

Student Participation in Quality Assurance Activities: Experience from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

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Abstract

Student engagement in quality assurance (QA) is vital for the success of any educational programme. Student feedback plays a crucial role in this. To gather feedback from students, the Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS) at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka utilizes surveys such as student satisfaction, module evaluation, student evaluation of teachers and tracer studies. In this article experience of FMS on implementation of Student Satisfaction Surveys (SSS) to foster student engagement in QA is described using findings from six SSS conducted across the three phases of the MBBS programme. The survey questionnaire is designed as a Google form with a 5-point Likert scale covering aspects related to teaching and learning as well as facilities provided. This survey is conducted at the end of each academic phase within the MBBS programme. Findings are analysed and the remedial measures are discussed and implemented to enhance the learning experience. Mean scores were compared using independent sample t test to see the change in satisfaction. Level of significance was considered as $p < 0.05$. Mean scores in learning and teaching activities in Phase I, II and III has increased to 3.89, 3.82, and 3.96 from 3.84, 3.50 and 3.90 respectively. In addition, the mean satisfactory score on facilities provided demonstrated an increase from 3.50 to 3.77 in Phase II and from 3.54 to 3.60 in Phase III. Significant increase in satisfaction was observed in Phase II for both learning and teaching activities ($p=0.002$) and facilities provided ($p=0.001$). These findings reveal variations in satisfaction levels concerning learning and teaching activities and the facilities provided across the three academic phases. There has been an increase in overall satisfaction, during the year 2022-2023 compared to the previous year 2021-2022.

Keywords: *Medical Education, Quality Assurance, Student Feedback, Student Participation, Student Satisfaction Survey*

Introduction

Ensuring active student involvement is an important aspect on quality assurance (QA) of a higher education institution (Coates, 2005). Student feedback is one of a crucial component in this regard. As a dedicated higher education institute to improve the learning experience of the medical undergraduates, the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura (FMS- USJ) has introduced several mechanisms to ensure student participation in QA. These mechanisms include student satisfaction surveys (SSS), module evaluations, student evaluation of teachers, tracer studies and ensuring participation of student representatives at committee meetings. By developing a conducive environment for active engagement between students and faculty members, the FMS is committed towards enhancing quality of the medical education. This article seeks to describe the mechanism in place for the SSS that was introduced in 2021 to ensure student participation in QA in the FMS- USJ.

Methodology

A mixed method research approach was used, which combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. An anonymous Google form on student satisfaction that is aligned with the requirements of the UGC programme review manual- 2015 was prepared (University Grants Commission, 2015). Students were instructed to rate their level of satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale where the number 1 is for least satisfied, and number 5 is for most satisfied. The questionnaire covers a broad area of satisfaction aspects related to Learning and Teaching (LT) such as use of Learning Management System (LMS), student assessments, personal tutor scheme, and opportunities for a range of LT activities including clinical learning experience. In addition, the questionnaire covers satisfaction on facilities provided. The survey was conducted under following areas through the questionnaire asking the satisfaction regarding the content, quality, duration, ease of use, reachability etc. which are specific to each areas.

1. Satisfaction on aspects of teaching and learning
 - a) Academic Support
 - b) Student assessments
 - c) Personal Tutor Scheme
 - d) Opportunities for following teaching learning methods/activities
2. Satisfaction with the facilities provided
 - a) Canteen facilities
 - b) Library facilities

- c) Hostel facilities
- d) Study areas
- e) Laboratory facilities
 - i. Laboratories for Para clinical subjects
 - ii. Skills lab for clinical subjects
- f) Dissection hall facilities
- g) Transport facilities
- h) Lecture hall facilities/ Tutorial room facilities
 - i. Examination hall facilities
 - ii. Lecture hall facilities
 - iii. Tutorial room facilities
- i) Welfare facilities
- j) Recreational facilities/ extracurricular activities
- k) Counseling facilities
- l) Mechanism to address student complaints/ grievance

The Google form survey link was shared with the all the students of the FMS through batch representatives. This was conducted at the end of each bar examination on 2nd year 4th year and final year. Two reminders were sent by the phase coordinators one week apart. The feedback was analysed by the IQAC. A comprehensive report was submitted to the phase coordinators to be shared with the respective committees to address the students' concerns. Relevant committees discussed the findings of the feedback and the remedial actions at their regular monthly meetings. Response to the feedback was sent through the feedback response template prepared by IQAC to the respective phase coordinator. At the phase committee, findings of the satisfaction survey and the recommendations were discussed. Finally, a summary report was submitted to the Faculty Board by the relevant phase coordinator. In addition, the mean satisfaction scores of the subsequent batches were used to make comparisons to evaluate the change in satisfaction following the interventions. Independent sample t test was used as the significant test with the level of significance taken as $p < 0.05$.

