



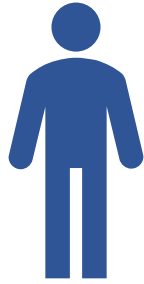
Balancing Student Feedback Against Staff Concerns: GCU's approach to handling inappropriate student comments

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Module Evaluations at GCU

- Centralised process since 2016-17
- End of trimester (3 weeks)
- Question personalisation (ranges between 10-15% uptake)
- Closing the feedback loop

Trimester A 2022-23 Module Evaluation stats



**18k
students**



**800
modules**



**45k
evaluations**



**11k
comments**

GCU's approach to inappropriate comments

1. Student guidance
2. Redaction of staff names
3. Removal requests

In-Survey Guidance

- Comments will be shared anonymously
- Keep comments **concise, constructive** and **relevant**
- Don't identify yourself or individual staff members
- Comments that breach **Dignity at Work and Study Policy** or **Student Code of Conduct** will be subject to removal

Student Guide to Giving Feedback

GCU
Glasgow Caledonian University

Study International study Library 🔍 ☰

Get Involved
Student life at GCU offers up lots of opportunities to get involved with activities on and off campus.

Home > Current students > Get involved > Student surveys > Student Guide to Giving Feedback

Student Guide to Giving Feedback

Your feedback helps us shape and improve the current and future experiences of students at GCU. You will have the opportunity to provide regular feedback on your academic and student experience via various channels, including:

- Class/Academic representatives
- Student Staff Consultative Groups
- Pause for Reflection and Feedback Week
- Module evaluations
- Student surveys (e.g. the National Student Survey)

In your **module evaluations** and **other online student experience surveys**, you may be asked to provide written comments about your experiences. This resource provides tips and guidance for students on how to provide meaningful written comments.

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Student Guide to Giving Feedback

Providing written comments

In your module evaluations and other online student experience surveys, you may be asked to provide written comments about your experiences. Your written comments are a valuable source of feedback. In order for staff to get the most out of your comments, please try to ensure that your comments are:

- Constructive
- Concise
- Relevant
- Specific
- Realistic
- Focused on the issue, not the person
- Based on first-hand experience

The following sections include some tips and examples on each of the above points, as well as information on **implicit bias**, and how this can play out in module evaluations. We also talk about the importance of **professionalism**.

Student Guide to Giving Feedback

Tips and examples



- **Be constructive:** Where possible, try to suggest solutions and improvements. For example: *'The tutorials would have been much better if we had been split into groups to discuss the questions'*.
- **Be concise:** The ability to be concise is an important skill in effective communication. Take a moment to think about what you really want to say before you start typing. This way, whoever reads your comments won't get lost or confused in unnecessary details.
- **Provide relevant comments:** Remember to keep your comment relevant to the question/survey. For example, when completing your module evaluations, make sure that your comments are about the module, its delivery, and the support you have received i.e. things that the module leader can take action on.
- **Be specific:** Try to explain specifically what you liked or didn't like. For example, *'I really enjoyed this module'* is very general, whereas *'I especially enjoyed the seminars. They were very informative and the seminar leader was great at answering our questions'* explains what specific aspects of the module you enjoyed and why.
- **Be realistic:** Try to be reasonable in your expectations and suggestions. For example, suggesting that an essential component of your module/course be scrapped is unrealistic. Instead, try to explain why you didn't like it and/or make suggestions on how it could be improved.
- **Focus on the issue, not the person:** Please remember that **real people will read your comments**. Please keep in mind the following points.
 - Try to **focus on the situation, not the person**
 - **Be mindful of the tone and language** you use. While criticism may be valid, it should always be expressed appropriately. If you would not say it face-to-face, then re-consider the wording of your comment to ensure that your meaning is conveyed without being hurtful to the individual.
 - **Writing offensive, discriminatory or personally insulting comments is not acceptable** as per the University's values, [Code of Student Conduct](#) and our [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#) which outlines our zero tolerance approach to any form of harassment and victimisation, racism, sexism, gender-based violence, homophobia and any other unacceptable behaviour. Comments of this nature will be subject to removal and may be taken forward in line with the Code of Student Conduct.
- **Based on first-hand experience:** Your comments should be based on your own experience of the module (rather than hear-say or assumptions).

Student Guide to Giving Feedback

Implicit bias



- **What is implicit bias?**

Implicit bias (or unconscious bias) is when our unconscious mind makes snap judgments about people and situations, based on our **background**, **cultural environment** and **personal experiences**. It can lead us to unconsciously favour people that are 'like us' based on things like gender, and social, or other characteristics.

- **How does implicit bias play out in module evaluations?**

Research has found that students' evaluations of teaching can be influenced by a range of demographic characteristics of their instructors, including **attractiveness**, **age**, **race**, **gender**, and **academic discipline**. For example, there is evidence of **gender bias** and **racial bias** in teaching evaluations, and that these biases can cause more effective instructors to receive lower scores than less effective instructors.

- **How might implicit biases be expressed in feedback?**

A common way in which our implicit biases play out in practice is through **microaggressions**. These are brief and commonplace daily words, actions and behaviours, often unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults. An example of this would be dismissive comments about foreign accents or English language ability being used to question a lecturer's professional competence.

Examples of microaggressions can be viewed in this [PDF download](#) from Advance HE's [Tackling Racism on Campus](#) project.

- **Why is it important to be aware of implicit bias?**

We all have implicit bias, but being aware of, and acknowledging it, can help reduce our susceptibility to it. Consider what biases are most likely to affect you. Just being conscious of your biases and actively thinking about how they might influence our judgements, can help to reduce the effects.

Student Guide to Giving Feedback

Professionalism and the Code of Student Conduct



Other ways to raise issues



We hope you find this short guide helpful. The tips provided will help you throughout your GCU career and beyond, not just in online surveys, but also when participating in online forums, professional conversations and meetings with other learners or colleagues, either online or in person.

Comment redaction

- Via Visual Basic Editor in Excel
- Staff names, titles and pronouns replaced with 'XXX'

Comment redaction process

Step 1: Prepare staff lists

Step 2: Export data from Explorance

Step 3: Replace HTML code

Step 4: Add spaces around punctuation marks

Step 5: Run VB editor

Removal requests

- Comments are shared with module leaders in the first instance
- Module leaders can request removal of any comments they deem to have breached the Dignity at Work and Study Policy or Code of Student Conduct
- Requests are referred (anonymously) to our DVC and PVC L&T for consideration

Effectiveness/impact of measures?

- Initial decrease in number of redactions
- So far, only 3 requests received to remove inappropriate comments

Upcoming priorities

- Free text analysis
- Review content of our reminder emails and timings
- Review of core questionnaire (following NSS results publication)

Thank you