Department for Education

Instant student feedback on teacher practices

Research on student evaluation practices in English colleges and a trial of new approaches

Research report

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Department for Education

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Executive summary

This report synthesizes the findings from (i) a survey carried out by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Association of Colleges (AoC) on methods of obtaining student feedback in Further Education (FE) colleges and (ii) a small-scale pilot of instant online feedback methods in five FE colleges.

Background

In December 2013 the Department funded six shared learning grants to FE institutions. The aim of these grants was to improve engagement within the sector and provide direction to help overcome common issues identified in implementing the 16-19 study programme principles. One of the strands identified as part of the 'improving strategic approaches and quality of teaching' principle was the implementation and practice of student feedback on the quality of the teaching they are getting, via instant online evaluation. This is a subject on which there is little specific evidence available in the English context.

'Instant online evaluation' is taken here to mean feedback provided immediately after all or a proportion of lessons by students, to their teachers in the first instance. The aims for it could include:

- helping them work out which teaching methods work best with their students;
- establishing which aspects of courses students find most difficult to grasp; and
- monitoring progress throughout the year in student engagement.

There is limited evidence on the use of student feedback in FE institutions to inform teaching and learning specifically. Research studies highlight the use of student feedback as a mechanism for overall school performance in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

Aims of the project

The purpose of the study was to explore methods for improving the quality of teaching for 16- to 19- year olds via instant online evaluation. The purest form envisaged involved students giving feedback on every lesson direct to their teacher. The study aimed to establish a baseline for the use of feedback from students in English colleges in a more general sense. Some of these forms will be directly relevant to the pilot, but colleges tend to obtain feedback on a range of issues and in a range of formats.

It then explored the experiences of five colleges in implementing new, technology-dependent, approaches to generating instant feedback, or more regular and structured feedback on courses, for teachers and leaders. It did not aim to establish 'what works' or provide robust conclusions on effectiveness, but sought to:

- illustrate a range of practical solutions that can be implemented to deliver instant feedback, or more frequent feedback on courses generally;
- highlight some of the practical challenges that are involved and the steps which colleges have taken to overcome them;

- explore the relevant trade-offs between objectives for feedback and how colleges decided on their approaches; and
- establish the sorts of perceptions that can arise under different models and approaches among teachers, leaders and students.

Methodology

i) Survey of colleges

The Department worked with the Association of Colleges (AoC) to design and distribute a survey on student feedback. The surveys were sent to all of their members by email in May 2014 and senior leaders were asked to respond within two weeks of distribution.

The survey enquired about student feedback provisions in institutions; the frequency of use and application of student feedback; and institutions' perceptions of student feedback as a way of effectively improving teaching and the barriers they face in achieving this.

The sample of the survey consisted of subscribed members of the AoC's fortnightly news-bulletin. At the time of the survey AoC had a national membership of 339 general further education, sixth form tertiary and specialist colleges. in England. Three hundred and thirty nine college senior leaders were sent the survey. Overall, 139 completed it, giving a 40% response rate.

ii) Qualitative research with five colleges

In January 2014, the DfE commissioned five further education and tertiary colleges to design and pilot an instant student feedback system. The colleges recruited were in the South of England, West Midlands, North East and North West. Through Shared Learning Grants, they were each funded £5,000 to cover the costs for resourcing and implementing the pilot. Colleges were given freedom over how to implement their pilots, but all were asked to:

- undertake a short, intense period (i.e. 1-2 weeks) of trialling their new instant online feedback system in the spring of 2014 for at least 40 per cent of students across all 16-19 and adult study programmes;
- ensure their students provide feedback to facilitate the improvement of teaching practices, as opposed to course content; and
- collect, but use as they pleased, student feedback evidence against one or more categories under a framework set by the Department, to ensure some comparability across models.

Inception interviews with senior leaders or pilot coordinators in the pilot colleges were conducted to collect baseline evidence on current student feedback provisions and the key differences associated with the proposed instant online system. Ten focus groups with students and five focus groups with teachers also took place as well as post-pilot interviews with senior leaders and pilot coordinators.

As part of the research study the Department collected Management Information from all pilot colleges to explore: the number of questions asked in the pilot; the responses received by pilot college's new system; classroom coverage of student feedback for each college, and the usage and presentation of the student feedback results to teachers.

College and researcher workshop

During summer 2014, emerging findings from the pilot were discussed at a seminar with coordinators from the pilots, Departmental staff and a representative from Ofsted. The discussion allowed colleges to share experience and the discussion helped inform the conclusions and interpretations made in this report.

Key findings

Current practice in collecting student feedback

Evidence from the survey of colleges suggests that:

- Colleges use a wide range of methods to collect feedback from students. These include online surveys, student representative meetings, student focus groups and course representative feedback to senior staff. Less popular methods include one-to-one feedback to the teacher, social networking and group feedback to the teacher.
- Colleges reported that most of the feedback activity took place on a termly basis.
- Feedback methods that were generating good response rates by students included student focus groups, online surveys and course representative feedback.
- Heads of faculties and principals were the main users of student feedback.

Findings from the qualitative work in the five pilot colleges

Models of collecting feedback

There was variance in the approaches chosen by the colleges (in terms of platform used, length of questions asked, timing and who had access to results) but at the same time there were similarities between them:

- Platforms included a texting system using students' mobile phones, or website methods using students' mobile phones, tablets or laptops, or using a virtual learning environment approach. Students without mobile phones or tablets/laptops were able to use shared IT facilities in the college.
- Models that offered flexibility to students (in terms of choosing a platform that suited them) were more successful in generating a large number of responses.
- Some models opted for a small number of questions (3-5) whereas others asked more questions covering a wide range of topics such as enjoyment of lesson, level of engagement and challenge, understanding of lesson and whether it helps them meet their achievement targets. Some models also used multiple choice questions and free text boxes.
- The timeframe of the data collection varied from one week to 2.5 weeks.
- In three of the five models, both teachers and senior leaders had access to the feedback data; in one model it was only senior leaders and heads of faculties that received the data, and in another rmodel the data became available to teachers solely.

Delivery and practical issues including challenges

- Colleges' staff and students were involved at the designing and implementation of the pilot from the beginning, with particular focus on choosing the right questions to ask.
- Challenges associated with the design of the model involved students' access to mobile and internet devices as well as the Wi-Fi capacity of the college.
- Another challenge encountered was about obtaining good response rates from students, with some colleges missing their response targets.
- Colleges opted for different models for collecting and releasing the data, ranging from mobile phone short surveys to more comprehensive surveys involving a range of platforms including tablets and laptops.
- The feedback was available to teachers, and/or senior leaders and heads of faculties. Depending on prior arrangements and the audience, feedback was presented at whole-college level, as well as departmental and class-level.
- Challenges associated with the implementation of the pilot included its timing e.g. overlapping with mock exams and Ofsted inspections. Some teachers would have preferred to have more detailed and informative questions included in the pilot.
- Many students found the questions easy to understand and quick to answer, though some students did not fully understand the questions on achievement or personal goals. Students with English as an additional language and /or those undertaking lower level qualifications required extra support by a teacher to submit the feedback.
- Students reported answering the questions truthfully, recognising however the role that their relationship with the teacher could play in this context.

Perceptions of usefulness of IOSF

- Most teachers were positive about the implementation of the pilot in their college.
- Teachers highlighted the contribution that IOSF could make in improving teaching practices as a convenient and speedy method of gathering information from large groups of students. It also offers teachers the opportunity to reflect more on how they teach. However, some thought that due to the simplicity of the questions asked there wasn't enough detail in the answers to help them improve their practices.
- Senior leaders and coordinators were positive about the use of IOSF as a source of information / supportive development tool about the quality of teaching.
- Regarding the use of IOSF to inform teacher appraisal, evidence from senior leaders suggests that it could be used over time (e.g. on an aggregated basis) and with some further development, outside of the scope of the pilot.

Future plans

- Colleges in the pilot indicated that they could augment existing feedback methods with IOSF, rather than seeing it as a replacement of everything they were already using.

- All colleges had considered the multiple uses of their feedback systems after the pilot, with three colleegs intending to proceed further in implementing IOSF in their classes.

Conclusions

This small-scale pilot of instant online feedback systems in FE colleges highlighted the potential that such a system could offer as well as some limitations. Some points which should be considered if other colleges were to design their own system are included below:

- Consideration should be given at the platform chosen: a texting method used in one of the pilots was unsuccessful for practical reasons. Offering students several options seemed to yield better results.
- The software systems used need to have the ability to analyse the data.
- The Wi-Fi capacity of the colleges should be able to support the system.
- Overall, the design of the system should be kept simple and accessible.
- Some students didn't have mobile phones with internet, or tablets/laptops. As a result, they had to access shared IT facilities to provide feedback which in turn meant that the feedback was not given straight after the lesson.
- Colleges should be mindful not to replicate existing feedback methods, but design a system to complement those; feedback exercises shouldn't be carried out in a way that generates 'survey fatigue' among students.
- An embedded, two-way college culture of feedback is likely to lead to successful implementation.
- Colleges should be open with students and teachers about the purposes of feedback methods and how the results will be used. Clarity of purpose therefore, and appropriate consultation on themes is important.
- If the purpose of feedback is to help teachers improve and plan lessons week-by-week, it may help if they are able to tailor the questions asked.
- If the purpose of feedback is for ongoing teacher appraisal with managers, it should be borne in mind that this may influence students' responses and as a result it might be best used as an indicator of changes through the year or a way of identifying issues for further exploration.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a study carried out by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Association of Colleges (AoC) in Spring 2014 on methods of obtaining student feedback on teacher practices in colleges for post-16 students. The study collected evidence on current practice in student evaluation among English further education (FE) institutions, and trialled alternative approaches to collecting instant feedback on individual lessons for a short period in a small number of colleges. This section summarises the motivations behind the study, background evidence on the subject, the research aims and the methodology used.

1.1 Background

In March 2011 Professor Wolf's review of vocational education presented recommendations to the DfE on the improvement of post-16 curriculum in Further Education (FE) (Wolf, 2011). This led to reforms of post-16 education currently being implemented and in August 2013 the new 16-19 study programmes were introduced in 16-19 education. This was accompanied by changes to the funding arrangements for 16-19 year olds in education.

In December 2013 the Department funded six shared learning grants to FE institutions. The aim of these grants was to improve engagement within the sector and provide direction to help overcome common issues identified in implementing the 16-19 study programme principles. One of the strands identified as part of 'improving strategic approaches and quality of teaching' was the implementation and practice of student feedback on the quality of the teaching they are getting, via instant online evaluation. This is a subject on which there is little specific evidence available in the English context.

'Instant online evaluation' is taken here to mean feedback provided immediately after all or a proportion of lessons by students, to their teachers in the first instance. The aims for it could include:

- helping them work out which teaching methods work best with their students;
- establishing which aspects of courses students find most difficult to grasp; and
- monitoring progress throughout the year in student engagement.

Such information could also be used by other members of staff including senior leaders and managers. In many approaches, this would rely on college use of the internet, but that will not always be the case, so in this report we use the term 'instant feedback' to loosely include any practice which provides feedback specific to one or more lessons, and in some examples the feedback would not be provided immediately after a lesson in practice.

