



University of  
**Chester**

Handbook

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# Quality and Standards Manual

**TO ACCOMPANY THE  
PRINCIPLES AND REGULATIONS:**

**SUPPORTING STUDENT  
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

**2020 – 2021**

Date of Approval: June 2020

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Version: 1.0

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## *Appendices*

- A Standards on Assessment, Feedback, and the Organisation and Management of Students' Learning Experience
- B Peer Observation of Teaching and Learning Guidelines
- C The Role of the Personal Academic Tutor: Guidance, Expectations and Responsibilities
- D Operational Manual – to accompany the Undergraduate Modular Framework
- E Increasing Inclusivity Policy
- F Disability Link Tutors
- G Student Academic Representation Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

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This Handbook sets out the University's procedures and practice relating to supporting students' academic achievement. This includes approved policies and guidance on arrival/induction, learning and teaching, and pastoral support. It does not include policies relating to students outside of the academic sphere, and policies which have not been approved by a committee, or other similar structure. Information on supporting postgraduate research students is also outside of the remit of this handbook and can be found in [Handbook G: Research Supervision and Assessment of Students Undertaking Research Programmes](#)

The Handbook is aligned to the Office for Students' Conditions of Registration. It is a working document and whilst reviewed and updated annually, policies and guidance contained herein will be updated and added to as and when required. This may not be limited to the start of the academic year.

### Purpose

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The purpose of this handbook is to promote good practice in supporting students academically, and also to act as a source of information for staff in the University on policies and procedures which relate to the support of students. This may be in the form of text within the handbook, reference to an appended policy/guidance document, or a link to another source.

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## SECTION A: PRE-ARRIVAL, ARRIVAL AND INDUCTION

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### Pre-arrival

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#### *Pre-entry activities*

The University recognises the importance of engaging students before their arrival, and the benefits this can have on transition to University. It is therefore highly recommended that academic departments make contact with students between when an offer is made, through confirmation of offer to induction. Particular emphasis should be placed on providing information that will enable students to get to know the department and its staff, and giving an insight into the work that the department is undertaking.

#### *Applicants with a declared disability*

Applicants typically disclose a disability on their UCAS application form, University application and/or enrolment form (for non UCAS courses). This prompts contact from the Disability & Inclusion team within Student Futures Support, to offer them the opportunity to discuss their needs and appropriate reasonable adjustments, with a view to enabling successful transition and settlement into their programme of study. On arrival at the University, there will be an opportunity to discuss further support with the Disability & Inclusion team. Details of the availability and type of support offered can be found on the Student Futures Portal page here: [Student Futures – Disability and Inclusion](#).

A student or applicant is regarded as disclosing a disability to the University if they advise **any** member of staff in **any** way, verbal, written or otherwise. The University then has obligations to assess and discuss reasonable adjustments via processes that Disability & Inclusion operate. All staff are therefore required to contact the Disability & Inclusion team to advise of any disclosure of disabilities made in any format as soon as possible following such disclosure.

Admission decisions are made on academic grounds in congruence with the University's Admissions policy, however the Disability & Inclusion team identify disabled students initially using UCAS data and issue Applicant Questionnaires to gather information for further assessment. Where particular risks are identified, or significant planning to accommodate needs becomes apparent, information may be shared with relevant academic and/or support departments to ensure appropriate and safe support can be provided. Applicants may be contacted for further information at this stage and invited to a telephone or face to face appointment.

On receipt of appropriate evidence (ref Section C) the Disability & Inclusion team will compile and issue an Inclusion Plan and where appropriate, SN1 (reasonable adjustments in exams) to relevant departments to communicate individual needs prior to their arrival at University. **Each academic department appoints a Disability Link**

**Tutor whose role includes responsibility to accept and disseminate Inclusion Plans accordingly when issued directly by the Disability & Inclusion team** (see [Appendix F](#) for further details). SN1 forms are issued directly by Disability & Inclusion to Registry Services and Faculty of Health and Social Care.