Results

Six SSS have been conducted as two per each phase (Phase I - 2021 & 2022, Phase II – 2021 & 2022, Phase III – 2022 & 2023). Main findings and actions based on the feedback are as follows:

Table 1 summarizes the results of the student satisfaction survey in three phases (Phase I, Phase II and Phase III) conducted during the 2021-2022 academic year. Phase I had the highest response rate of 97.47% while Phase II had the lowest (46.67%).

When it comes to satisfaction scores, Phase III received the highest rating for LT activities with a score of 3.90 whereas Phase I had the highest rating for the facilities provided with a score of 3.85. Phase II scored lowest in both LT activities (3.50) and the facilities provided (3.50).

Table 1: Summary of the Student Satisfaction Survey (2021-2022)

	Phase I (N=158)	Phase II (N= 150)	Phase III (N= 151)
No. of responses (Response rate%)	154 (97.47)	70 (46.67)	94 (62.25)
Response of female students (Response rate%)	101 (100.00)	46 (44.66)	70 (68.63)
Response of male students (Response rate%)	53 (92.98)	24 (51.06)	24 (48.98)
Satisfaction with LT activities (1-5 scale)	3.84	3.50	3.90
Satisfaction with facilities provided (1-5 scale)	3.85	3.50	3.54

Table 2: Summary of the Student Satisfaction Survey (2022-2023)

	Phase I (N= 188)	Phase II (N= 165)	Phase III (N= 147)
No. of responses (Response rate%)	122 (64.8)	85 (51.5)	93 (63.27)
Response of female students (Response rate%)	84 (68.0)	51 (60.0)	66(71.0)
Response of male students (Response rate%)	38 (32.0)	34 (40.0)	27(29.0)
Satisfaction with LT activities (1-5 scale)	3.89	3.82	3.96
Satisfaction with facilities provided (1-5 scale)	3.84	3.77	3.60

Table 2 summarizes the results of the student satisfaction survey for three phases (Phase I, Phase II and Phase III) in the academic years 2022-2023. The response rates differed in each phase with Phase III

having the highest rate (63.27%) followed by Phase I (64.8%) and Phase II (51.5%). When it comes to satisfaction scores, LT activities received the highest rating in Phase III (3.96) while facilities provided had the highest rating in Phase I (3.84).

Tables 3, 4 and 5 show the comparison of the mean satisfaction scores between two consecutive batches in each phase.

Phase I:

In the year 2021, there were 154 responses, and the response rate was 97.47%. In the following year 2022, 122 responses were collected, with a response rate of 64.8%. In 2021, the response rate of female students was 100.00%, while in 2022, it was 68.00%. For male students, the response rate was 92.98% in 2021 and 32.00% in 2022. The average satisfaction score for LT activities was 3.84 in 2021, whereas it increased to 3.89 in 2022. The satisfaction with facilities provided received an average rating of 3.85 in 2021 and 3.84 in 2022. Among the 29th batch and the 30th batch there was no significant difference in satisfaction with the LT activities as well as facilities provided (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison Between Two Consecutive Batches of Phase I

	29th Batch/2021 (N=158)	30th Batch/2022 (N= 188)	Test Statistics
No. of responses (Response rate%)	154 (97.47)	122 (64.8)	
Response of female students (Response rate%)	101 (100.00)	84 (68.0)	
Response of male students (Response rate%)	53 (92.98)	38 (32.0)	
Satisfaction with LT activities (1-5 scale)	3.84	3.89	t 1.11 p 0.26 df 274
Satisfaction with facilities provided (1-5 scale)	3.85	3.84	t -0.234 p 0.81 df 274

Phase II:

In 2021, there were 70 responses, and the response rate was 46.67%. In 2022, 85 responses were collected, through a response rate of 51.50%. The response rate for female students was 44.66% in 2021, while in 2022 it increased to 60.00%. For male students, the response rate was 51.06% in 2021 and 40.00% in 2022. The average satisfaction rating for LT activities was 3.50 in 2021 and improved to 3.82 in 2022. The satisfaction with facilities provided received an average rating of 3.50 in 2021, and it

increased to 3.77 in 2022. Both the t-test resulted in significant p values (0.0015 and 0.0013, respectively), representing a significant difference in mean scores between the two batches (Table 4).