1.2 Research evidence on student feedback and evaluation

There is limited evidence on the use of student feedback in FE institutions to inform teaching and leanring, despite the wide use of student feedback for other purposes. Research studies highlight the use of student feedback as a mechanism for overall school performance in mainstream primary and secondary schools. Chapman and

Sammons (2013) reported that student feedback, as part of teaching evaluations, have often been developed in schools as part of a wider school self-evaluation, programme as a means of achieving school improvement.

Coe et al (2014) in their literature review for Sutton trust about what constitutes great teaching identified 'student ratings' as one of the approaches that demonstrate moderate validity in signalling effectiveness; the other two were 'classroom observations by peers, principals or external evaluators' and 'value-added' models (assessing gains in student achievement). According to the findings, collecting student ratings is a cost-effective, reliable and valid approach, requiring minimal training and contributing to teachers' formative assessment. The two main drawbacks are that the results may be different according to the students' age, and the risk that teachers would oppose this type of assessment if its only purpose was for their appraisal.

OECD's (2013) report 'What Makes Schools Successful?' advocates student feedback about teachers and emphasises its important contribution to formative processes of school evaluation. Their research found that on average across OECD countries, 59% of students attend schools where students' written feedback is combined with other forms of evaluation of teaching (i.e. internal and/or external evaluations), while only 2% of students attend schools where students' written feedback is sought but neither internal nor external evaluations are used. The research also found that school systems in which more schools seek written feedback from students about lessons, teachers or resources tend to be more equitable. The study, however, acknowledges that student feedback can help identify certain problems in teachers' practice but should not be used in place of relevant professional feedback.

Evidence from the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project (2013) project suggests that student evaluations of teaching practice in the US produce more accurate measures of teacher effectiveness if combined with classroom observations or achievement gain measures. The MET project also suggests that teachers benefit from receiving evaluation of their teaching practices as it helps them become reflective learners: specifically, the process aids continuous improvement and development by identifying strengths as well as areas for improvement. Despite this, there can be resistance among the teaching profession over the use of student evaluation. The concerns are centred around students' general lack of understanding about the full context of teaching and concerns that students' ratings of individuals may be unduly affected by their views of teachers' personalities or by their own grades.

The MET project also outlined the challenges of student evaluation. It suggests that thought must be given to the timing of student evaluations and the danger of over-burdening students if they have to complete surveys for each subject on a regular basis. It is also vital to have well designed research instruments that are measuring the right things. Evaluation systems also need to ensure confidentiality, appropriate sampling and accuracy of reporting.

The research suggests that the application of student feedback in schools is a positive tool in improving teaching, learning and whole school performance as part of wide evaluation. Current research however does not investigate the range of student feedback methods used within schools in England and the practical methods of receiving student feedback. Evidence suggests that student feedback can be beneficial in improving teaching but we know relatively little about how these methods are used in English FE institutions. There is also little evidence on the potential benefits from increasing the use

of instant online feedback in particular within the sector, or the challenges associated with doing so.

1.3 Aims of the project

This study aimed to develop and share experience and evidence under the 'improving strategic approaches and quality of teaching' strand of the shared learning grant programme. Specifically, it aims to explore methods for improving the quality of teaching for 16- to 19- year olds via instant online evaluation. The purest form envisaged involved students giving feedback on every lesson direct to their teacher.

With limited existing evidence and the use of technology for 'instant feedback' purposes only just developing, the study aimed to establish a baseline for the use of feedback from students in English colleges in a more general sense. Some of these forms will be directly relevant to the pilot, but colleges are encouraged by Ofsted to, and tend to, obtain feedback on a range of issues and in a range of formats.

It then explored the experiences of five colleges in implementing new, technology-dependent, approaches to generating instant feedback, or more regular and structured feedback on courses, for teachers and leaders. It did not aim to establish 'what works' or provide robust conclusions on effectiveness, but sought to:

- illustrate a range of practical solutions that can be implemented to deliver instant feedback, or more frequent feedback on courses generally;
- highlight some of the practical challenges that are involved and steps colleges have taken to overcome them;
- explore the relevant trade-offs between objectives for feedback and how colleges decided on their approaches; and
- establish the sorts of perceptions that can arise under different models and approaches, among teachers, leaders and students.

The following sections set out the specific research questions identified.

1.3.1 Establishing a baseline for student feedback in English colleges

The study aimed to answer the following questions using quantitative evidence:

- What feedback practices in general are used in FE institutions to collect the views of students?
- How frequently do they use student feedback in monitoring teacher classroom practices and other aspects of learning experiences?
- What are their perceptions of the benefits and disadvantages of student feedback in general?
- What are their perceptions of the value of student feedback in identifying good practice and areas for improvement in teaching approaches?
- What methods of collecting feedback do colleges think are most effective in generating high numbers of useful responses?

1.3.2 Learning from the pilots

Research with pilot colleges aimed to answer the following questions in qualitative terms:

- What was the nature of student feedback practices in colleges prior to the pilot?
- What approaches could colleges identify to collect instant feedback from students?
- What challenges were experienced by pilot colleges in designing and implementing an instant student feedback system?
- How far did the systems developed enable students to express their views on their teacher's classroom practices instantly?
- How were the new feedback systems received by college senior leaders, students and teachers?
- What were the pilot colleges' perceived advantages and drawbacks of the new approach compared with previous ones?
- How far did pilot colleges seek to use student feedback methods to measure and monitor the performance of teachers?
- What were the perceived benefits for the college of using this sort of student feedback?

2. Methodology

This section summarises the approach taken in this study to surveying colleges and implementing and researching the instant feedback trial. The survey was carried out by the AoC, designing the research materials jointly with the Department, whilst the pilot research fieldwork was carried out by Departmental analysts.

2.1 Survey of colleges

Survey implementation

The Department worked with the Association of Colleges (AoC) to design and distribute a survey on student feedback. The surveys were sent to all of their members by email in May 2014 and senior leaders were asked to respond within two weeks of distribution.

The survey enquired about:

- student feedback provisions in institutions;
- the frequency of use and application of student feedback; and
- institutions' perceptions of student feedback as a way of effectively improving teaching and the barriers they face in achieving this.

Responses were analysed using spreadsheet software.

Sampling and response rate

The sample of the survey consisted of subscribed members of the AoC's fortnightly news-bulletin. At the time of the survey AoC had a national membership of 339 general further education, sixth form, tertiary and specialist colleges, in England. The survey was advertised through the organisation's bulletin and FE senior leaders (e.g. principles, deputy principles, faculty heads etc) were also sent the survey separately. 339 college senior leaders were sent the survey. Overall, 139 completed it, giving a 40% response rate. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the responses by type of institution.

Table 1 College survey sample

Provider type	Number of responses	Achieved sample
General Further Education/Tertiary College	101	74%
Sixth Form college	23	17%
Specialist Designated College	11	8%
Other	2	1%
Total	**137**	**100%**

2.2 Pilot methodology

2.2.1 Implementation

In January 2014, the DfE commissioned five further education and tertiary colleges to design and pilot an instant student feedback system. The colleges recruited were in the South of England, West Midlands, North East and North West. Through Shared Learning Grants, they were each funded £5,000 to cover the costs for resourcing and implementing the pilot. Colleges were asked to:

- undertake a short, intense period (i.e. 1-2 weeks) of trialling their new instant online feedback system in the spring for at least 40 per cent of students across all 16-19 and adult study programmes;
- ensure their students provide feedback to facilitate the improvement of teaching practices, as opposed to course content; and
- collect, but use as they pleased, student feedback evidence against one or more categories under a framework set by the Department, to ensure some comparability across models.

Colleges were given freedom over how to implement their pilots so that they could explore a range of methods. The framework categories set by the Department to identify aspects of teaching about which colleges could generate feedback were the following:

- How teachers use their knowledge and skills to ensure learning in the classroom or vocational workshops meets individual students' needs.
- How effectively and creatively teachers use available resources (e.g. the classroom, equipment, technology, specialist vocational resources, specialist advice and guidance) to promote and support learning.

- How well teachers set appropriately challenging work and short- and longer-term learning goals. How well assessment or assignment activities build on previous knowledge and extend learning.
- How well teachers tie in classroom/workshop-based learning in other settings such as work experience or other practical activities.
- How students' progress, improvement and development are checked and followed through in subsequent tasks and activities.
- How well teachers' teaching practices fit with learning outside of the classroom.

Prior to designing the pilot, the Department asked colleges to complete a pro-forma which captured details about the design of their proposed feedback systems and how it would be administered. They also provided details on the number of students enrolled in their college, the minimum number of students participating in the pilot and named a co-ordinator for the pilot. The five pilots took place between February and April 2014.

2.2.2 Research

Inception interviews

Inception interviews with pilot colleges were conducted to collect baseline evidence on student feedback provisions in their institution and the key differences associated with the proposed instant online system. The interviews were conducted during colleges' design stages of their pilot to test their approach and interpretation of 'instant' in the way they developed their methods. The interviews covered:

- the proposed design and implementation of colleges' instant online student feedback systems.
- how student feedback questions within pilot colleges' instant online systems fit with the Department's pilot framework criteria; current student feedback provisions and their uses within the college.
- colleges' perceived value of student feedback as a tool to improve teacher classroom practice.

Interviews were conducted with one senior leader and a pilot coordinator in each college. College's systems were discussed in detail, focusing on levels of access to results among staff; nature of student engagement within lessons during the trial; and the flows of information generated. Analysis of the inception interviews was also used to develop research materials.

Post-pilot focus groups and interviews

Qualitative case study visits were conducted to explore in detail the implementation of the five colleges' instant online systems, assessing the experience of the trial among students, teachers and leaders.

Interviews were carried out with senior leaders and pilot coordinators. These investigated:

- other student feedback methods used in their college

- key development and technical issues experienced during the pilot's implementation;
- perceptions of the overall delivery of their new instant online student feedback system;
- staff's use of instant online feedback results and whether it influences classroom teaching practices;
- perceptions of instant online system's potential to improve FE teaching practices in the future;
- recommendations and future plans for implementation of the college's instant online feedback system; and
- the value of student feedback in helping colleges improve and the barriers they face in achieving this.

Colleges recruited participants for focus groups, aiming to achieve broadly representative (though these are very small samples) separate groups of students and teachers. These explored: perceptions of the overall delivery of the new instant online student feedback system; the level of engagement and the perceptions of students and teachers: the value of student feedback and the barriers to using it effectively; and perceptions of an instant system's potential to improve teaching practices in the future.

Table 2 outlines participant numbers for the focus groups and case studies. The discussions were recorded using audio equipment and analysed thematically by the Department.

Table 2 Post-pilot research respondant numbers

Research method	Number of interviews/focus groups	Total number of participants
Senior leader/coordinator interviews	5	11
Student focus groups	10	57
Teacher focus groups	5	24

The 24 teachers taking part in the focus groups had on average 11.7 years of experience and almost all of them reported that their ethnic group was 'White'. Two-thirds of the teachers were female compared to one-third being male; they taught on average 12.4 lessons per week covering a range of courses from Level 1 to Level 3, and A-levels.

In terms of demographic characteristics of the 58 students that took part in the focus groups, their average age was 18.4 years. There were 24 male students and 34 female students. Thirty of them were studying for a Level-3 course, 13 were studying for an A-Level course and the rest of them were studying for courses at Level 1, Level 2 or other qualifications.

Management information

As part of the research study the Department collected Management Information from all pilot colleges, detailing to varying extents:

- The number of questions asked in the pilot
- The responses received by pilot college's new system
- Classroom coverage of student feedback for each college, and
- The usage and presentation of the student feedback results to teachers.