In a tandem process, applicants are supported by the Disability & Inclusion team to apply for and access Disabled Students' Allowances. Disability & Inclusion can provide information, advice and guidance on evidence requirements, the application and assessment process and how to access recommended funded support.

### *Student Privacy Notice*

The University of Chester is committed to protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals as detailed in relevant Data Protection legislation including looking after any personal data that it collects, uses or hold. More information regarding the Student Privacy Notice can be found [here](#).

### Arrival and induction

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A number of centrally led induction activities are provided for students during their initial weeks at the University. This is managed by the Induction and Transition Manager in the Student Futures department.

The Induction team coordinate activities to help new students at the University of Chester settle in to their new life as a student both academically and socially. This involves ensuring they complete their enrolment process and arrange payment of fees, providing information on the Pre-Arrival Student Site (PASS) which they access before they arrive. This also includes a Pre-Arrival E-Library with useful resources and materials to help them get a head start on their University journey. The team organise a number of events and activities, along with the Students Union to ensure the new arrivals have been introduced to their academic department and are aware of all the services and facilities available to them, preparing them for life at the University and providing opportunities for socialising and networking.

For the main cohort of undergraduate students arriving at the end of September this takes the form of Welcome Week, but for other cohorts of students events and information are targeted to them at an appropriate time of year. Please contact [induction@chester.ac.uk](mailto:induction@chester.ac.uk) if you have any questions.

Academic departments should also ensure that they provide an induction that includes programme-related activities that are appropriate to the time at which they are delivered. It is advised that programme teams plan a short term and longer term induction programme, sustained over the year.

## Section B: Academic Support

### Learning and Teaching

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#### *Peer observation of teaching*

The University requires that staff observe a colleagues teaching and/or have their teaching observed, and record a commentary about their learning from the observation each academic year. The purpose of peer observation of teaching is to share and enhance learning and teaching within and across departments of the University, to benefit the student experience, and to provide an opportunity for reflection and development of teaching practice.

The Learning and Teaching Institute (LTI) have published full guidelines on practice relating to the peer observation of teaching. Further information, guidelines and form can be found [here](#).

#### *PAT policy, guidance and materials*

The University operates a Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) system for undergraduate students. The role of the PAT is central to the University's student support system, and its function is to provide academic and pastoral support for students throughout their University career. [Appendix C](#) (The role of the PAT: Guidance, expectations and responsibilities) provides an overview of the PAT system and highlights the core features of the role which every PAT is expected to offer to their students.

Advice and support materials for PATs can be found via the 'PAT Pack' on the University's Portal page [here](#).

#### *Operational Manual – to accompany the Undergraduate Modular Framework*

[Appendix D](#) provides a guide to accompany the University's [Undergraduate Module Framework](#), and offers advice and guidance on the following:

- Operation of the Undergraduate Modular Framework
- Learning and Teaching Objectives
- Administrative Arrangements
- Contact points for advice and guidance

This is updated annually by the Co-Directors of Undergraduate Modular Programmes, and provides a useful guidance on the management of the framework, assessment arrangements, and curriculum design.

#### *Peer Mentoring*

Peer mentoring can help to foster a stronger sense of belonging for students within an academic community, which has knock on benefits to student retention and success.

The University's Peer Mentoring (PM) scheme matches current students with new students, and encourages flexible interaction between them. Peer Mentors can help with a range of queries, from social issues, to money, living and study related issues.

Student Futures provide further information about [Peer Mentoring](#).

## Developing Academic Skills

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### *Study Skills Guidance*

The Learning and Teaching Institute provides Study Skills provision, including maths and statistics, which supports students studying at University of Chester sites. Primarily, Study and Maths Skills Advisers work directly with academic staff to embed study and maths and statistics skills within module teaching and assessment. This might take the form of:

- Meeting with staff members to discuss methods of supporting students to develop and enhance study and/or maths and statistics skills in the context of their subject.
- Providing or creating study and/or maths and statistics skills resources or in-class activities which staff can either deliver themselves or which can be co-delivered with a Study or Maths Skills Adviser in a teaching session.

