

Student support policies and procedures

Student voice policy

Aim:

- To strengthen teaching and learning and responsiveness to individual need;
- To strengthen student participation and representation;
- To create a culture of student voice and democracy.

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Policy author	Deputy Principal

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1. Introduction

The Blackpool Sixth Form College is committed to involving students in its decision-making and operational management processes. Blackpool Sixth firmly believes that embracing student views and offering an opportunity for students to have direct involvement in assessing and shaping their own learning experience will have a significant impact on developing the college's quality improvement processes and increasing student success. Student participation and representation bring to life the British value of democracy.

2. Scope of the policy

This policy is applicable to all staff employed by the college and all students enrolled at the college.

3. Benefits of student voice

There are several benefits of effective student voice to Blackpool Sixth and to the students.

3.1 To students:

- improved participation, retention, achievement and progression
- better feedback on the students' experience informs quality improvements
- students become empowered, more self confident and motivated
- students learn the British value of democracy
- students have the opportunity to become directly involved in social action for the benefit of others
- services and facilities are improved to better meet the needs of students
- identification and sharing of good practice
- promotion of an environment of mutual respect
- enhanced CV for entry into higher education or employment with training

3.2 To college:

- improved participation, retention, achievement and progression
- students who are more expert and independent
- better quality information about the students' perspective so improvements can be made
- better decisions about resource allocation and investment
- students who feel more involved, see college as a place where they belong and are motivated to put something back into the college
- enhanced college reputation within the community

4. Mechanisms of student voice

4.1 Involving students individually

Blackpool Sixth aims to create an ethos that fosters dialogue with students, enabling them to take a full and active part in their learning experience in a way that delivers success. A focus on individual student needs is at the heart of our college's Pastoral Mentor and Progress Review systems. Each student has a 1:1 review with their Pastoral Mentor approximately every 5-6 weeks, along with at least two formal

progress reviews during the academic year.

The main focus of 1:1s and formal progress reviews is to assess progress against individual targets and to tailor students' individual learning and progression plans (ILPPs) to meet their own personal needs and objectives.

Students who receive a significant amount of Additional Support have three formal opportunities to negotiate change and give feedback on their Additional Action Plans.

4.2 Involving students collectively

College has a range of established routes through which students are engaged in a variety of quality processes across the college.

4.2.1 Student Directors

Two students each year are selected to become college directors through a formal application and interview process; one student is selected from Lower Sixth (L6) and the other from Upper Sixth (U6). It is usual that the L6 Student Director continues in role as they progress from L6 into U6, thus providing consistency on the Governing Body and allowing the more experienced Student Director to mentor and support the new student.

Student Directors receive director training and induction and participate fully in Corporation and Standards Board meetings and the annual residential conference. The U6 student also sits on the Finance and Administration Committee. At the end of each year the Governing Body receives an annual report. The responsibility for the recruitment of Student Directors lies with the Principal.

4.2.2 Student Council

The Student Council is composed of a mixture of lower and upper sixth students, selected via an interview panel comprised of the Assistant Principal - Academic, the Student Council Co-ordinator and Senior Students. In order to be selected for interview, students write a supporting statement/letter to the Assistant Principal - Academic, outlining the qualities they feel link to individual roles within the council.

The whole council meets on a weekly basis and has four main functions:

- i) Firstly, to act as ambassadors of Blackpool Sixth at a variety of internal and external events such as college open evenings.
- ii) Secondly, to act as a mouthpiece and representative body for the whole student population. A formal council report is submitted to the SLT termly, and issues arising are communicated via the Assistant Principal - Academic to the SLT.
- iii) Thirdly, the council actively engage in fundraising and raise awareness.
- iv) Fourthly, each Student Council member is encouraged to participate in a work shadowing exercise of a Leadership Team member, and in a limited number of cross-college management meetings. Their role here is to contribute student opinion to issues arising in such meetings or during the work shadowing exercise.

4.2.3 Senior Students

The college Senior Students are appointed through a selective interview process with the Assistant Principal - Academic and Student Council Co-ordinator and represent the college at internal events.

4.2.4 Pastoral Mentor Representatives

Every student within college is assigned to a Pastoral Mentor group. Each Pastoral Mentor group has the opportunity to elect a representative to pass their views on to the Pastoral Leads. The Pastoral Leads, who lead the Pastoral Mentor programme, facilitate half termly meetings with the representatives, which are also attended by members of the Student Council. Feedback from these meetings is disseminated to appropriate college managers, including SLT, for consideration and, where appropriate, action taken.

Issues emerging and resulting actions / responses are fed back to Pastoral Mentor Representatives at the following meeting and feedback is given to the whole student body during Pastoral Mentor sessions.