College and researcher workshop

During summer 2014, emerging findings from the pilot were discussed at a seminar with coordinators from the pilots, Departmental staff and a representative from Ofsted. The discussion allowed colleges to share experience and the discussion helped inform the conclusions and interpretations made in this report.

3. Current practice in collecting student feedback

In this chapter, we report the results of the national student feedback survey and findings from pilot coordinator interviews and student focus groups on their colleges' methods of collecting and use of student feedback in general.

3.1 Key findings

- **Methods of feedback**: evidence from the survey suggests that colleges use a wide range of methods to collect feedback from students. These included online surveys, student representative meetings, student focus groups and course representative feedback to senior staff. Less popular methods include one-to-one feedback to the teacher, social networking and group feedback to the teacher.
- **Frequency**: colleges reported that most of the feedback activity took place on a termly basis.
- **Increasing students' response:** feedback methods that were generating good response rates by students included student focus groups, online surveys and course representative feedback.
- **Usage**: evidence from the survey found that heads of faculties and principals were the main users of student feedback.
- **Existing methods of feedback**: teachers in the focus groups indicated that they could augment existing feedback methods with IOSF, rather than seeing it as a replacement of everything they were already using.
- **Preferred methods of feedback:** evidence from the student focus groups suggests that their preferred methods of giving feedback varied according to the areas within the college they were providing input on e.g. post-it notes, surveys or group feedback. Teachers on the other hand expressed a particular preference to student surveys.

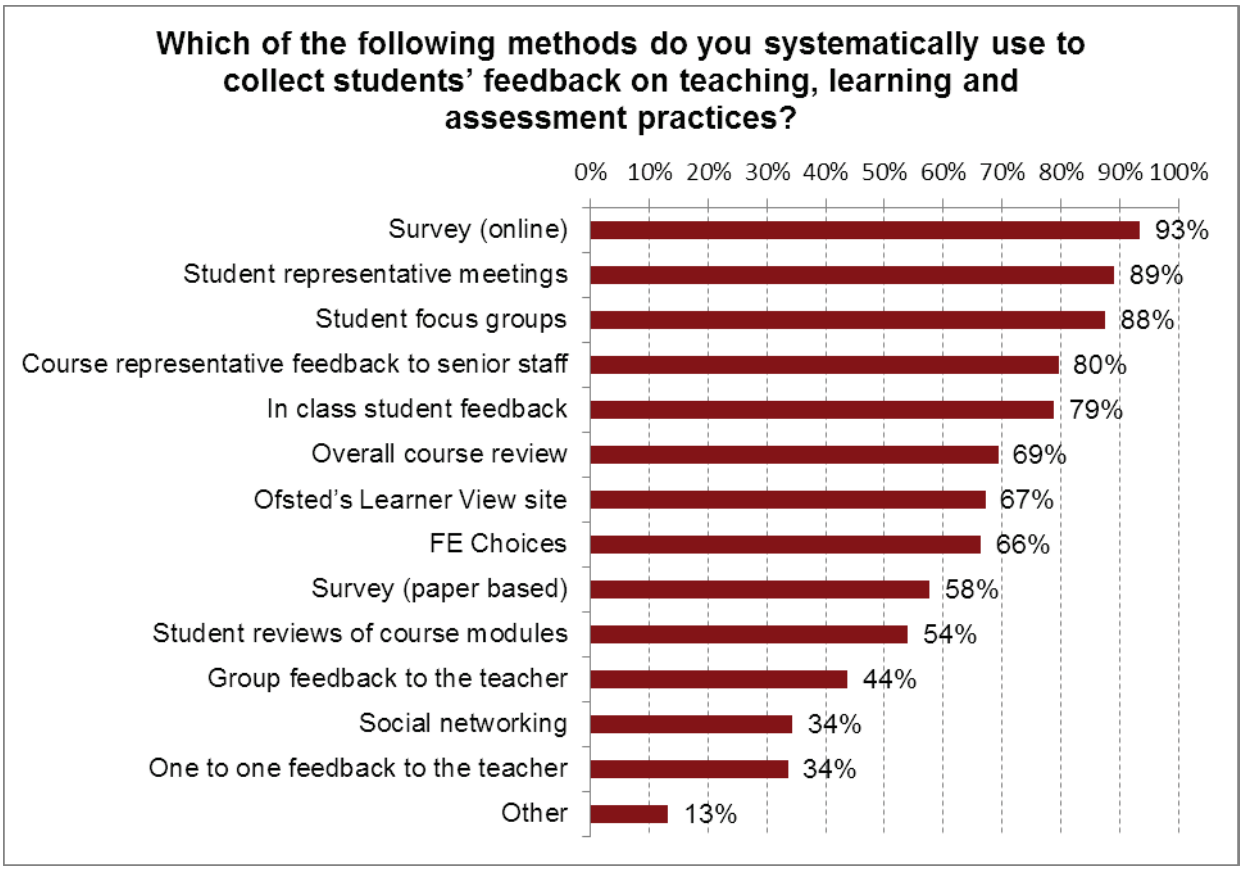
3.2 The use of student feedback in English colleges

The following section presents analysis of the national survey, exploring methods and frequency of feeback collection, perceptions of effectiveness of different methods in generating useful response rates, and the value of student feedback for improving teacher practices.

3.2.1 Methods and frequency of collecting feedback

The survey asked senior college leaders about the methods used systematically to gain student's views of teaching, learning and assessment[1]. Figure 1 shows that colleges used a wide range of methods with 10 of the 13 tools applied by more than half of colleges surveyed. Ninety three per cent used online surveys to capture the views of students. Other commonly reported methods included student representative meetings (89 per cent), student focus groups (88 per cent) and in-class student feedback (79 per cent).

Figure 1 Methods used to collect feedback in colleges



One to one feedback to the teacher and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter were the least reported with just over a third of colleges (34 per cent) stating that they used these methods in both cases. Group feedback to the teacher (44 per cent) was also a method less common. Colleges who stated 'other' tended to describe methods of engagement with senior managers to provide feedback (e.g., 'buzz the boss' and

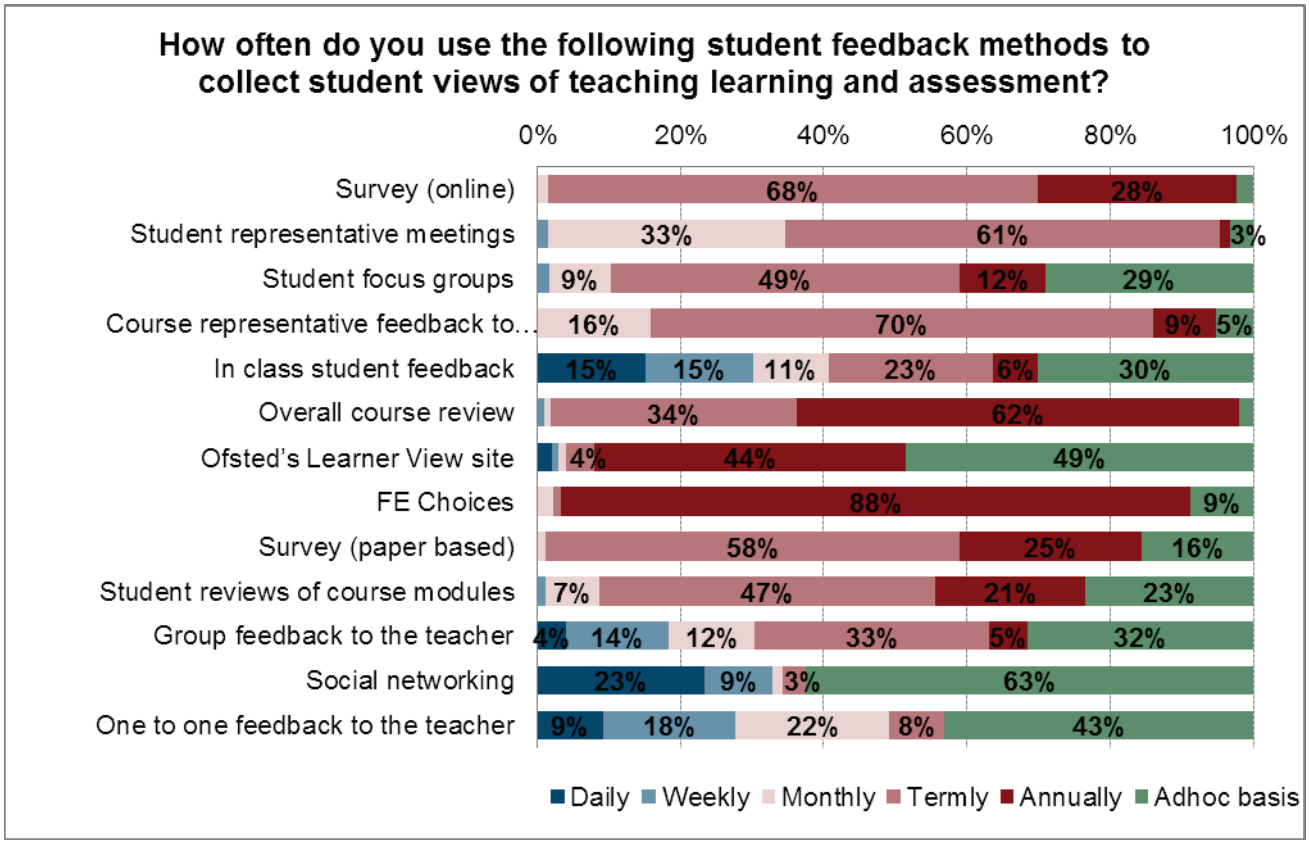
[1] Teaching learning and assessment was defined as the ability of teachers to plan for individual and group needs; encourage high expectations; assess students using initial diagnosis of need; provide feedback that supports future learning; develops English and maths skills; and, helps students with their next steps into work, higher education or future learning.

'principal question time'). Some of these might be similar to activities other colleges cited under the other headings.

Colleges were asked to indicate how often they used their chosen feedback methods within an academic year. Respondents reported that the majority of feedback activity occurred on a termly basis. Figure 2 indicates that, among colleges that used course representative student feedback to senior staff, 70 per cent did this termly. Of those using online surveys 68 per cent of respondents carried them out frequently.

The methods most likely to have been used annually where relevant were the overall course review (62 per cent) and the Ofsted learner site (44 per cent). Colleges also reported that the methods most likely to be used on a monthly basis, if at all, included student representative meetings (33 per cent), one to one feedback to the teacher (22 per cent) and course representative feedback to senior staff (16 per cent).

