



BEST STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Last year, *The Times Higher* commissioned Opinionpanel, owner of The Student Panel, to run the survey for its first Student Experience Award. After polling more than 10,000 students, Swansea University came out top based on responses to a five-part questionnaire.

This year, the survey has been developed and refined. We began by asking a representative sample of 1,000 current students to tell us, in their own words, what they would say for and against the student experience at their university. Replies were condensed into a three-minute online survey that covered 21 aspects of the university experience.

We also added a new question: "Would you recommend your university to a friend?" Many business experts see this question as the best predictor of future organisational growth and success, and it is widely used as a proxy for

TOP TEN INSTITUTIONS

(In alphabetical order)

- Cambridge University
- Leeds University
- Liverpool University
- Loughborough University
- Oxford University
- St Andrews University
- Sheffield University
- Stirling University
- Swansea University
- Warwick University

customer satisfaction. We could have asked just this one question, but we needed more detail to ensure that the full range of student experience was being measured and that recommendations were not being driven by non-experiential factors such as a university's reputation.

The new questionnaire was administered online to more than 6,931 full-time undergraduate students at 140 different institutions. We calculated average institutional scores for each of the 21

attributes and applied a weighting system to ensure that attributes most closely correlated to recommendation had the biggest impact on overall scores. Attributes with high correlations were weighted by two; those with low correlations were weighted by one; and other items were weighted by 1.5.

Results for institutions with fewer than 50 responses were suppressed, leaving 94 universities in the final analysis. Fieldwork took place between April and September 2006, and the sample comprised 26 per cent first-year students, 36 per cent second-years and 38 per cent third-years or higher. It was nationally representative in terms of gender.

The top ten universities are listed above. The winner will be announced at the awards ceremony on November 15.

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THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The **2005 questionnaire** was based on Agree/Disagree responses on a ten-point scale to the following questions:

- "My course is very stimulating"
- "Overall, I find the library and IT facilities at my university to be first rate"
- "I really enjoy my social life at my university"
- "The time I spend at my university will stand me in good stead for the future"

■ "Overall, my student experience at my university has exceeded my expectations"

The **2006 questionnaire** was based on Agree/Disagree responses on a seven-point scale to the following question:

"Based on your experience, how strongly do you agree that your university offers the following? (post fieldwork scoring weights in brackets after each attribute)

- High-quality staff/lectures (2)
- Helpful interested staff (2)
- Well-structured courses (2)
- Good social life (2)
- Good community atmosphere (2)
- Good environment on campus (2)
- Good extracurricular activities (2)
- High-quality facilities (2)
- Personal requirements catered for (2)

- Good student union (1.5)
- Good support/welfare (1.5)
- Good relationship with teaching staff (1.5)
- Centralised facilities (1.5)
- Industry connections (1.5)
- Cheap shop/bar (1)
- Tuition in small groups (1)
- Good accommodation (1)
- Fair workload (1)
- Security (1)
- Sports facilities (1)
- Library (1)