Using Unitu as a Staff member at UCL

Introduction

[Unitu](#) is an award winning Student Voice platform that is being used in a growing number of Universities across the UK.

Built around the student representation system, Unitu, an online platform, helps universities and student unions to collect and analyse student feedback, to enable faster improvements to the student experience. It's a space where students, year representatives and staff can collectively raise, discuss and resolve both academic and more general experience issues.

Unitu will be available in more departments across UCL in September 2020 and beyond. The service helps students give feedback and raise questions, which staff and Student Reps respond to.

This document is a guide for staff on the most frequently asked questions. We hope it will help you better understand what Unitu is, how it works and how your department can implement it at UCL.

Contents of Staff guidance document

Why is UCL using Unitu?

Unitu supports the UCL and Students' Union UCL ambition for students to be active partners in their education. The platform supports staff-student partnership in the following ways:

- Responsiveness – Some Student Reps previously felt it would be better to hold on to feedback on the academic experience until the next Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) meeting, where they could discuss the feedback with staff. With Unitu, students and Reps can receive more timely responses from staff and make positive changes more swiftly.

- Transparency – Students who have made a post on Unitu can see who is considering their feedback (Student Rep or staff member), and how many times their fellow students have up-voted their post. Responses from Reps or staff will be visible to other students, so there is less duplication of feedback.

- Anonymity – Some students previously felt nervous about asking questions or raising issues via their university email account. On Unitu, students have the option to post anonymously. Along with a built-in [sentiment checker](#) on Unitu, a [three-strike policy](#) is in place to deter inappropriate / offensive posts.

- Flexibility – With much of the university's teaching in 2020-21 likely to be conducted remotely, and some students remaining overseas for part of their studies, it is important to have feedback mechanisms that don't rely on attendance in-person. Students can access Unitu at any time, and give their feedback without having to attend a "live" meeting.

How does Unitu work?

You can find a full introduction to Unitu on the [Staff Training web pages](#).

In brief, on the Unitu platform:

1. Students share prompted or spontaneous feedback on their experiences by making a post on their Unitu board. This feedback can be a Praise / Issue / Question / Idea. The content of the post is not visible to staff at this stage.

2. Student Reps review the feedback posts and respond where appropriate.

3. Reps can choose to share the feedback with staff in the department, by moving it to the next level 'Opened'. Here staff can see the content of the feedback and can provide a response, such as explaining how a change will be made in response to the feedback.

4. Staff can then move the feedback to the next level 'In Progress' or the final level 'Closed' dependent on their response.

5. Notable changes and improvements in the department / programme are then recorded in the 'Together We Changed' section of the Unitu board.

You can find a comprehensive introduction to how Unitu works on the Staff Training section of the Unitu website.

What is a feedback board?

A feedback board is a central space for where students, Reps and staff interact with feedback that is raised by students. You can find a full introduction to the [feedback board here](#).

In brief, the feedback board works in a few ways:

- The feedback board is split into two sections, Private and Public.

  - Private is where students and Reps (if they have access) within a specific feedback board are able to raise, discuss, resolve or escalate feedback to the Public area. Staff do not have access to the Private area of the feedback board, however they can see how many feedback posts have been created, what programme it relates to and the year of study of the author of the post. Once a post has received enough votes and cannot be dealt with by Reps and students, the elected representatives can escalate the feedback to the Public area.

  - Public area is where staff members are able to open feedback, review, comment and update students through commenting in the discussion thread or by moving into one of two columns; "In progress" or "Closed".

How do I login to my Unitu account?

Once your account is created you will receive an email notification from Unitu that provides the login instructions.

As single sign-on is enabled, you can access Unitu using your usual UCL credentials.

The URL to visit to log in to your account is: ucl.unitu.co.uk

Which comments do I see?

Staff can see posts and comments that have been moved to the Public section by students Reps in their particular board. From there, staff will be able to update students on the progress of the feedback by commenting and or leaving an update on the post, moving the post to 'in progress' or by closing the post and leaving a resolution message.

How will my response get back to students in the school?

By commenting or providing updates on the feedback post, students who have chosen to receive notifications on posts they have engaged with, will receive either an email or a push notification to inform them you have responded.