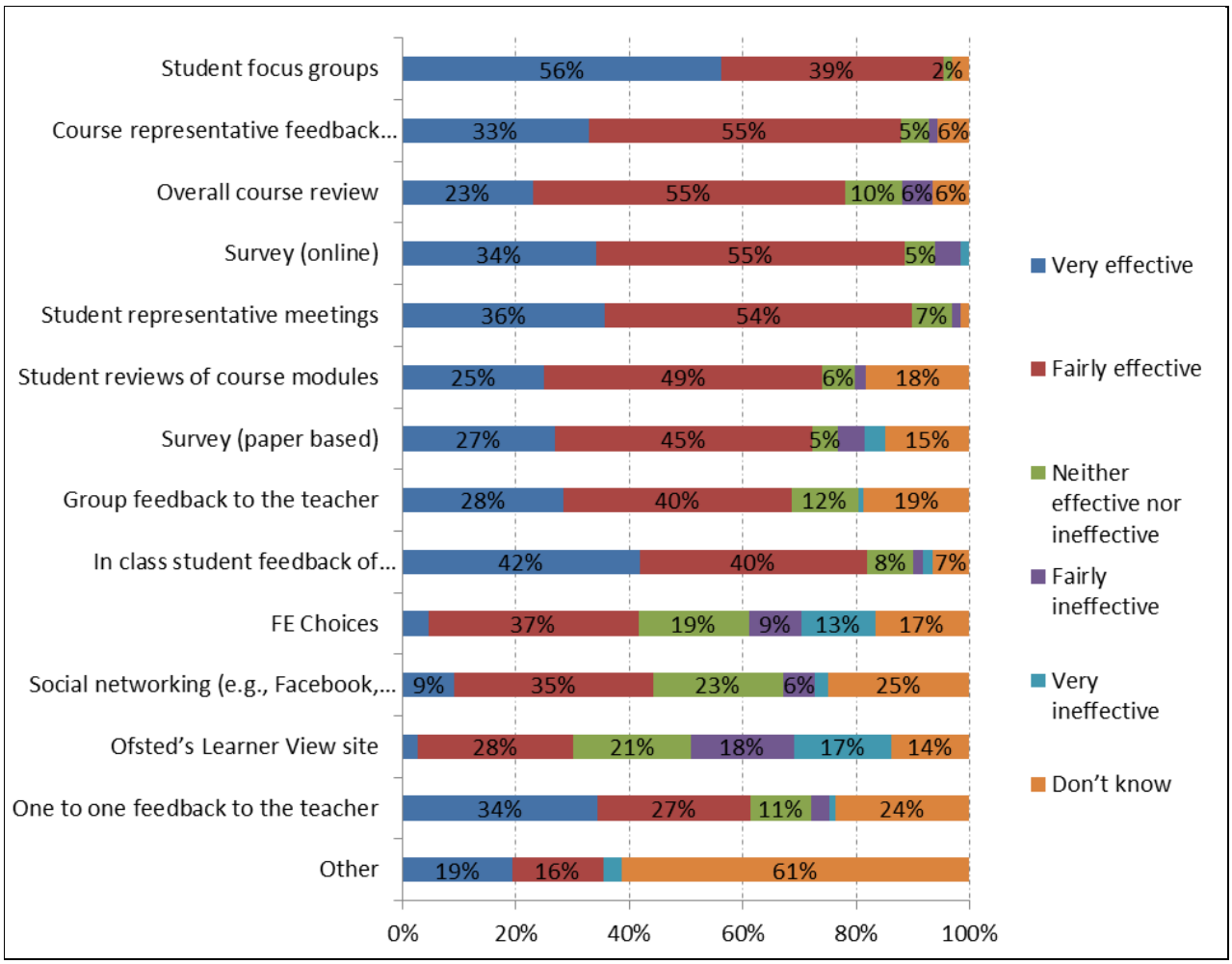
Figure 2 Frequency of use of student feedback methods



3.2.2 Generating good response rates among students

The colleges' views on how effective the various feedback tools were at gaining a good level of student responses are presented in Figure 3. Ninety-five per cent of college respondents thought that student focus groups were very or fairly effective in gaining student responses. Online surveys, course representative feedback to senior staff and overall course reviews were also considered effective by 89 per cent, 88 per cent and 78 per cent of colleges respectively. In contrast, only 35 per cent of respondents thought that Ofsted's learner view site was either 'fairly' or 'very' ineffective in gaining good student response rates. Respondents' views about the effectiveness of FE choices, social networking and one-to-one feedback to the teacher were mixed, including a large number of 'Don't Knows'.

Figure 3: Effectiveness of different tools in generating good response rates from students



3.2.3 The value of feedback

Evidence from the survey suggests that heads of faculties and principals or vice principals were the main users of student feedback. The most commonly reported application was to regularly review perceptions of teacher practices and performance at either a departmental or whole-college level, with 84 per cent reporting this use by principals or vice principals, 89 per cent by head of faculties, and 60 per cent by teachers. Popular uses for vice principals in the survey included the review of college facilities (83 per cent), induction practices (74 per cent) and pastoral care (73 per cent).

Heads of faculties used student feedback the most within colleges. Common areas of application for this group included the review of induction practices (90 per cent), student perceptions of teacher practices and performance (89 per cent), and teaching resources (89 per cent). Reviewing student financial support (59 per cent) was the least reported area for this group. College respondents also believed that teachers used student feedback the least, compared to other staff. When teachers did use feedback it was mainly focused on classroom activities such reviewing course content (75 per cent), assessment procedures (75 per cent) and ad-hoc use to identify improvements in teaching (64 per cent).

Colleges were also asked about the quality of the student feedback (i.e. disclosure, representativeness and accuracy of feedback produced). About nine in ten respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that students provided honest, confidential and insightful feedback about their classroom teaching and learning experience, and had an understanding of the feedback's purpose. Many respondents also believed that feedback received was representative with 85 per cent agreeing that the feedback produced a balanced account of most students within their college.

3.3 The use of student feedback in pilot colleges

This section summarises findings about the use of student feedback taken from the pilot in the five colleges. Senior leaders and coordinators were interviewed about their student feedback methods prior to the trial.

Consistent with the survey, all colleges used a wide range of feedback methods to capture student views on teaching practices. Paper-based or online surveys were key tools as they were regarded as quick, flexible and inexpensive ways of capturing information. This was often implemented to assess areas in addition to teaching, learning and assessment such as college induction, quality of facilities and student wellbeing.

Focus groups were carried out in the five colleges to understand student views in more detail. Many respondents mentioned the use of surveys in providing feedback. Although regularly used, all respondents recognised the risk of students being over-burdened with survey fatigue. Other innovative methods of student feedback were identified in class such as:

- Post-it notes for students to communicate what they have learnt during the lesson and areas that they think require more clarity.
- Peer feedback where students gathered in groups to give thoughts on their course to other students not in their class and an external person.
- Feedback to the principal or senior leaders and mock Ofsted inspections were also common feedback methods.

Students in the focus groups were asked about their awareness of and preferences over methods of giving student feedback within their college. Most had an accurate awareness of the various activities provided but expressed a particular preference for supplying feedback through *informal methods* such as one to one or group tutorial sessions. Students' reasons for this were generally based on the belief that it was a safe environment to express their issues or concerns without any repercussions. The preferred *formal method* to raise issues about teaching and learning was through student representative and union meetings. Social network sites and student councils were also mentioned in the focus groups but when given the opportunity students rarely chose to provide feedback in this way.

The survey finding about the feedback being termly or annual was also reflected in discussions from the focus groups. Many respondents felt that this frequency was sufficient for senior managers and head of faculties to monitor and review their areas of responsibility. One of the colleges reported that their teachers asked for student feedback on a more adhoc basis. For example the college's pilot coordinator highlighted the use of modular feedback surveys within specific subject departments. These were designed and implemented by teachers for their respective classes. The process was considered a

useful way to ensure that the subject areas had been clearly understood and gave teachers an opportunity to review topics that were considered unclear by students.

When asked about current *instant* student feedback methods related to teaching and learning, pilot colleges reported informal activity which teachers undertook within the classroom. These included discussions and resources such as post-it notes and interactive whiteboards: for example, one college was using a ‘muddy box method’, where students provided feedback via post-it notes anonymously, about course content and anything that was unclear to them. The teacher would then plan in some time at the beginning of the next lesson to run through the issues raised by students. Another college used a type of instant feedback through white boards where students can indicate whether they understood key concepts within the lesson. A third method mentioned was the use of a phone application for Microsoft power point in class, which students uploaded on their portable devices to produce happy or unhappy emoticon faces on the whiteboard to signal to the teacher whether they understood the concepts taught.

These instant methods were not reviewed or monitored by senior leaders as colleges believed this was part of teachers building relationships with their students.

Views about existing methods of feedback

Evidence from teachers in Model 5 suggested that instant feedback existed prior to the trial. This was implemented through an in-class electronic system called ‘smart response units’ which enables students to provide feedback in the classroom. This has been embedded in all of the college’s classrooms.

> *'This isn't new to the college because we have smart response units as well. where us tutors we can programme direct questions or tests and then data is displayed directly and then we can analyse it with the students.' so that's used as an assessment tool '.*

Pilot college students and teachers were asked about any current student feedback methods in addition to the IOSF pilot. All were aware of the wide range of provisions available within their college and believed this activity to be a valuable tool to inform improvements of teaching. All colleges had a rich culture of collecting student feedback and applying this to their classroom practices. As a result all college members were experienced in providing, receiving and applying results from this activity. The value of specific student feedback activities to improve classroom practices varied between teachers and students.

When asked whether instant online feedback could replace existing methods, all preferred to keep the current system. However, many teachers saw the advantages of analysing the trends of lesson feedback within the system and were happy to include IOSF into their practices.

Preferred methods of feedback

Evidence from the student focus groups suggests that their preferred methods of giving feedback varied according to the areas within the college they were providing input on. For example, students favoured methods such as tutorials and representative meetings to provide feedback about teaching and learning. In-class methods such as post-it notes

and paper surveys were also noted. Alternatively, students felt surveys were ideal when providing views on other college areas such as facilities, induction or overall course modules. More confident students expressed their preference to discuss teaching issues personally with the teacher. Many students also believed that feedback on the quality of teaching should be given informally between teachers and students. This was due to their consideration for the wider implications to their relationship with the teacher if feedback was negative. In-class or third party methods of feedback such as tutorials and group feedback were regarded as the safest way to provide feedback anonymously.

Teachers welcomed feedback from students and considered student views important when reviewing and improving their teaching. In-line with the student feedback survey, teachers expressed a particular preference for student surveys. Surveys were considered effective in flagging issues about the subjects taught and the delivery of teaching in lessons and there was a tradition in some colleges of carrying them out. Some teachers were also using instant feedback methods in the classroom but this was done at their own initiative.

The range of feedback methods used within colleges were also helpful to improving classroom teaching. The ability to assess practices in various ways allowed teachers to get a holistic view of their progression. Teachers recognised that there might be other factors which influence student views and believed multiple sources of feedback enabled them to assess issues raised. The need for colleges to have both high-level student perceptions and in-lesson feedback was also considered important.

4. Design and implementation of the instant feedback pilots

This chapter will report the design and implementation of the instant online student feedback (IOSF) system. It will examine college coordinators' and senior leaders' considerations when planning and designing their pilot and models of IOSF as well as some of the challenges associated with the project.

4.1 Key findings

- Colleges' staff and students were involved at the designing and implementation of the pilot from the beginning, with particular focus on choosing the right questions to ask.
- Challenges associated with choosing the right platform for the exercise involved students' access to mobile and internet devices as well as the Wi-Fi capacity of the college. Obtaining good response rates from students was also challenging, with some colleges missing their response targets.
- Colleges opted for five different models for collecting and releasing the data, ranging from mobile phone short surveys to more comprehensive surveys involving a range of platforms eg. mobile phones, tablets and laptops.
- The feedback was available to teachers, and/or senior leaders and heads of faculties. Depending on prior arrangements and the audience, feedback was presented at whole-college level, as well as departmental and class-level.

