Background

Student Voices is concerned with the social side of student culture and what effect this has on medical students in particular.

‘Hidden Marks’ [1], ‘That’s what she said’ [2] and the most recent NUS Lad Culture Audit 2015 [3] have focused on the issues ‘lad’ culture. However, we perceive this term as alienating and we see ‘laddish’ behaviour expressed across all genders. For this reason we use the term ‘student culture’.

We define student culture as ‘a collection of shared experiences, ideas, behaviours and attitudes resulting from young people being in close proximity’.

Student culture has many positive aspects such as promoting friendships, breaks from the stresses of academic life and the chance of broadening one’s horizons whilst making valuable connections. However, pressures to conform to social norms including heavy alcohol consumption, ‘banter’ and students feeling intimidated have been highlighted as problems. Many students feel that they cannot be included if they do not drink alcohol; whether this is for personal, religious or cultural reasons.

The Student Support Unit, at Leicester Medical School have seen an increase in student self-referrals around the impact of student culture.

We believe that by changing the perceptions of new students, we will positively impact on student welfare and happiness. It is to this effect that we have designed the ‘Student Voices’ workshop in order to signpost them to the correct welfare support we can positively address these issues before they may arise.

Aim

Explore student culture and its effects on students and possible impacts on professional identity.

Goals

• Enable students to explore student culture and what it means to them.
• Promote positive student culture & encourage empathy.
• Reflect upon the consequences of decisions, the implications for yourself and those around you.
• Begin to foster and promote professional attitudes amongst first year students.
• Empower students to be able to participate in areas of student culture that interest them
• Emphasise the importance of feeling happy in your own skin
• Signpost the Student Support Unit
• Promoting gender equality and diversity

Example Case Study

A group of students are on a bar crawl, they are moving onto their fourth bar. The group passes a woman on her own walking in the street. She does not respond. Instead puts her head down and fastens her pace.

One of the male students shouts at the woman, ‘Oi love, follow us for a good time!’

The woman does not respond. Instead puts her head down and fastens her pace.

The male student then shouts, ‘Silly slut, I wouldn’t f**k you anyway!!’

The group laugh and continue onto the next bar.

“I’ve seen a lot of groups of lads doing horrible things that I don’t think any of them would do by themselves.” [2], p.36

References


Student Voices Workshop Series Overview

• 45-60min student led workshops
• Student led to encourage engagement
• Small group discussions
  • Ideally groups of 6 to maximise participation
  • Groups split equally into male and female to ensure varied perspectives are expressed
• Brief introductory presentation
  • Aims and objectives
  • Ground rules – confidentiality etc.
• Ice Breaker Activity
  • Give case studies and get students to move to either side of the room with which response they agree with.
  (See example case study)
• Break up for group discussion of case studies
• End of session
  • Feedback
  • Student Lead Debrief

“I’s like you are expected to go out. If you don’t go out on fresher’s then nobody will speak to you ever again.” [2], p.43

Student Voices – ‘in chorus’

Leicester Medical School plans to run a pilot workshop scheme following this structure. Feedback from these sessions will guide how we move forward.

We see a lot of potential for the expansion of ‘Student Voices’ to other departments across Leicester University and beyond.

There is an opportunity to collect qualitative research around the impact of student culture on the experiences of people studying at university.

Our proposed Student Voices Workshops hope to open up discussion about issues surrounding student culture in an informal environment. This is a student-led project, with student welfare as its main focus.