

## **Information Sheet – Promoting the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey**

The 2013 **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey** (for PGT students) launches at The University of Manchester on **Monday 18 February 2013** and will run until **30 April**.

Now in its fifth year, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is a service available from the Higher Education Academy to all higher education providers with postgraduate taught (PGT) student provision.

The survey aims to help institutions enhance the student experience for Postgraduate Taught students.

In the last wave of PTES, 54,640 students from 83 institutions across the UK took part.

The University has never previously run the PTES (it runs nationally every year) but sees it as a potential tool (alongside the Student Barometer survey and others methods) for enhancing the student experience for PGT students.

While PTES contains some questions from the undergraduate National Student Survey – allowing institutions to compare the experience of their undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision – it also goes into more depth and detail, for example asking about students' motivations, their experience relative to their expectations, and the depth of learning they experience.

Unlike the NSS, where results are published on the Unistats website, institutional-level results are confidential, meaning they cannot be used to form league tables.

However, PTES allows benchmarking while keeping institutional level results confidential, through the creation of eight benchmarking groups, including one for the Russell Group. These allow participating institutions to compare their own performance with the average performance of the institutions in each group.

The PTES survey is being administered by the Project Office in the Directorate for the Student Experience. Your point of contact for any queries about the administration of the survey is Kevin Hewitt ([kevin.hewitt@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:kevin.hewitt@manchester.ac.uk)).

Once the survey has been conducted and data checked, the DSE Project Office will arrange for results to be shared with Schools. A national report will also be produced – you can read the 2012 report at [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/postgraduate/PTES\\_2012\\_report.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/postgraduate/PTES_2012_report.pdf)

There is an internal University website which contains links to lots of further information about the PTES Survey at <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/supporting-students/student-experience/ptes-and-pres/>

**PLEASE NOTE: This website is for information and promotional materials and does not provide access to the survey – student needs to follow the unique link they are provided with via email or My Manchester for their response to be counted.**

### **Launching the survey to students**

PGT students will receive a central email from the University inviting them to take the survey – this email will contain a unique access link for them to follow and complete the survey.

*However, good practice guidelines suggest that it may be advantageous for a School/local contact to communicate with students in advance of the launch, to let them know to expect the email and also the purpose of the survey.*

You can download an email template to do this from  
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=15022>

There will also be a special edition of the My Manchester weekly student bulletin targeted at PGT students, which will feature the survey and encourage students to take part.

They will also see their unique survey link when they log into the My Manchester student portal at <http://my.manchester.ac.uk>

### **We are aiming to achieve a response rate of at least 20% at institution level**

It is important that as many students as possible provide their feedback for the survey to generate reliable information – **and we need your help to ensure this happens!**

Although we have never run the PTES survey before at Manchester, we know from running the Student Barometer in 2011/2012 for the first time, that it will take a joined-up and concerted effort from all colleagues across Schools and Faculties, PSS, and in the Students Union, to achieve this level of response.

The key message is that we need your help to encourage students to fill out the survey and achieve a high a response rate as possible.

### **Key Messages**

The Communication strategy for the PTES is being overseen and co-ordinated by the Student Communication and Marketing Team, working with colleagues from the DSE Project Office, Students' Union and Internal Communications.

The main communications campaign will run from early February until the Easter break.

A number of key messages for students have been defined – you can use these in any written or oral communications with students

- PTES opens on Monday 18 February until 30 April
- Open to all students taking a Masters degree, postgraduate certificate or diploma, who commenced their studies prior to January 2013.
- Your chance to give your opinion on your experience, including teaching, assessment and feedback, personal development and resources.
- If eligible you will receive an email and other communications from the University containing a unique survey link.
- You can also log into My Manchester to take the survey – if eligible you will see a link.
- Responses remain anonymous – an opportunity to express honest opinions
- PTES is supported and run in partnership with the Students' Union
- PTES is part of our commitment to listening to our students and improving the student experience
- Your responses will be used to make improvements and extend existing good practice
- Your feedback can make a real difference – ***[use examples of enhancements made to student experience previously as a result of feedback]***

- Results used nationally to help improve learning and teaching of taught postgraduates across the sector.

### **Specific guidance for academic and student support staff**

For staff that regularly meet with students face to face, we have put together a separate information sheet on how you can support the survey, important points to make when talking to student about PTES, and important things to bear in mind. You can find this here

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/supporting-students/student-experience/ptes-and-pres/promoting/>

### **Publicity and Promotional Material**

Below is a list of the available materials, together with suggestions as to how they can be used to promote the PTES to postgraduate taught students.

Publicity material will also be distributed by the Student Communications and Marketing Team to central locations that have high student footfall areas, where PGT students are likely to see them.

Arrangements have also been made for eligible students to see a PTES box and a survey link in the My Manchester student portal when they log in. Central IT computer clusters will also display a PTES slide on their screensavers.

### **Hard copy materials:**

Although HEA produces its own electronic publicity material for the PTES, a strong brand does not exist in the same way as for the NSS, and therefore a decision has been taken to produce our own PTES promotional materials. These have been produced in consultation with PGT students to try and ensure their effectiveness and relevance in communicating key messages.