4.2 Involving staff and students

Senior college leaders and coordinators were interviewed before trialling their IOSF system to investigate their strategies to planning and implementing their pilot. All colleges collaborated with heads of faculties, technical IT resource and other senior leaders to design the system. Heads of faculties and senior leaders were also involved to some extent in the release of the feedback results.

4.3 Choosing the questions to ask

The scoping of measurable and applicable questions was one of the most important aspects when designing IOSF. Colleges aimed to produce questions that accurately assessed views of the broad range of activity within all lessons undertaken. Another key objective reported was for students to complete feedback within five minutes of the lesson. This meant that feedback questions had to be simple and easy to understand by all students.

One of the colleges took an inclusive approach to gaining group consensus by designing questions with senior leaders and testing these with teachers and students before implementation. This allowed them to test the feasibility of the questions and the potential

uses for improving teaching practices. Coordinators also noted that students were already giving feedback through many other methods in their college. As such, questions needed to be simple and quick to answer so that these students remained engaged.

4.4 Establishing the platform for responses and challenges associated with it

The main challenges associated with the pilot related to students' access to mobile and internet devices as well as to the Wi-Fi capacity within colleges.

All colleges acknowledged the challenge of implementing a pilot which would enable all students to provide instant feedback within the classroom. Some recognised the risk for the IOSF system to exclude students who did not have a smart phone or tablet or did not have mobile-data on their phone. Colleges also thought that this could possibly exclude poorer students or those from different cultural backgrounds (who are sometimes the low achievers).

Another accessibility issue raised was the need to support students with substantial physical disabilities and/ or with poor English language skills. To tackle this, three of the five colleges ensured their Wi-Fi system facilitated free online feedback through multiple devices. Extra laptops, mobile smart phones and tablets were also purchased to ensure that all students could provide feedback. To facilitate students with English as an additional language teachers or physical disabilities many college teachers offered them extra support and allowed extra time to give feedback after the lesson.

Much consideration was also given by colleges on their wireless internet's ability to cope with high usage during the trial. One of the colleges saw this as an opportunity to test their Wi-Fi system. Other challenges reported was the development of a system that was effectively formatted across all internet web browser platforms (e.g. Internet explorer, Google Chrome, Safari etc.) and a timed mechanism to release text messages after all lessons.

Communication of the purpose of IOSF

Colleges used formal communication methods to notify teachers and students about the IOSF pilot. Coordinators explained that senior leader and faculty meetings were contacted to update staff on their involvement in the pilot. Two senior leaders, who also held team meetings, also reported using their newsletter bulletins to email teachers about the pilot. Three of the five colleges made faculty and teacher participation voluntary with the remaining two setting participation as compulsory. Communication to students was mainly through their teachers within the classroom. An exception to this was Model 1 who informed students through advertising on study profiles and emails.

4.5 Models for processing information

This section presents a summary of the five models that were trialled in the colleges. A more detailed description of them is included in Appendix 1 – key characteristics of the five models.

Table 3 Type of feedback models used in the pilot

	What & how	When & coverage	Purpose & audience
Model 1	A texting system using students' mobile phones. Three questions by text.	After the 2nd and 4th lesson of the chosen week	Questions about: Enjoyment of lesson; ease of asking the teacher a question & relevance of the lesson to aspired profession. Senior leaders & heads of faculties reviewed the information.
Model 2	A website based method using students' mobile smart phones, tablets and laptops. Three questions.	The pilot was rolled out gradually to a number of lessons over the course of the pilot week	Questions about: Extent to which they agree or disagree to have learnt, understood and enjoyed the lesson. Teachers had instant access to the results. Senior leaders & heads of faculties had access to results at whole college or lesson level
Model 3	A virtual learning environment through students' online Moodle profiles. Students were able to submit IOSF through their phone or tablet during the lesson, or use IT facilities *after* the lesson. Survey of five questions + text boxes	A selected number of teachers trialled the system for one lesson during the pilot week	Questions about: Enjoyment of lesson, stretching, what they learnt. Teachers had instant access to the results through their Moodle teacher profile. Senior leaders couldn't review the data.
Model 4	A free online survey software package; Students provided feedback using their	One lesson per teacher for a 2.5 week period, in a third of the college's	Questions about: How interesting, engaging and challenging the lesson was, how they undertood the lesson and whether

	What & how	When & coverage	Purpose & audience
	mobile phone (app), webpage or a shared classroom tablet. Survey of seven questions.	departments	they know how to improve their grades. Teachers had instant access to results via email. Senior leaders & Faculty heads had a strategic overview of results at whole-college level & within departments.
Model 5	An online survey placed on students' profiles on the college's intranet; Students responded via mobile phones, laptops or the college's shared tablets. Survey of five questions.	All students studying for level 2 or level 3 qualifications, on all lessons for one week	Questions about: Whether students have learnt something new, received feedback on their work, level of interest in the lesson and whether they were working above the target grade. Senior leaders & heads of faculties initially reviewed results at whole-college and departmental level. Teachers accessed the results after discussing individual feedback with their Faculty manager.

The process of collecting management information

The below table highlights the target and total valid feedback received from all pilot colleges. The student feedback targets were agreed and set with the Department in the early stages of designing the pilot. The data indicate that in total 4,896 valid feedback responses were collected during the IOSF pilot. Model 2 exceeded their target by 46 per cent whereas the other colleges didn't manage to meet their targets, with three of them being within 80 per cent of their target set.

All colleges demonstrated the ability to produce student feedback information at a whole-college or faculty level. Other management information collected was dependent on the way in which student feedback was obtained and how integrated their IOSF methods were with existing systems. For example, the coordinator of Model 5 described their student feedback method's ability to understand all aspects of their IOSF process due to

each feedback response being linked to individual student profiles. The table below describes the potential level of information generated from the systems.

Table 4: IOSF output from all pilot colleges

Pilot College Model	Feedback response target	Feedback response achieved	Level of management information (MI) collected through pilot method
1	1,000	357	• Classroom • Teacher • Pupil
2	1,400	2,048	• Classroom • Teacher
3	12,000	626	• Classroom • Teacher
4	1,000	888	• Classroom
5	2,000	1,865	• Classroom • Teacher • Pupil
Total	17,400	4,896	

This level of MI was also available in Model 1 but management information was dependent on how up-to-date their student contacts were.

The Department analysed MI generated by Model 5 to understand the potential use of a fully IOSF system integrated with college intranet profiles. Compared with other models, this system produced the most detailed management information which could be reviewed and monitored within the college. When asked about the use of this information, senior leaders recognised this potential but preferred to focus on the overall student feedback results for the pilot.

Although some of the models demonstrated the potential to collect detailed information, all senior leaders explained that they did not intend to review the results at the individual teacher or student level during the pilot. This approach was deemed inappropriate considering the short-term nature of the trial during this period.

A comparison of the models

Looking across the five models we can see a variation in platforms used, from mobile phones solely to websites and virtual learning environment. Models that offered students many options to respond (such as Models 2 and 5) seem to have been more successful in getting students' interest in the pilot. In contrast, Model 1, that was based on students' using their mobile phones only, had limited success in generating a good response rate.

The questions used to collect feedback also varied from a handful of questions (three) to more elaborated systems e.g. seven questions or five questions plus some free text boxes. The topics explored several aspects of learning. The timeframe of the data collection also varied from one week to 2.5 weeks giving students a bigger window of opportunity to respond. In some models, students fed back their responses during or straight after the end of lesson, whereas in cases where they had to use the colleges' shared IT facilities the feedback was sent a bit later after the lesson.

The 'audience' of the feedback was also different: in some models both teachers and senior leaders had access to the data; in one model it was only senior leaders and heads of faculties that received the data, and in another model the data became available to teachers solely.

4.6 Trial costs

Each pilot college received a £5,000 grant fund to support the operating and technological costs for the pilot. When planning the design of their system within this budget all colleges initially considered existing IT resources. Four of the five colleges modified these current systems which included tools like:

- Student and teacher profiles
- Automated texting services and
- College virtual learning environments (e.g. Moodle).

One college used free survey software during the trial as it was considered a simple inexpensive method to gathering IOSF. Two of the five colleges also developed and implemented a mobile application which was designed at low cost.

The highest set-up cost reported by colleges was staff time. Key staff activity included senior staff meetings to discuss the pilot's implementation, IT software development to modify existing software and college analysis and administration of instant feedback results. Other costs related to the pilot included the purchase of computer hardware (e.g. tablets, laptops etc), the price of text messaging and internet data usage within the college.

5. Perceptions of instant student feedback

This chapter looks at teachers' and students' perceptions of the IOSF model that was implemented in their college.

5.1 Key findings

- Most teachers were positive about the implementation of the pilot in their college.
- Challenges associated with the implementation of the pilot included its timing e.g. overlapping with mock exams and Ofsted inspections. Some teachers would have preferred to have more detailed and informative questions included in the pilot.
- Many students found the questions easy to understand and quick to answer, with some students not fully understanding the questions on achievement or personal goals. Students with English as an additional language and /or those undertaking lower level qualifications required extra support by a teacher to submit the feedback.
- Students on the whole reported answering the questions truthfully but their relationship with the teacher could play a role in how strongly they voiced their opinions.
- Teachers highlighted the contribution that IOSF could make in improving teaching practices as a convenient and speedy method of gathering information from large groups of students. It also offered teachers the opportunity to reflect more on how they teach.
- Some teachers thought that in order for IOSF to be useful and meaningful, students should be asked more questions so that there is enough detail in the data collected. This in turn would help them make changes to their teaching practices.
- Senior leaders and coordinators were positive about the use of IOSF as a source of information / supportive development tool about the quality of teaching.
- Regarding the use of IOSF to inform teacher appraisal, evidence from senior leaders suggests that it could be used over time (e.g. on an aggregated basis) and with some further development, outside of the scope of the pilot.

5.2 Introduction

As described in section 2.2, focus groups with students and teachers took place in five colleges to explore their perceptions of the overall delivery of IOSF, level of engagement, the value of feedback and perceptions of an instant system's potential to improve teaching practices in the future. A synthesis of these findings in presented below.

5.3 Implementation and accessibility of IOSF

Students and teachers in all colleges were asked about their experience of participating in the pilot, how easy the system was to use and whether they understood the questions asked.

Communication / awareness of the pilot

In general, college students were aware of the new system through their classroom teacher or form tutor and gave feedback when required. Students in Model 1 believed that they were not well informed or aware that they were taking part in piloting a new system, and as a result were hesitant to participate.

Implementing the pilot – time and accessibility

Most teachers were positive about the implementation of their pilot. Many found it was not disruptive despite having to allow time for students to provide feedback. For example, teachers in Model 3 allowed students to find college IT facilities to complete the feedback during the lesson. However, others found that reserving time for students to provide feedback affected their ability to move to the following lesson. In some cases students provided feedback outside of the lesson. For instance, students in Model 5 were given the opportunity to give feedback of the week's lessons during their tutorial period.

Teachers reported the use of mobile smart phones as the preferred method by students. Those who did not have a phone would either borrow their peers or use the mobile device (e.g. tablet, laptop etc.) provided by the teacher.

