Using Student Data in Higher Education: NTU's commitment to you

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Introduction

At every stage of the learning process, from admissions to graduation, Nottingham Trent University generates, stores and uses data about students. The University simply could not operate without systems such as student records, timetabling and NOW. This document outlines how the University is using this data in a new way: *learning analytics*.

Learning analytics is the *"measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, for purposes of understanding and optimising learning and the environments in which it occurs."* (Siemens, 2011). NTU is one of the leaders in this field in the UK, but this technology is increasingly being used throughout higher education to support students.

Why is the University doing it and what are the benefits to me?

Nottingham Trent University has a responsibility to you, to maximise your opportunities to succeed in your course. Using learning analytics is a further tool to help us achieve this goal. Learning analytics can help you in two ways:

Firstly, it provides data to help you consider how you are engaging with your course. You will be able to see how much you are studying compared to the peers on your course. Students with higher engagement tend to achieve better grades than those with lower engagement.

Secondly, learning analytics provides the University with data that can be used to help students who may be at risk of falling behind. This can be particularly useful in conversations between students and tutors and may be useful for referring students to services such the study skills available in the Library. The data will only ever be used positively to aid you in your studies (see learning analytics principles below).

What data does the University collect?

The University collects two types of data. Firstly, details about your background are normally collected during your application process. It is used primarily to check how well we are doing against various institutional and national targets, for example reporting to agencies such as the Office For Fair Access (soon to be replaced by the Office For Students). We do not use this data for the purposes of learning analytics.

We also collect data about your engagement with your course. This data includes information such as library use, attendance or grades achieved. The University is increasingly using this data to develop learning analytics.

This information gathered will be displayed to you on the **NTU Student Dashboard.** Here you can compare how well you are engaging with your studies compared with the average on your course and can see a range of other details such as your attendance or the number of times you've visited NOW recently.

What about my privacy and who actually has access to the data?

Your privacy is a top priority. The information collected is only available to restricted members of staff within the University. This includes your tutor, course leader, course administrator and a limited number of professional services staff, for example Student Support Services. NTU ensures that it adheres to all relevant data legislation requirements and has high expectations of staff described in the computer use regulations.

Is it my choice if I want my data to be collected?

At the moment, one of the conditions of joining the University is that you consent for your data to be used by the institution. This is because without consenting to share your data the University would simply not be able to provide an education to you. Therefore, it is not possible to opt out of sharing your data. The enrolment conditions state that the University *'shall hold use and process personal data or information about you. The purposes for which the University may process information about you (including your personal data) are set out in the **Student Data Protection Notice*** (available in the enrolment conditions)'. We will only use the data in the Dashboard to enhance the student learning experience.

Our Learning Analytics Principles
The NTU Quality Handbook describes how the University will use learning analytics (Section 14, part 8) in some further detail.
Our goals are to:
- Improve student retention, engagement and the working relationship between tutors and students
- Enhance University support networks
- Provide useful data for research to improve the student learning experience

How do I know if my data will be used appropriately in academic research?

NTU has a strong code of research ethics. This means that all researchers are required to handle student data appropriately against strict criteria including ensuring that all data remains anonymous.

I have more questions, who can I ask?

If you have any more questions, please contact
SDfeedback@ntu.ac.uk