Table 4: Comparison Between Two Consecutive Batches of Phase II

	26th /Batch 2021 (N= 150)	27th/Batch 2022 (N= 165)	Test Statistics
No. of responses (Response rate%)	70 (46.67)	85 (51.5)	
Response of female students (Response rate%)	46 (44.66)	51 (60.0)	
Response of male students (Response rate%)	24 (51.06)	34 (40.0)	
Satisfaction with LT activities (1-5 scale)	3.50	3.82	t 6.374 p 0.0015 df 153
Satisfaction with facilities provided (1- 5 scale)	3.50	3.77	t 3.926 p 0.0013 df 153

Phase III:

Table 5: Comparison Between Two Consecutive Batches of Phase III

	25th/Batch 2022 (N= 151)	26th /Batch 2023 (N= 147)	Test Statistics
No. of responses (Response rate%)	95 (62.91)	93 (63.27)	
Response of female students (Response rate%)	70 (68.63)	66(71.0)	
Response of male students (Response rate%)	24 (48.98)	27(29.0)	
Satisfaction with LT activities (1-5 scale)	3.90	3.96	t 1.192 p 0.23 df 186
Satisfaction with facilities provided (1- 5 scale)	3.54	3.60	t 0.905 p 0.36 df 186

In 2022, there were 95 responses, and the response rate was 62.91%. In 2023, 93 responses were collected, with a response rate of 63.27%. The response rate for female students was 68.63% in 2022 and it was 71.00% 2023. The average response rate of male was 48.98 in 2022 whereas 29% in 2023. The average satisfaction rating for teaching and learning activities was 3.90 in 2021-2022 and increased to 3.96 in 2023.

The satisfaction with facilities provided received an average rating of 3.54 in 2022 and improved to 3.60 in 2023. The t-tests and p-values suggest no significant difference between the batches regarding the satisfactions (Table 5).

When comparing the two years, the response rates for Phase I and II in 2022/2023 has decreased compared to the previous academic year. However, Phase III's response rate remained same in both years. Additionally, there were variations in the average satisfaction ratings for both teaching and learning activities and facilities provided across the different phases. However, comparing the two academic years, there is an overall increase in the average satisfaction with teaching and learning activities and facilities provided in 2022-2023 academic year than in 2021-2022 academic year (Figure 1).