A common logistical issue reported was the accessibility to college Wi-Fi systems. This resulted in a delay of teachers receiving feedback results and many reporting students being reluctant to use their own mobile data allowance. As can be expected, many teachers also reported that the number of students within the class influenced the time it took to provide feedback. Other logistical issues raised by teachers were the piloting of the systems during mock exams and Ofsted inspections. For example, teachers in Model 3 believed that the questions asked were not appropriate during their college's mock period. Teachers also recognised that the questions asked by Ofsted inspectors sometimes replicated those asked in their IOSF system.

Understanding and length of questions

Many students thought that most questions were understandable and quick to answer. However, some students reported not fully understanding the questions related to more complex areas such as achievement or personal goals. A small minority of Model 5 students understood the term 'meeting their target grades' to mean 'minimum level of performance' which may have led to inaccurate answers.

The number of questions by all colleges tended to be adequate but not burdensome. Some students who took part in Model 4 believed that there could have been more questions asked. Those who provided feedback more than once believed that it would be excessive to provide this for every lesson and many preferred a fortnightly or termly feedback system.

Suitability and accuracy of responses

Most students believed that the questions enabled them to be reflective about what they learnt during the lesson. Examples were given of how this sometimes led to a dialogue with their teacher about this. Some students would have liked a text box to add context to their answers:

> *'One thing I would say is that, you know the tick boxes to further improve it you could have a little box on the side describing how you agree with this statement, because it might be different for each student'.* **Student- Model 3**

> *'Sometimes it was a bit hit and miss because they were bullet points that you had to tick for everything so you couldn't add detail.'* **Student- Model 2**

All students reported answering the questions truthfully. However, many recognised that their relationship with their teacher affected whether they gave objective feedback. Most were wary that providing negative feedback could lead to their teacher treating them unfairly in the lesson. Being identified by their teacher was therefore a serious concern which was recognised as a deterrent to providing their true thoughts. Confidentiality within their feedback system was an important factor and determined whether they provided honest and objective opinions of the lesson. More confident students believed that they were comfortable with talking to the teacher about any issues rather than using IOSF.

> *'Because I liked the teacher I answered it on more a neutral level instead of, no I don't like this or I don't like that.'* **Student - Model 1**

> *'I really like my teacher so I didn't really want to offend them'. If you say something mean they might pick you out.'* **Student - Model 4**

The sensitivity of student feedback results and the potential for students to misuse the system to intentionally provide negative feedback was also reported by teachers, who also observed that students were aware of this and understood the implications to their answers. Context about the students and their motivation to participate was also thought to be important when interpreting IOSF results.

Most teachers perceived the questions presented to be clear and applicable to their classroom environment. Those in a workshop or outdoor environment (e.g. sports science, construction engineering) found that they could not apply all question results to what had been taught.

As described by the students, many teachers found that questions related to topic areas such as target grades and student perceptions of their progression confused students and required clarification. Students with English as an additional language and/or those undertaking lower level qualifications required extra support by a teacher to help them understand what was being asked of them.

Accessing students' responses

Teachers from four of the five colleges had received student feedback results by the time focus groups were undertaken. Those who had received feedback were asked about its application to developing teacher practices. Feedback was provided to teachers mainly through their teacher's email address or teacher Moodle profile (Models 1-4). Results

presented in Model 1 were not specific to the individual lessons due to the low student responses received. Model 3 teachers, who gathered feedback through Moodle, reported a preference for their results to be emailed to them rather than through Moodle. Teachers who had reviewed their feedback believed that the system's allowed an open dialogue with students about how subject areas were being taught in the lesson. Some teachers monitored the feedback during lessons and immediately acted on this by clarifying unclear areas noted by students.

5.4 Relevance for improving teacher practices

Teachers, senior leaders and students from pilot colleges were asked about their views on whether IOSF could and should be used to monitor and review teaching practices. This produced mixed views between teachers and senior leaders. All believed that it was possible to use feedback from their pilot to inform teaching practice. However, teachers' views varied on how robust this was as a measurement of effective teaching.

Value and relevance of IOSF

Students on the whole valued the opportunity to provide feedback. However, many believed that changes made within their college following feedback in general were limited and mostly related to non-teaching elements of college life. Feedback on teaching and learning was considered important but less actioned by their college.

Among teachers who did receive feedback many believed that IOSF was a convenient and useful method of gathering the views of a large group of students, due to the speed and convenience of gathering information. They also identified their system's ability to improve the way in which topics were taught in the lesson and share effective practices with other teachers. Another advantage was the ability for teachers to be more methodical and reflective about how they taught within the lesson. For example, one teacher innovatively altered the feedback system to consult students to structure and plan their lessons according to the subject areas they considered challenging. This enabled them to give emphasis on specific areas which were difficult.

> *'What I did as a result of <the pilot>, I had come across this system before so I went through all the topics for each of my modules and then gave them red, amber green, so that they could go through the entire syllabus for the year in chunks and tell me whether they were happy with each subject area or not. And so now I've got a list of the areas that they don't like, that I can spend a bit more time on during revision.'*
> **Teacher – Model 3**

However, some teachers believed that due to the simplicity of the questions posed, the feedback given was not in-depth enough to help them improve their teaching practices. To increase the IOSF's ability to improve teaching and learning teachers believed that more questions would be needed to probe students further. For example, a Model 2 teacher proposed that a question measuring how useful students find particular teaching methods in the classroom would enable clear monitoring of teacher's performance. Likewise, a teacher in Model 1 expressed the view that the format of questioning in their system was too shallow and the information produced would not be useful to inform and improve teaching and learning.

Evidence from coordinators and senior leaders

Coordinators and senior leaders were asked about the management of IOSF and the application of results produced from this type of feedback. These views were accepted on the underlying acknowledgment that the information produced was merely indicative of the performance of teachers and too vague to accurately assess teaching and learning. All coordinators suggested that instant feedback should primarily be used as a supportive development tool for teachers to use and improve their practices. This would enable them to informally assess their teaching and further improve future lessons.

Senior leaders and coordinators of the pilot were positive about the use of student feedback within their college. It was perceived as a good indicator of the quality of teaching delivered and broadly perceived as a valuable source to measure the quality of teaching in colleges. For example, the senior leader of Model 3 emphasised the use of the feedback as a CPD tool for teachers to self-assess their practices.

When asked their perceptions of which specific method was useful to improve teaching and learning, most could not explicitly isolate one tool. This was due to the various types of information produced, the individual limitations of each method and the importance to consider all sources of evidence. Like the survey results, other senior leaders believed that annual surveys and focus groups had great strategic insight into the views of students and enabled planning for the next academic year. Sources outside of student feedback such as student results and teacher observations were also reported to be a useful assessment of the quality of teaching and learning.

5.5 Usefulness for teachers performance appraisal

In comparison with formal performance management procedures all senior leaders reported being content with the current methods they have and would use IOSF as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement. When probed further some leaders suggested that if they were to use IOSF it would be based on student feedback collected over time to analyse trends. Many also shared their understanding of the emotive volatility of student views and the influence this has on feedback provided to teachers. As a result of this many colleges consider student feedback with many other sources such as achievement results and class observations.

Further development of the tool and detailed planning of its application was also perceived important for its effective use. Many felt that the use of their system as a management tool would require further consideration outside of the pilot. However some senior leaders provided examples of potential application and integration with current systems. These proposals supported senior leader’s initial thoughts of using IOSF as a supportive improvement tool for teaching.

6. Future plans

This chapter reports on pilot colleges' plans for further implementation of their IOSF system.

6.1 Colleges' future plans for instant online feedback

All colleges had considered the multiple uses of their feedback systems after the pilot. Three of the five colleges (Model 2, 4, and 5) had shared their intentions to further implement their IOSF system in the future. Most senior leaders had perceived the pilot of their system as a success and a motivator to further embed IOSF with their current systems. The Model 4 senior leader demonstrated this by explaining discussions amongst senior leaders about merging IOSF with their teacher observations.

> *'We've recently changed our lesson observation system entirely this year and we've moved away from grading lessons. One of the things we've put in is that we talk to the learners and we are debating about whether we can use this at the end of an observed lesson. Because at the moment its been done verbally'.* **Senior Leader - Model 4**

Ways of improving IOSF systems that were considered included improving the Wi-Fi capacity of the college, changing the frequency of feedback, and managing teachers' implementation. Almost all leaders recognised the importance of updating their internet systems to enable reliable and consistent use across their college. Three of the five colleges had explained their plans to undertake a significant upgrade to their computer networking systems over the summer term to improve Wi-Fi. This was of key importance to these senior leaders for any further implementation of the system.

Similar to student views many senior leaders believed that implementing IOSF in every lesson would be burdensome. Further development of the system's processes would be needed to create a constant measure of in-class student feedback that is unique from other college methods. The management of teacher's views of its uses was also recognised. An approach of transparency over how IOSF results would be used was reported commonly to overcome these fears. Some leaders were also keen to promote the flexible use of the system by involving heads of faculties and teachers in the future design of questions.

> *'What we have asked staff to do is to use it as part of their CPD plan so they can tell us what they're going to change as a result of having feedback from students and what we're also going to do is go back to the staff and ask them how they think we should take this forward and where we can gets some views from students. What I'd really like to do is continue with it working with students and a group of staff to see whether we need to have the online survey or whether what we actually need a policy that says staff will have to evaluate so many of their lessons as part of their CPD and that would be a guideline.'* **Senior Leader - Model 3**

In contrast, the senior leader of Model 1 described their plans not to use their system any further to assess teaching and learning. The low response received during the pilot resulted in them perceiving limited value within this area. The reason given for this low response was due to students' preference to discuss teaching issues in person and the

emotive nature of the student perspective. As a result of their trial the college has considered using their system for other purposes of IOSF.

7. Conclusions

This small-scale pilot of instant online feedback systems in FE colleges highlighted the potential that such a system could offer as well as some limitations. Some points which should be considered if other colleges were to design their own system are included below:

- Consideration should be given at the platform chosen: a texting method used in one of the pilots was unsuccessful for practical reasons. Offering students several options seemed to yield better results.
- The software systems used need to have the ability to analyse the data.
- The Wi-Fi capacity of the colleges should be able to support the system.
- Overall, the design of the system should be kept simple and accessible.
- Some students didn't have mobile phones with internet, or tablets/laptops. As a result, they had to access shared IT facilities to provide feedback which in turn meant that the feedback was not given straight after the lesson.
- Colleges should be mindful not to replicate existing feedback methods, but design a system to complement those; feedback exercises shouldn't be carried out in a way that generates 'survey fatigue' among students.
- An embedded, two-way college culture of feedback is likely to lead to successful implementation.
- Colleges should be open with students and teachers about the purposes of feedback methods and how the results will be used. Clarity of purpose therefore, and appropriate consultation on themes is important.
- If the purpose of feedback is to help teachers improve and plan lessons week-by-week, it may help if they are able to tailor the questions asked.
- If the purpose of feedback is for ongoing teacher appraisal with managers, it should be borne in mind that this may influence students' responses and as a result it might be best used as an indicator of changes through the year or a way of identifying issues for further exploration.