Below is a typical flow of how board administrators on feedback boards engage with student feedback. Once a feedback is made Public by a a Rep to act upon, board admin will:
1. Provide an acknowledgement comment to the student
2. They will then either:
    a. Take the feedback off Unitu to appropriate staff for an update and then come back to students with the update from that particular staff member.
    b. Assign it to the relevant staff member on their feedback board. The staff member assigned to that feedback will then be able to provide the students with the appropriate response to their feedback.
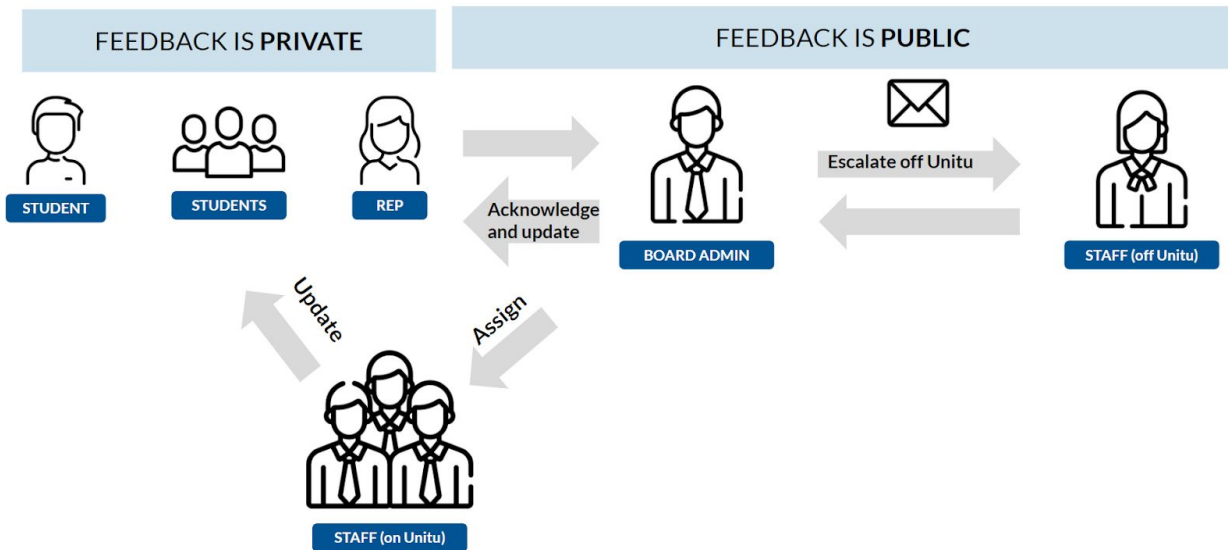
How does Unitu differ from social media platforms?

- Unitu is a closed environment where **only** selected students and staff in the department or university can view and engage with feedback posts. Their accounts are created in advance and therefore only students and staff from specific courses and departments have access to Unitu.

- Unitu brings students, staff and Reps into a transparent environment to deal with student experience related issues and feedback. In comparison social media is purposefully built for social engagement.

- Unitu is managed by the University and departmental staff. Students are incentivised to post feedback on Unitu rather than other social media platforms as university and department staff can be made aware of student concerns and respond in a timely manner.

- Unitu is a student experience first organisation. All iterations and future developments are focused on enhancing the communication between students, staff and Reps with the primary goal of improving the student experience.

- We have stricter and uniquely designed moderation processes and controls that are designed to ensure a more professional and constructive academic community. You can read about our 3 strike policy and sentiment checker processes on the staff training web page.

How much time will I need to commit?

It varies from university to university, department to department.

We have found that an an average feedback board of:

- 900 students

- 200 student posts

- 120 of those posts escalated to staff to act upon

Typically has around 200 staff comments across an entire academic year and predominantly responses from 1-2 key staff members.

After interviewing numerous staff on these boards, they shared that their typical workflow is:

- To block out **1-3 hours per week** to update all student feedback posts with comments and status updates.

- Aim to respond within the expected response time.

- View feedback when receiving a notification that has been assigned to them or has been escalated by a representative.

We've found on feedback boards with the highest student engagement and satisfaction staff tend to:

- Provide an initial response within 3.5 days of the feedback post being escalated into Public

- Resolve and close feedback within 10 days

How do I Report inappropriate language or misuse?

