

Departments/Schools Heads

Full Reports – Staff

Individual – Staff

Students



# Report Thresholds

Each report must reach a threshold of 5 responses before a report is run

This causes a lot of distress for staff and departments

This is University policy in order to retain anonymity

Of the recent PGT implementation 377 modules – 100 had less than 5 students registered. 15 modules had 1 student on.

To overcome this we used a spreadsheet report to at least give Likert scales but we are losing the richness of the data



# Departmental Spreadsheet Report

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	Q	R	S	T	U
Unit	Code	Module Name	Q1 - Unive	Q2 - Unive	Q3 - Unive	Q4 - Depar	Q5 - Depar	Q6 - Depar	Q7 - Modu	Q8 - Modu	Q9 - Modu	Teacher	Rating	% Respons	Responder	Invited Co	Merged	Count
BIOL	1151	Physiology	4.42	4.17	3.92	4.47	4.27	4.18	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	58	132	227	[132/227]	
BIOL	1151	Physiology	4.42	4.17	3.92	4.47	4.27	4.18	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	58	132	227	[132/227]	
BIOL	1151	Physiology	4.42	4.17	3.92	4.47	4.27	4.18	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	58	132	227	[132/227]	
BIOL	1151	Physiology	4.42	4.17	3.92	4.47	4.27	4.18	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	58	132	227	[132/227]	
BIOL	1161	Organisms and Enviro	3.92	3.88	4.3	3.78	4.1	4.22	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	56	108	194	[108/194]	
BIOL	1161	Organisms and Enviro	3.92	3.88	4.3	3.78	4.1	4.22	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	56	108	194	[108/194]	
BIOL	1161	Organisms and Enviro	3.92	3.88	4.3	3.78	4.1	4.22	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	56	108	194	[108/194]	
BIOL	1161	Organisms and Enviro	3.92	3.88	4.3	3.78	4.1	4.22	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	56	108	194	[108/194]	
BIOL	1161	Organisms and Enviro	3.92	3.88	4.3	3.78	4.1	4.22	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	56	108	194	[108/194]	
BIOL	1161	Organisms and Enviro	3.92	3.88	4.3	3.78	4.1	4.22	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	56	108	194	[108/194]	
BIOL	1161	Organisms and Enviro	3.92	3.88	4.3	3.78	4.1	4.22	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	56	108	194	[108/194]	
BIOL	1171	Genetics	4.47	4.24	3.86	4.43	4.23	4.28	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	58	148	256	[148/256]	
BIOL	1171	Genetics	4.47	4.24	3.86	4.43	4.23	4.28	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	58	148	256	[148/256]	
BIOL	1171	Genetics	4.47	4.24	3.86	4.43	4.23	4.28	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	58	148	256	[148/256]	
BIOL	1171	Genetics	4.47	4.24	3.86	4.43	4.23	4.28	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	58	148	256	[148/256]	
BIOL	1171	Genetics	4.47	4.24	3.86	4.43	4.23	4.28	NRP	NRP	NRP	Hidden	Hidden	58	148	256	[148/256]	

# Free Text Comments

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# Free Text Comments

- ❖ Experience of dealing with Free Text Comments crosses 14 years
- ❖ In the past we have always told students that responses to evaluations are anonymous and ask them to be frank but constructive in any feedback
- ❖ Until we went to Blue ....
- ❖ The amount of free text comments is overwhelming and we cannot monitor this
- ❖ This is an issue for most UK institutions and am sure in the US and beyond
- ❖ The Module leaders are asked to analyse feedback before passing this information onto individual teachers



# Free Text Comments - Issues

- ❖ Administrative staff in Schools/Departments were editing the PDF versions of the reports
- ❖ No policy to say they can't do this – their interpretation
- ❖ For some I did edit the free text on 2-3 evaluations, however, discovered that I needed to regenerate all the reports. This takes time but what it does is that it takes every free text section and randomly re-orders. I had staff now saying that they had a mismatch from what the downloaded reports were to the online versions.



# Free Text Comments - Issues

Questions I am currently dealing with:

- ❖ What makes a free text comment inappropriate?
- ❖ Do we do anything about feedback that may hurt someone's feelings but is an honest opinion
- ❖ How do we try and monitor this
- ❖ What is the current direction from the institution
- ❖ Currently working with Explorance to look at automating the process for end users





# Free Text Comments – Possible solution

- ❖ Using Text Analytics - we have asked for a spreadsheet report run against free text responses using all the dictionaries for rude/disrespectful/negative

COURSE CODE | USERID | QUESTION | COMMENT

- ❖ We have tried this on one question and there were 156 responses
- ❖ This is the point where you decide what is beyond the acceptable boundaries
- ❖ We would like an automated feature that locates that's individuals submission and removes the whole thing.



# Next Steps

- ❖ Set an Institutional Policy
- ❖ Set up an Evaluation Unit to administer surveys
- ❖ Set up a Data Sync to automate data feeds
- ❖ Think of a way to collect questions for the Question Bank
- ❖ Try getting Questions into DIG
- ❖ Work on the Text Analytics for inappropriate comments

# Any Questions?

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