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9. Appendix 1 – key characteristics of the five models

Model 1:

- The system used the college's student contact list of mobile numbers and the online classroom registration log to send up to three questions via text message to attending students.
- Questions explored whether students enjoyed the lesson, the ease of asking the teacher a question and the relevance of the lesson to their aspired profession
- This method was dependent on **student mobile phones and the college student mobile phone contact database.**
- The feedback pilot was conducted on the 2nd and 4th lesson for the chosen week.
- **The information was initially reviewed by senior leaders** and head of faculties then sent to teachers to review after the trial week.
- Student responses were instantly stored centrally on the IT server for analysis

Model 2:

- **A website based method** where each lesson was allocated a unique code number which was used to link the student feedback to individual lessons.
- Students used the college Wi-Fi or their mobile internet to answer three questions on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed to have learnt, understood and enjoyed the lesson taught.
- **Student mobile smart phones, Tablets and Laptops** were used in this model.
- Lesson participation was conducted on a gradual basis throughout the trial. A small number of lessons participated on the first day with more taking part during the pilot week.
- **Teachers had instant access to the results** through their teacher profile
- Senior leaders and head of faculties had access to the results of students at a whole college or lesson level.

Model 3:

- **A virtual learning environment** system was designed to collect IOSF through student's online Moodle profiles.
- The feedback method consisted of a survey of five questions and some text boxes which asked students whether they enjoyed, felt stretched, learnt anything, or thought what they learnt during the lesson related to their existing knowledge. Results were emailed instantly to teachers.
- Students were able to use their **mobile phones and tablets** to enter IOSF within the lesson. Teachers also allowed students **to visit IT facilities to give feedback.**
- IOSF collected from a select number of teachers who trialled the system for one lesson during the pilot week.
- **Teachers were able to review the results instantly through results sent to Moodle teacher profile**.

- Senior leaders did not have the ability to review the data.

Model 4:

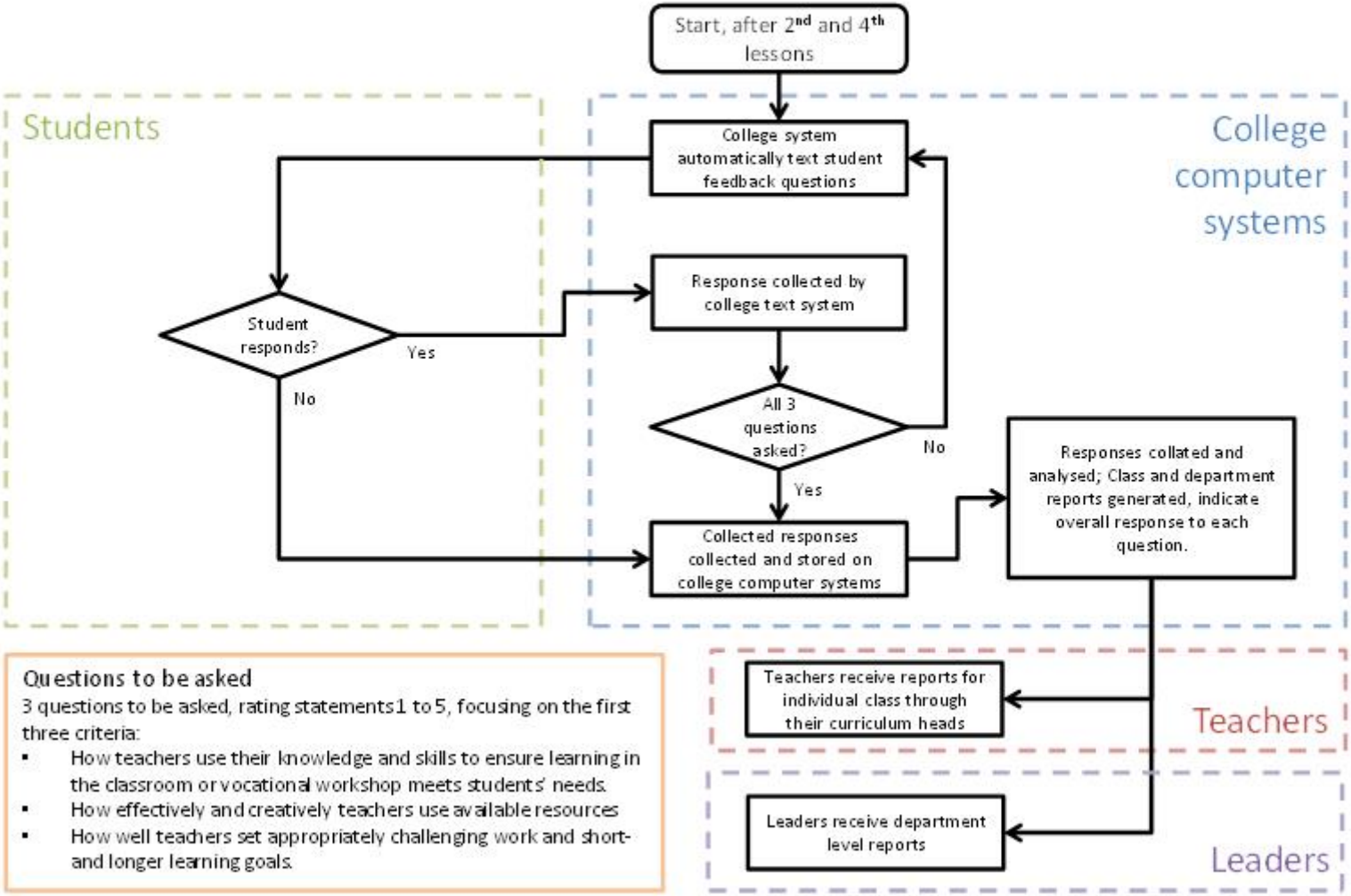
- **A free online survey software package was used to gather IOSF.** Senior leaders consulted teachers and students to design seven questions that rated how interesting, engaging and challenging the lesson was, how they understood the lesson and whether they know how to improve their grades.
- Lessons were given a unique code to identify the subject and teacher. Students' views were collected online and sent to teachers automatically in spreadsheet form.
- Students provided feedback through their mobile phone (app), webpage or a shared classroom tablet which was given to those without a smart phone.
- The trial was conducted by teachers within 10 of the 29 college's departments for one lesson per teacher for a 2.5 week period.
- **Teachers had instant access to results via email.**
- Senior leaders and Faculty heads had a strategic overview of the results produced across the whole-college and within the departments.

Model 5:

- An online feedback survey was designed and placed on student's profiles on the college's intranet to provide feedback in their lessons.
- Five questions were asked with one of the questions being an open text box. The questions asked whether students had learnt something new, received feedback on their work, been kept interested in the lesson and whether they were working above their target grade.
- Students completed the survey through their mobile phones, laptops and the college's shared tablets.
- The pilot collected feedback from all students conducting level 2 or level 3 qualifications. The IOSF system was trialled on all of their lessons for a week.
- Senior leaders and Head of Faculties initially reviewed student feedback results at a whole-college and department level.
- Teachers would have access to the student feedback results after to discussing individual feedback with their faculty manager.

10. Appendix 2 – Diagrammes of the five models

Model 1 (Stanmore College)