**If you wish to order A3 and A4 posters and A5 flyers, please email Leah Clegg ([leah.clegg@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:leah.clegg@manchester.ac.uk)) in the Student Communications Team, specifying quantities. We expect to deliver all materials w/b 11 February.**

**Posters** – please display in prominent locations e.g. near entrances/in areas frequented by postgraduate taught students / in any PG computer clusters or cafes located in your building. If you have specific social or study areas for students, these would be ideal.

**Flyers** – We are working with the SU to involve Student Reps in promoting the PTES, but it is also worth engaging with them and encouraging them to support the campaign. They can help by handing out flyers at final year lectures (this would be more effective than simply leaving them on counters or around buildings) and through lecture shout outs – and they may well have other creative suggestions.

### **Online materials**

(download from <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/supporting-students/student-experience/ptes-and-pres/promoting/>)

**Banners** – For use online and electronically, as appropriate. These can also be added to email signatures – but please remember to remove them once the PTES finishes.

**Screensavers** - These could be loaded onto machines in School managed computer clusters.

**Plasma Screen Display-** A slide suitable for display on plasma screens will be available for those who have access to such a screen in their School/Building.

### **Use of email to communicate with students**

Schools are encouraged to use email channels to communicate with relevant students, but are asked to;

- target messages as precisely as possible (eg send messages to a PGT Listserv rather than one for the whole School)
- use this method sparingly to avoid 'bombarding' – evidence suggests this approach can lead to students ignoring emails
- try to ensure emails comes from a named person, preferably someone students will recognise, such as a student support officer, course leader or Head of School.

The Student Communications and Marketing Team will use its weekly My Manchester student bulletin to promote the PTES periodically, and it is recommended this is supported by local communications.

Generally, one email a week from a School/programme during the PTES period would be proportionate – but to vary the content slightly, perhaps giving students an update on response rates, any local initiatives around PTES, examples of improvements that have been made previously to the student experience (perhaps from Unit Surveys or other feedback), or asking for a final effort in the final days of the survey.

Further advice may be obtained from the Student Communications Team – in the first instance please contact Alex Waddington, Student Communications Manager, on x67998, or by email: [alex.waddington@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:alex.waddington@manchester.ac.uk)

### **Incentives & Prize Draws**

There will not be a University-wide incentive scheme or prize draw for the PTES.

There is also evidence that prize draws can be ineffective as a way of increasing response rates, although offering something for everyone who participates can be more effective (see example below).

If you want to offer a prize draw as an incentive, you will have to think creatively about how to link it with the PTES. For example, in the NSS the School of Computer Science offers free pizza in return for attending a PC cluster and completing the survey - this approach could be extended to offering students who come to an event and complete the survey the opportunity to enter a prize draw. You – and your student reps – may have other ideas

***Please ensure that any incentive you offer a) does not compromise the neutrality of the survey and b) is equally available to all eligible students. (If you're not sure, please contact [Jenny Wragge](#) in the DSE Project Office for advice).***

### **Working with Your Student Reps**

It has been shown that enlisting the support of student reps and students' unions is one of the best ways to promote surveys.

Centrally we are working closely with SU to ensure reps are made aware of the PTES and are able to communicate key messages to their peers effectively. But why not hold a meeting with your reps to tell them about the School's support for PTES and involve them in planning and promotion?

In 2012, one school increased response rate from 73% to 86% in the NSS through a successful partnership with reps, which saw the reps using their student-led Facebook groups and Twitter accounts to engage with students and promote the survey.

### **Other ways you can help**

The support and encouragement of the student's school/programme team and individual lecturers/tutors has been shown to be highly influential in achieving a high level of response to student surveys.

**Please ensure that academic colleagues in your School are aware of the survey and encourage them to promote it to their PGT students.**

We have developed a short guidance note indicating how they can help to promote the PTES, which you may find useful. Feel free to adapt it to your local circumstances as appropriate. It is available from <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=15020>

The following strategies have also been found to be effective

- announcements in lectures and seminars
- giving PGTs time in scheduled sessions to complete the survey (if they are working at computers connected to the Internet)
- sending PGTs personalised emails from known, named people (eg Course Leaders or Heads of School) asking for student support and participation

### **How you discuss the PTES with students**

When you discuss the PTES with students, ***remind them that responses are anonymous, and they should feel free to express their honest opinions.***

**CAUTION - it is crucial that local survey promotion is neutral and that:**

- Students are targeted equally so that each eligible student is given a chance to express their views on their student experience
- Students feel free to give honest feedback about their experiences without their responses being influenced by their institution
- Students must not be asked to complete the survey while a member of staff is overseeing their responses, or made to feel that their responses are being monitored
- Students must not be encouraged to reflect in their answers anything other than their genuine perceptions of their experience

**Remember to keep your information factual and avoid attempting, or appearing to attempt, to influence the way that students answer the questions.**

**Weekly Response Updates:** Once the PTES survey is underway, the DSE Project Office will provide weekly reports about how the responses are progressing in each subject area.

This will be distributed by email so that you can see if any further publicity is required in your area – please feel free to contact the Student Communications Team on x67998 or email [alex.waddington@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:alex.waddington@manchester.ac.uk) if you want further advice, help and guidance on doing this.

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[www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/stupporting-students](http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/stupporting-students)