On Unitu, we have a strict moderation process:

- The moderators are student Reps, staff members and Unitu Reps.

- Any user can Report a feedback post or comment.

- Once it's Reported an email will go out to the moderators on that specific board:
  - Content Reported in the Private area: if the post or comment that is Reported is on the Private area, then only Reps and Unitu staff will be notified and will be able to view and moderate the content.

  - Content Reported in the Public area: if the post or comment that is Reported is on the Public area, then Reps, staff and Unitu staff will be notified and will be able to view and moderate the content.

- If as a staff member, you receive an email about a moderated content:
  - You can click on the link to the Reported content and you will be ask to perform one of three actions:
    - Remove the content with no strike for author

    - Remove the content with strike for author

    - Do not remove this content

  - Whichever decision you make you will be asked to give a reason for it.

  - If it's one of the first two, the content will be removed and the author of the content will receive a notification explaining that the moderation team have removed the content and the explanation why.

○ In addition, staff have the ability to directly remove content from the feedback board if it is deemed inappropriate.

○ For more details on the content policy, included our 3 Strike Policy, please visit https://unitu.co.uk/content-policy/

You can find further information and a video walkthrough of our moderation process here.

Will staff training be provided?

- Yes, staff training will be provided. The dates and timings of your University's staff training will be sent out through the appropriate channels.

- The staff training are live webinars that lasts approximately 1 hour and 30 mins. Unitu can provide more than one training session if necessary.

- In addition, we have a short online staff training course that will allow staff to go through the training at any time.

Will Reps & students training be provided?

- All Reps are advised to enrol on the online training for elected Reps that have access to Unitu.

- In addition we have created a student Rep guide to support student Reps in their role.

- There is guidance available for students that will be delivered via email from staff and through University induction. In addition, when students log into the app, there are video tutorials on how best to use the app.

What Reports are available?

- Unitu will provide your implementation managers (see details below) with monthly and end of year Reports. Your implementation managers will disseminate the Reports with all staff members using Unitu. These Reports will cover:

  - Engagement: how students, Reps and staff are engaging with Unitu (e.g. activation, post interactions and response times)

  - Insights: What themes and patterns are occurring from the student feedback per department and across the university.

- Staff can also check engagement at any time via the "User engagement" option in the left menu.

Which students will have access to my board & see my comments?

- Only students that have been assigned to a department/school board will be able to access the board and view posts/comments.

- This will be decided by your implementation manager. Typically the students who will have access to your board will be based on your department/school structure.

What response time is expected from me to Reply to students ?

The Expected Response Time is a feature on Unitu that applies to students Reps and staff. To learn more about the Expected Response Time feature you can watch a [video here](#).

The purpose is to align clear expectations on what a reasonable time students can expect responses to their feedback by their Reps and staff.

Board admins on Unitu are able to update and select the appropriate amount of time a student can expect to wait to have a response on their feedback.

Usually Universities have the Rep expected response time between 3 and 10 days and for staff between 5 and 14 days.

Benefits for my school from the system

- Real time feedback: Rather than having to wait for SSCC meetings or responses to surveys, Unitu will help you collect and analyse student feedback in real time, delivering faster improvements to the student experience.

- Amplify student voice: Unitu will help you empower your students by letting them engage with an accessible app and website to voice their feedback anonymously.

- Better Rep engagement: Unitu provides the tools to student Reps to do their job more effectively. In addition, Reps have felt Unitu has increased their visibility to their fellow students. As a result, you will have more Reps engaged over the entire academic year.

- Discover and solve issues faster: Unitu will help you find out and resolve issues faster before they escalate to a wider issue.

- Stronger Community: By bringing students, Reps and staff from your department under one transparent board, it will help increase your sense of trust and therefore build a stronger sense of community.

- Improvement in student survey scores: By providing students with a student voice platform that is easy for them to see how staff value and act on their feedback, Unitu has consistently helped institutions improve their NSS results, specifically around student voice and community.

Further information

For technical queries on Unitu, please contact support@unitu.co.uk.

For queries on using Unitu as a Staff Member at UCL, please contact Yusuf Ozkizil (OVPESA) y.ozkizil@ucl.ac.uk.