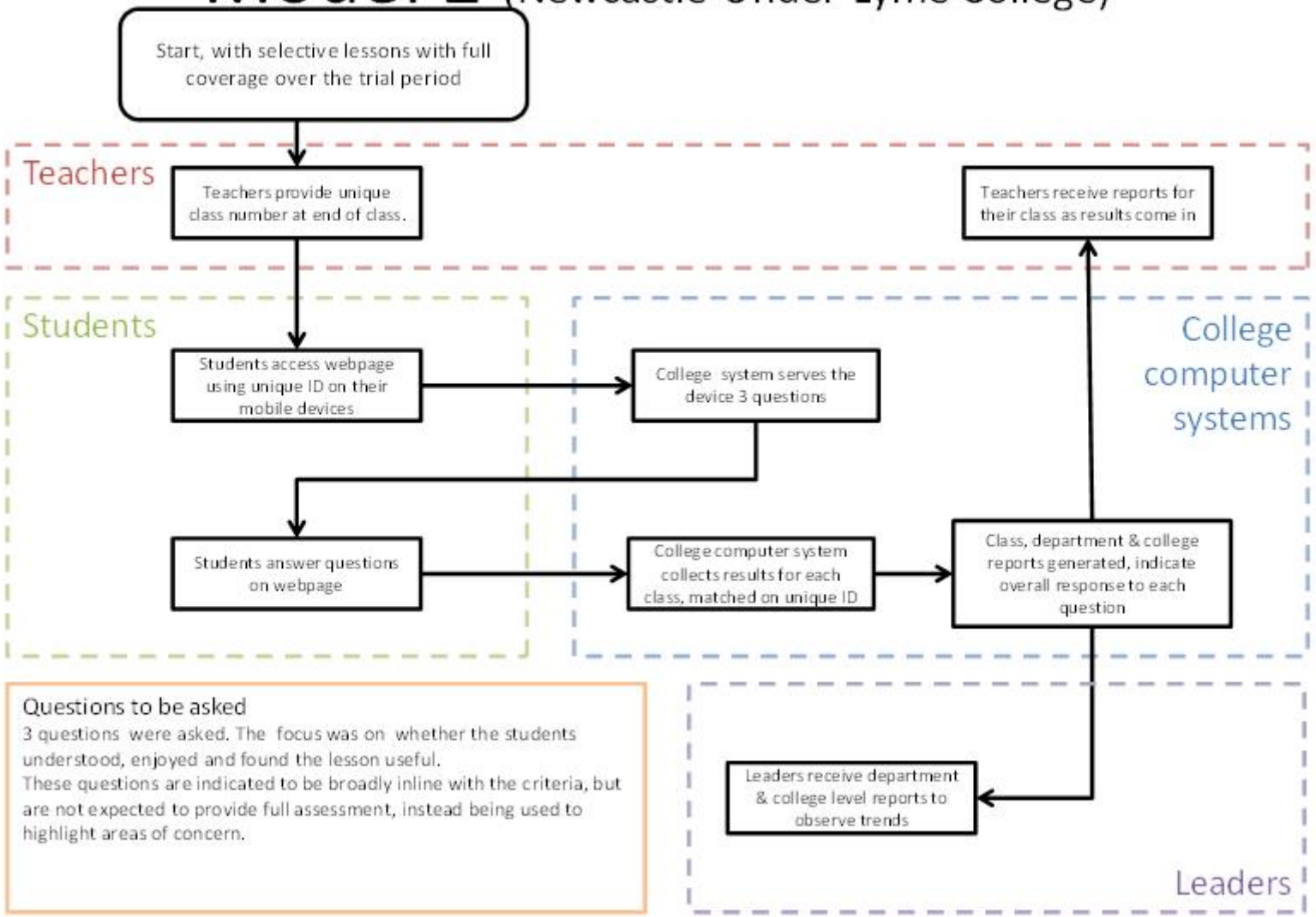


Questions to be asked

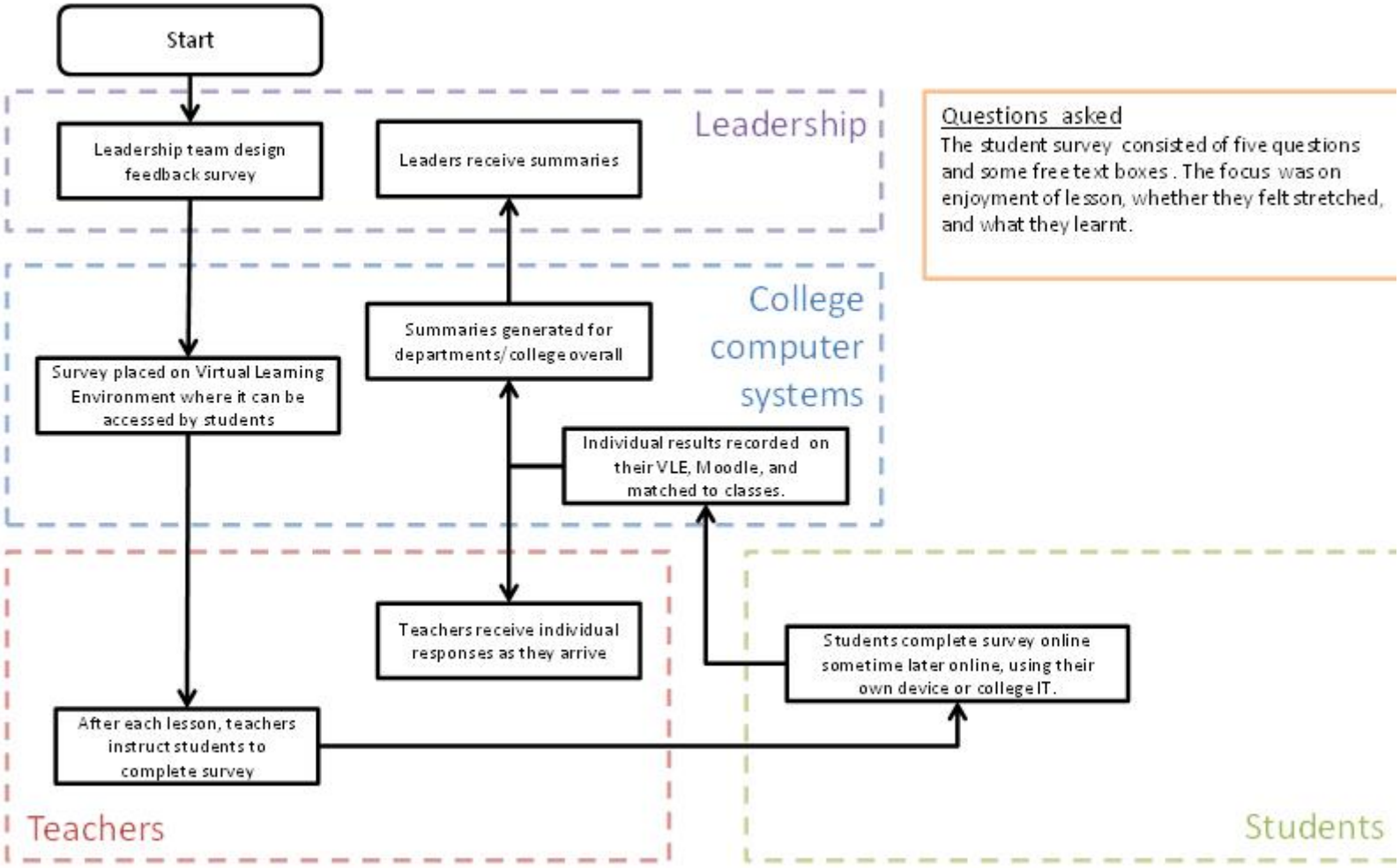
3 questions to be asked, rating statements 1 to 5, focusing on the first three criteria:

- How teachers use their knowledge and skills to ensure learning in the classroom or vocational workshop meets students' needs.
- How effectively and creatively teachers use available resources
- How well teachers set appropriately challenging work and short- and longer learning goals.

Model 2 (Newcastle-Under-Lyme College)



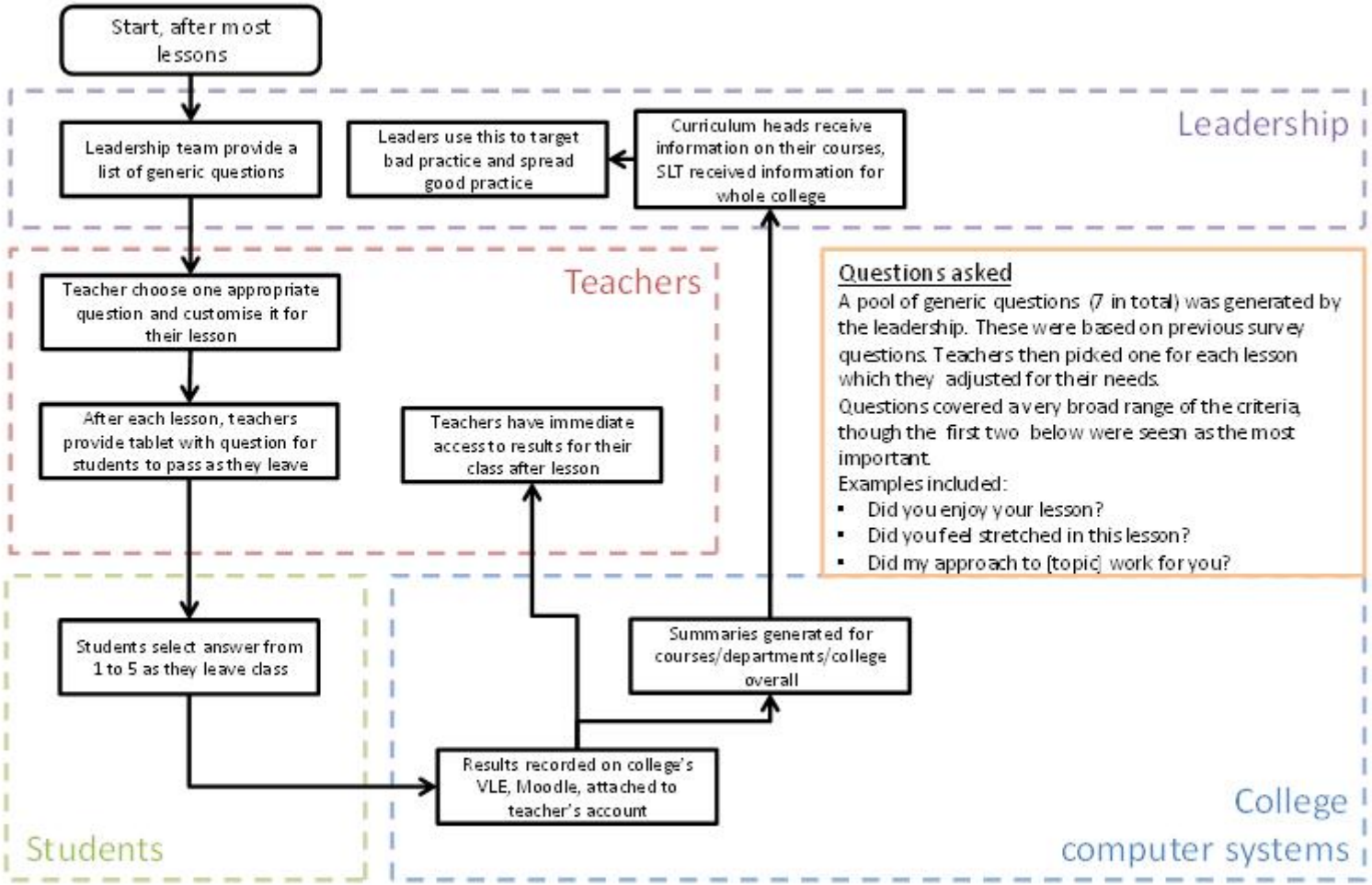
Model 3 (South & City Birmingham College)



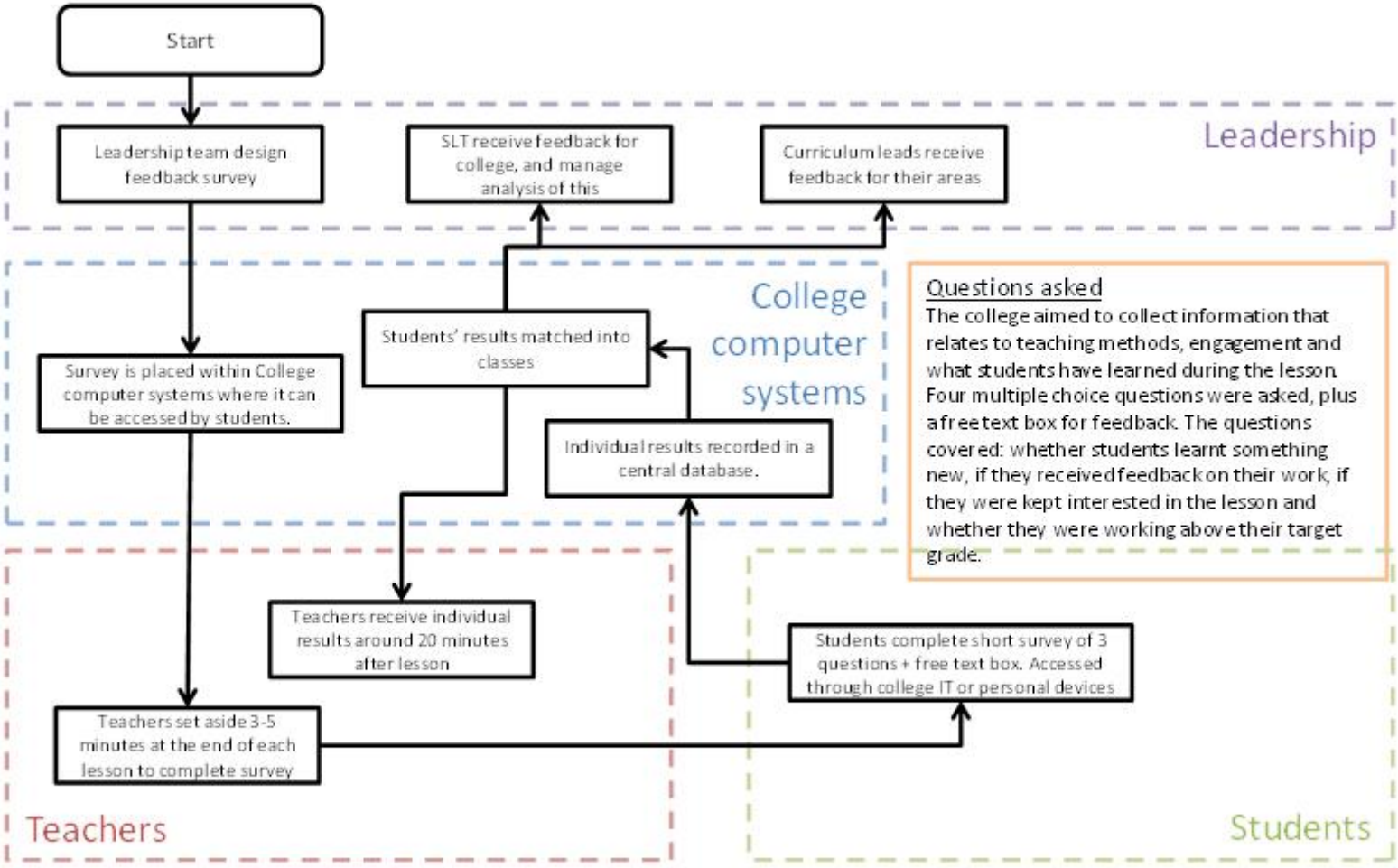
Questions asked

The student survey consisted of five questions and some free text boxes . The focus was on enjoyment of lesson, whether they felt stretched, and what they learnt.

Model 4 (Brockenhurst College)



Model 5 (Burnley College)



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at: Konstantina.DIMOU@education.gsi.gov.uk or www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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