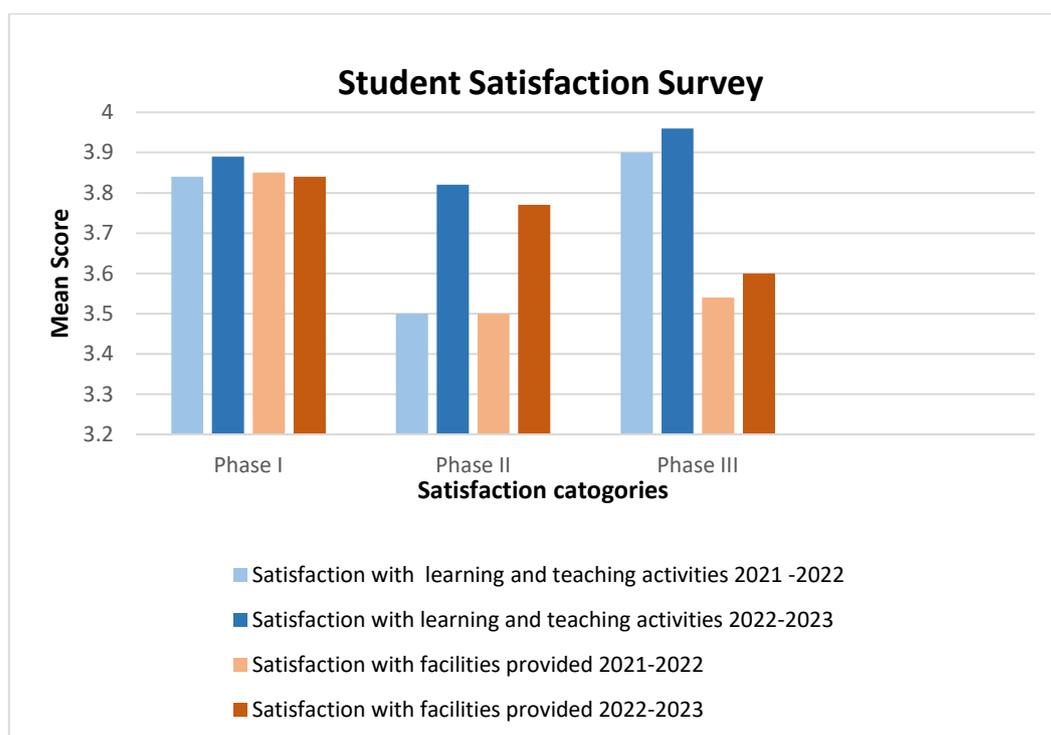


Figure 1: Satisfaction Survey Mean Score.

Based on the SSS findings and the comments made by students, following changes were made:

- Academic Support: More past paper discussions were initiated in tutorials. Transparency in marking procedures was improved by discussing answers of MCQs during teaching.
- Student Assessments: The number of continuous assessments were reduced to relieve stress of the students as suggested. Continuous assessment papers, including MCQs, are currently discussed after exams for better learning.

- Orientation Programme: The Orientation term duration was reduced to two terms in the proposed new curriculum. A glossary was made available in the language lab and language lab activities were conducted during pre-orientation since a special suggestion was made on terminology.
- Learning Management System (LMS): Efforts were made to make it more user-friendly and secure, and all academics were requested to upload the lecture to the LMS.
- Dissection Hall: Actions were taken to improve ventilation, fix broken windows, provide more chairs, and rectify issues with whiteboards and marker pens.
- Release of results: To respect student confidentiality a system was established for students to access their results individually.
 - To conduct MCQ discussions during the professorial appointments.
 - To conduct a mid-appointment mock exam with 1-2 short cases, and provide individual feedback to each student.
 - Post exam (end appointment OSCE) discussion to be conducted by an academic member of the department.
- Regular Phase III Meetings: Phase III academic members will have meetings every two months, inviting student representatives from each appointment.

Discussion

Engaging students as important, equal and responsible players in the education process evidently impacts on their learning and motivation, increases their sense of belonging as well as builds trust and confidence in the university-student partnership (Isaeva et al., 2020). Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS) at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura has implemented a number of mechanisms to ensure active student involvement in quality assurance (QA). The student satisfaction surveys provide the FMS with valuable feedback on the overall quality of the MBBS programme. Therefore the changes mentioned under the results which were made according to the feedbacks received from phase I, II and III, shows how dedicated the faculty is to improving the quality of medical education along with student satisfaction. The FMS is committed to using the feedback from these mechanisms to improve the quality of the MBBS programme. By ensuring active student involvement in QA, the FMS is able to create a more student-centered learning environment and to ensure that the MBBS programme meets the needs of its students.

Conclusion

The FMS has made significant progress in ensuring active student involvement in QA. The mechanisms that have been implemented have provided the faculty with valuable feedback on the MBBS programme, and the faculty is committed to use this feedback to improve the quality of the programme. This standardized and transparent process was intended to uplift teaching quality and establish an optimal learning environment for students. It is recommended to maintain the practice of conducting Student Satisfaction Surveys (SSS) regularly to ensure on going feedback. Importance should be placed on transparency in marking procedures and timely feedback on continuous assessments. Continuously keeping the user-friendliness and security of the Learning Management System (LMS) can facilitate effective communication. Addressing facility-related concerns, such as ventilation and equipment, is crucial to provide an optimal learning environment. Academic support initiatives like past paper discussions should be sustained, along with meetings involving student representatives to enhance communication. Upholding post-exam discussions, particularly led by academic department members, can be valuable. To respect student confidentiality, maintaining a system for individual result access is essential. Finally, encouraging other higher education institutions to adopt similar student satisfaction survey mechanisms can contribute to program improvement and heightened student engagement.

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