The embedding of academic skills within programmes and modules, as an integral part of curriculum design, is both supported and encouraged by the Learning and Teaching Institute (see Handbooks A and B).

Academic staff can arrange a meeting with a representative of the Study Skills Team to discuss the embedding of academic skills, and where considering academic skills within their overall curriculum design, they are advised to email their Faculty Senior University Teaching Fellow, and the Study Skills Coordinator ([seniorsskillsadmin@chester.ac.uk](mailto:seniorsskillsadmin@chester.ac.uk)) in the first instance.

The Study Skills team offer support to students on the following topics:

- Stepping up at university. This includes support with transition to university and through each level of study, including postgraduate study.
- Time and task management.
- Academic integrity and referencing. This includes support to understand how and why citations are needed to support ideas; strategies for developing good academic practice, including: paraphrasing, summarising and quoting; APA and MHRA referencing support.
- Reading and note-making. This includes developing reading strategies for academic purposes to aid comprehension and developing active note-making when reading and listening.

- Academic writing. This includes assignment planning; structure; writing style; grammar and punctuation; and proof reading and editing your own work.
- Critical thinking. This includes the critical selection, analysis and evaluation of sources and creating arguments in academic writing
- Reflective learning. This includes developing reflective practice and reflective writing.
- Revision and exams. This includes exam revision, preparation and managing exams on the day.
- Posters and presentations. This includes oral and written communication and group work.
- Maths and statistics. This includes developing numerical problem solving and providing guidance on statistics and probability.

The Study Skills team develop students' learning by designing and delivering extra-curricular workshops and webinars; e-resources; face-to-face individual support which includes remote support via video using MS Teams. For more information, please see our Portal page [here](#). All students should contact [LTIskills@chester.ac.uk](mailto:LTIskills@chester.ac.uk) with any enquiries.

### *Information Literacy Guidance*

Learning and Information Services provide information literacy support and teaching for students of all levels. Subject librarians work directly with academic departments to embed information literacy skills within module teaching and assessment. This might take the form of:

- Delivering specific taught sessions on core information literacy skills such as finding / evaluating relevant academic sources and undertaking literature searches.
- Offering a range of additional voluntary taught and drop-in support sessions within libraries.
- Meeting with staff members to discuss methods of supporting students to develop and enhance information literacy within their subject.
- Providing one to one consultations within students and staff to address specific information literacy needs.
- Providing a range of online guides and learning materials available via Portal.

Subject librarians offer (including taught sessions) on the following topics:

- Navigating and managing reading lists
- Identifying relevant books, journal articles and other information sources for topics
- Evaluating information sources for authority, accuracy and relevancy
- Undertaking literature searches for literature review
- Using a range of specialist information sources and research databases
- Managing and organising references
- Keeping up to date with research in a given field
- Understanding copyright compliance and protecting your work

Academic staff can arrange a meeting with the relevant specialist subject librarian to discuss support available for students and themselves, including making arrangements for the team delivering taught sessions. Subject librarian contacts are available on Portal [here](#).

### *Development Weeks*

The names of these weeks may be updated but the concept will remain the same with improvements and amendments being made based on evaluation feedback and ongoing research.

Learning and Teaching weeks 7 (w/c 02/11/2020) and 19 (w/c 15/02/2021) are set aside for Flexible Learning Student Development Activities.

Academic departments are encouraged to offer suggestions that support departments can deliver for their students (email [development@chester.ac.uk](mailto:development@chester.ac.uk)) or organise specific activities for their own students (for example, field trips, conferences etc). Central departments are also to offer seminars, workshops and events targeted at Levels 4, 5 and 6 of undergraduate study including the ECDL qualification, Careers and Employability sessions and Study Skills workshops.

A detailed programme of what's on will be available on Portal for new students early October 2020 under the Student Futures tile – Induction and Transition. This will also be circulated to support and academic staff, who are encouraged to promote to all students. Promotional lecture slides will also be available and advertisements will be found across all campuses.

