

### **Numerical targets for student module evaluations**

I suggest as item for the agenda to push back against the questionable practice of using numerical targets for student module evaluations as main or only means of assessing the module leader on teaching for promotion and performance evaluation. It could take the form of an open letter similar to the one for in-person teaching during Covid, or it could be brought up in discussions between UEB and senior management.

Some of the reasons why this is bad practice:

1. **Discrimination:** There is a large literature on bias against teachers who are diverse from the student body, both related to legally protected and unprotected characteristics
2. **Victimization:** Everybody who has spent some time teaching knows that there are more popular and less popular modules. Sometimes you have to grind through the hard stuff to get to the fun stuff. By assigning less popular modules, managers can victimize staff while claiming to empower students.
3. **Randomness:** The low participation rate for electronic module evaluations makes the results statistically not significant, staff are rated on random fluctuations.
4. **Blame game:** The Welsh government sets targets for NSS results. Instead of addressing shortcomings at an institutional level, managers pass the blame on to individual academics by imposing similar numerical targets on each single module leader. This passing down of blame is unfortunately a bad practice all too often used in this university.
5. **Not comparable:** Percentages answering “agree” or “completely agree” are not comparable between student cohort, let alone between schools. They correlate with general student happiness in a module which is influenced by many factors out of control of the module leader, like the pandemic.
6. **Race to the bottom:** Using what are essentially customer satisfaction questionnaires encourages more and more over-teaching, leaving those who cannot work more than the contracted hours behind
7. **Value teaching like research:** The university has signed the DORA convention, pledging to assess research by its contents, not by bibliometric scores. Teaching deserves the same.

This does not mean that teaching is not important, that teaching cannot be assessed or that student opinion does not count. Quite to the contrary, we need a meaningful conversation with the students on how we can improve our provision, taking a holistic view across modules.