4.2.5 Sharing and Observation Weeks (ShOW) Focus Groups

ShOW focus groups are facilitated by members of the Sharing and Observation Weeks (ShOW) review team during the ShOW process, which lasts from November to April. Focus groups are conducted in each curriculum department and are composed of a cross section of subjects and levels. A standard set of teaching, learning and assessment questions are asked and participants are invited to make general observations, highlight strengths and offer suggestions for improvement.

Heads of Department are given written summaries of the main issues arising in the ShOW report, and asked to feedback these to their departments. Responses / actions to the issues raised, are reported to their SLT link as part of the ShOW review 6 weeks later. Issues emerging and resulting actions / responses are directly discussed or fed back in teaching sessions within the department.

4.2.6 Compliments, concerns and complaints

The Compliments, concerns and complaints policy, managed by the Deputy Principal, is a written channel of feedback to the Leadership Team and to the Directors. Complaints may be informal or formal (written) in nature and the process for responding to complaints is detailed in this policy.

4.2.7 Student groups

Student groups (such as the LGBT+ group), set up and led by the students for the students are another channel of communication. A member of staff facilitates each group and liaises with a member of the Leadership Team to ensure views are shared and acted on.

4.2.8 The Torch Bearers

This group is an open group, open to any stakeholder with an interest in disability. The Torch Bearers meet once per term to consider the identified area of disability. The Head of Student Support has responsibility for this group.

4.2.9 Strategic Equality Committee

This cross-college group is composed of the Principal, Deputy Principal, representatives from the Leadership Team, college middle leaders, staff and a student representative from the Student Council. This group meets termly to provide strategic oversight of all matters of an equality and diversity nature. Issues are cascaded via each representative of their particular group.

4.2.10 The college magazine

The college magazine is led by a group of students supported by a member of staff in the English department. The magazine is a mouthpiece for student views and news.

4.2.11 Alumni

There is regular and active engagement with former students who are encouraged to comment on their experiences at Blackpool Sixth and maintain their connection with the sixth form. A prime purpose of the alumni programme is to provide a means for former students to reflect on their study pathways and career development and to share their insights with current students and staff. Former students often visit the sixth form to speak to current students and staff about their careers and these activities are facilitated through the alumni programme. There is a display of particularly notable alumni in the foyer and further alumni profiles are produced for display elsewhere in the college and for use in publications.

4.3 Student satisfaction surveys

Student surveys are formally reported on to SLT and the Directors, as well as being fed back to all curriculum and cross college areas and students.

4.3.1 Marketing survey

A survey researching student views on the impact and reach of the college's pre-enrolment marketing is run in October each year (first one was delivered in October 2016).

4.3.2 Annual student survey

The annual student survey takes place each March. This survey asks specific questions about student satisfaction on a range of cross college issues. A formal report is generated for SLT by the MIS department. Results of the surveys and any additional actions are communicated to staff and students subsequently.

The online survey is organised by the Deputy Principal and is completed during Pastoral Mentor sessions and covers questions relating to topics such as: equality and diversity, safety and progression.

4.3.3 Support department surveys

These take place on a rota throughout the academic year and enable support departments to survey students about the quality of their service/function.

4.3.4 ShOW survey

During the ShOW process, students in each curriculum department complete a survey about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The questions are the same as in the ShOW focus groups outlined in 4.2.5 above.

4.3.5 Ofsted learner view survey

This is emailed out to colleges in the Autumn term; there are 9 questions. These questions are incorporated into our own annual student survey and the ShOW survey and focus groups. For this reason, the students only complete this survey when the college is notified of an Ofsted visit.

5. Sharing progress, improvements and changes

Each department creates poster material (“You said, we did”) which communicates what the college has done about student feedback. This is also shared in Pastoral Mentor time, in the Weekly and on the student voice calendar on the student portal. A mid year and end of year report is presented to SLT and the Directors.

6. Creating a culture of student involvement

Vital to the success of a meaningful student voice policy are the skills of staff and the readiness of staff to engage in the process. The college’s vision for student involvement includes the developing of a culture where staff listen actively to the views of students and students listen actively to the views of staff. In this way meaningful dialogue can take place.

The college offers employment opportunities to students in departments such as MIS and Estates. This gives us yet another perspective on student views on how the college functions as an employer.

The college contacts students who have left to endeavour to improve its service wherever possible.

In addition, the SLT regularly invite students to talk with them directly in groups, or as individuals, giving a strong lead in creating an open culture.

7. Review of the student voice policy

The Deputy Principal will review the student voice policy every 2 years. The Student Council will input into the review.

8. Records and monitoring

A report is presented to SLT and the Directors mid year and at the end of the academic year.

9. Links to other policies

- ShOW policy
- Pastoral support policy
- Compliments, concerns and complaints policy
- Equality and diversity policy