Development Weeks should be highlighted in Programme Handbooks and during departmental induction activities in order to promote the weeks to students. They should however already be aware of these weeks following advertisements in the documentation they receive prior to their arrival at the University.

In addition to Development Weeks, Digital Skills Weeks will be provided w/c 14/12/2020 and 29/03/2021.

## Academic Progression

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### *Turnitin Guidelines*

Students must submit all assessed work which can be handed in electronically to Turnitin for originality checking. This applies to all summative assessments submitted for a University of Chester award at levels 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and taught provision at level 8.

Guidance on the use of Turnitin in online assignment submission for staff can be found [here](#), and for students can be found [here](#). The staff documentation from Registry includes how to set up an online submission on Moodle, and advice and guidance on interpreting reports, and when to raise as an instance of malpractice.

## Policies and procedures

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### *Social Media – guidance for acceptable use*

Acceptable use of Social Media for staff is covered in the policy developed by Human Resource Management Services (HRMS) available [here](#).

*Policies relating to the appropriate use of social media in an academic setting are currently in development.*

### *Other Student-Related Policies and Guidance*

Student Futures Support, Development and Proctor's Office provide links to policies, procedures and guidance for students on a range of matters relating to the student experience, which are not included in other quality and standards manuals. These can be found on the Portal page [here](#).

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## SECTION C: OTHER PASTORAL SUPPORT

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### Inclusion - reflecting student diversity

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The University aims to help support all students, including disabled students, with inclusivity being at the core of what we do for each student, regardless of any particular status. The University has developed an [Increasing Inclusivity Policy \(Appendix E\)](#), which provides advice and guidance on academic practice which incorporates support for students. This policy sets out the University's minimum requirements for inclusivity, and will be reviewed regularly.

Further advice on inclusive learning and teaching has also been provided by the Equality Challenge Unit, which can be found [here](#).

### Supporting students with a declared disability

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The Disability & Inclusion team of Student Futures Support offers information, advice and guidance with regard to reasonable adjustments for disabled students. Disability is used in its broadest sense and includes the following:

- SpLD such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder etc.
- Autistic Spectrum Conditions
- Unseen disabilities such as chronic fatigue syndrome and epilepsy
- Mental Health Conditions
- Mobility impairments
- Sensory impairments

All information relating to support offered by the Disability & Inclusion team and advice for staff can be found on the Portal site [here](#).

### *Privacy Notice – Disability and Inclusion*

The University of Chester Student Futures Disability and Inclusion Service Privacy Notice can be found [here](#).

### *Inclusion Plan*

Once acceptable evidence has been received, disabled students' needs will be communicated by the Disability & Inclusion team via an Inclusion Plan. This document contains details of the student, their course and nature of their disability amongst other information. Inclusion Plans are designed to formally notify academic and other support departments of a student's support needs and are compiled from evidence or from a combination of evidence, negotiation and agreement with students as necessary. The University retains the right to discuss and potentially decline support recommendations for reasonable adjustments if they are detrimental to other students, functions or policies of the University in any way; Disability & Inclusion staff will discuss this fully with the student concerned.

### *Reasonable Adjustments in Professional Placements (RAPP)*

Supporting students on professional placements is an area that disabled students often require additional planning and support with, in order to agree appropriate reasonable adjustments with the Placement Provider. The Disability & Inclusion team have dedicated Portal pages explaining this process and providing resource materials to support students, staff and placement providers, which can be found [here](#). If after consulting these pages you have any further questions about support in placement settings, please contact the Disability & Inclusion team via email at [disability@chester.ac.uk](mailto:disability@chester.ac.uk), telephone 01244 511550.

### *Increasing Inclusivity in practice*

In congruence with changes to external availability of support, the Disability & Inclusion team have worked closely with other colleagues in the University to develop and agree a central policy, to help improve access for all students to resources. This policy can be found in [Appendix E](#).

### *Recording of lectures*

The University allows students to record lectures in accordance with the University's Recording Agreement.

### *Acceptable evidence of a disability*

Whilst disclosure of a disability can be considered in any format (for example verbally or via email), sufficient evidence for the University to provide reasonable adjustments is more measured. In the interests of clarity and consistency, the University follows the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability and consults the [Equality Act 2010 Guidance](#).

### *Fitness to Study Policy*

A healthy environment for all students and staff and active promotion of positive health and well-being across the institution are important. The University recognises that many students may experience difficulties related to health and aims to provide support and flexibility to enable students to fulfil their potential. University support services offer comprehensive support to those students experiencing health or any other difficulties.

The latest version of this policy can be accessed [here](#).

### Preparing for Employment

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The University's Careers and Employability department provides a number of schemes and services to support student's skills development in preparation for employment. More details about the department and the services it offers can be found [here](#).

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## SECTION D: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & FEEDBACK

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The University's of Chester's vision and values hold student engagement, involvement in decision making and partnership learning at the centre of all aspects of the student experience. This includes embedding student participation in academic quality assurance and enhancement processes. This aim and accompanying initiatives can be found [here](#).

### Student Experience Representation system

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Student Experience Reps voice student thoughts, opinions and feedback from their courses on a variety of themes, these can be academic and non-academic as well as being positive and negative. The Student Representation System at University of Chester is lead by the Chester Students' Union in collaboration with the University.

The full Student Experience Representation Policy can be found as [Appendix H](#), and up to date details via the [Chester Students' Union website](#).

### *Student Experience Representatives (SERs)*

A Student Experience Representative (SER) is an elected student chosen by other students to represent their views and feedback to the academic department. Any

student can volunteer themselves to participate in an election to be a course representative which takes place at the beginning of each academic year. Students who have previously been course reps are able to nominate themselves to be a department rep. The role lasts for one academic year but students are encouraged to put themselves forward to do the role again in second, third and fourth year if they enjoy it, feel it has been beneficial and have been effective in the role.

Student Experience Reps are responsible for collecting feedback (both positive and negative) from students on their course. The aim is to celebrate success in their departments as well as identify improvements needed in the current system and to bring about positive change where there are issues. Reps can feedback on academic and non-academic matters such as timetabling, assessment feedback and department facilities.

Student Experience Reps are split into *Course Reps* and *Department Reps*.

### *Course Reps*

Course Reps represent students on their course within their year of study, and they will gather feedback from their fellow students on various topics surrounding academic and non-academic areas, these could be both positive and negative. Course reps will attend Staff Student Liaison Meetings (SSLMs) with University staff to discuss feedback and actions. They will also work with the VP Education and Academic Representation Co-ordinator (ARC).

### *Department Reps*

Department Reps are those elected to represent the voices of all students across a variety of courses within each department. Department Reps will be part of Student Council to voice the opinions and thoughts of their students. They are also invited to be part of the Board of Studies (BoS) meetings and attend Student Experience Committee (SEC) Working Groups, providing them with the opportunity to have their voices heard at a senior level within the University. Department reps will meet monthly with the VP Education and ARC to discuss any issues and wins.

If reps can't attend any of the meetings, they must send apologies to the Chair of the meeting, along with any relevant feedback.

### *Role and Responsibilities of Departmental Contacts*

Each academic department in the University must have a designated departmental contact who is known to the Academic Representation Team – usually this will be the Head of Department. This member of staff will become the lead person within the academic department to liaise and communicate with staff, students and the Academic Representation Team. For any support with the role please contact [studentreps@chester.ac.uk](mailto:studentreps@chester.ac.uk).

## Guidance for staff on Staff-Student Liaison Meetings (SSLMs)

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The University of Chester (the University) and Chester Students' Union (CSU) are committed to working in partnership to provide effective structures for student feedback and representation. The Student Experience Representation System provides a framework in which students can have a direct input towards decisions regarding their academic programmes, with representatives feeding into structured feedback meetings.

Every student at every level of every programme will have access to representation, and as a result, will be able to influence their student learning experience through their representatives. This will take place through Staff Student Liaison Meetings (SSLMs). These are the key point of communication between Student Experience Representatives (SERs) and academic departments and should take place at least once per term. Ideally, the SSLMs in the first two terms will take place in a face to face format, then the meeting in the third term can take place by the most appropriate means, which could be remotely/online. Circumstances may mean that remote/online meetings are preferable or even required at other times, and further guidance can be found [here](#).

It is expected that SERs will collect feedback, both in areas of good practice and areas for improvement, from their cohorts in advance of the meeting and this should be shared with the Chair at least one week before the meeting starts to allow for responses to be formed or possible actions to be explored before the meeting starts. This then allows for a discussion of actions to improve the student experience during the meeting. It is also good practice to talk to SERs if there are certain areas of the course if there is any specific feedback that the department would like (for example, on something that has been changed following feedback the previous year) to check to see if previous changes have had the desired impact on the student experience.

SSLMs will be chaired by the relevant staff member. SSLMs should be free to discuss any topics relating to learning and teaching. These may include, but are not limited to, issues such as:

- Minutes from the last meeting
- Matters arising
- Reports from Chair and other relevant staff Outcomes from previous student feedback and actions taken
- Student Feedback on areas such as:
  - overall quality of programmes and modules
  - learning and teaching methods
  - assessment methods
  - feedback on assessed work
  - the provision of study skills support, general student support and/or supervision
  - learning resources
  - facilities, and study space
- External examiner reports (these should always be discussed at the appropriate meeting of the SSLM)
- Updates to CME actions from action plans

- Discussion of institutional surveys (NSS, UGES, Postgraduate Experience Surveys, etc.)

SSLMs must be seen as a safe space for ideas and issues to be discussed broadly and should, therefore, not engage in discussion of:

- Individual staff members
- Individual students
- Personal complaints/grievances/appeals

All dates and times for SSLMs should be set by academic departments prior to induction week and communicated to the relevant SERs, and also the Student Academic Representation Team ([studentreps@chester.ac.uk](mailto:studentreps@chester.ac.uk)) to allow co-ordination, as soon as possible. Meetings should be chaired by the Head of Department or designate, whilst being minuted by a member of departmental staff to produce an accurate record of the meeting.

SSLM minutes should always include attendees, issues/good practice identified and agreed action for resolution.

Following each meeting minutes should be circulated to the respective Student Experience Representatives and the student body within the course/department detailing the issues raised, actions agreed and timescales of implementation. Sharing actions at the beginning of lectures and explaining previous decisions to the subsequent cohort should also take place to allow for continuous development. It is also good practice to post the minutes onto the programme Moodle space to allow students to access them and (if possible) key actions taken could be shared through posters around the department.

All Boards of Studies should receive annually a schedule of Staff-Student Liaison meetings to be held by departments within the Faculty, and at each meeting receive departmental synopses of key matters raised and, as appropriate, any associated action plans to address such matters. Sharing SSLM outcomes at the Board of Studies Meetings facilitates the sharing of good practice and helps highlight if any issues identified by the SERs cross the faculty and may require cross-departmental collaboration. This is all a key part of completing the Feedback Loop, and more guidance can be found [here](#)).

In order to facilitate collaborative working with CSU, SSLM minutes must also be sent to the Academic Representation team ([studentreps@chester.ac.uk](mailto:studentreps@chester.ac.uk)) at Chester Students' Union within two weeks of the meeting. This will allow the Academic Representation team to escalate frequently raised issues that cannot be solved at departmental level to through the appropriate channels, giving the University chance to respond to student feedback in a timely manner.

For further information and guidance for staff please contact [studentengagement@chester.ac.uk](mailto:studentengagement@chester.ac.uk).

## Student Survey Results

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Results from student surveys, for the purpose of review and enhancement, are provided to staff at the following links:

- National Student Survey – [NSS](#)
- Undergraduate Experience Survey – [UGES](#)
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey – [PTES](#)
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey – [PRES](#)

## Student Engagement – further good practice

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The University's Student Engagement Officer has produced a web page which includes guidance, examples of good practice and the latest news about student engagement at the University. This can be found [here](#), together with further information about student engagement at the University.