

**Focus Groups**

**Library & Learning Support Services**

**University of Surrey**

***About the organization***

**Organisation:** University of Surrey

**Department:** Library & Learning Support Services
**Size:**  92 employees
**Industry Sector:** Higher Education

University of Surrey is a campus university offering a wide range of research and study programmes for approx. 13,500 students.

Library and Learning Support Services (LLS) is accommodated within a single building at the centre of campus. Along with core academic library services it also incorporates Learning and Research Support and Development, Additional Learning Support for disabled and dyslexic students and the National Resource Centre for Dance.

***Focus Groups at the University of Surrey***

Focus groups at University of Surrey are run by the Students Union to provide a way of seeking student feedback in a controlled environment. A Student Union staff member organises and facilitates the meetings and will select students based on requirements (eg all categories of student or UG or PG only). They will base the meetings on a set of questions and lines for discussion provided by the customer but students are not told of the subject under discussion in advance. Students are paid £5 for their participation (one hour). Customer pays £5 per student if they share the results of the focus group with the Students Union or £10 if they don’t wish to share the results.

Two one hour sessions are run for each topic with approx. 8-10 students at each session. Therefore, if results are shared with the Students Union a focus group will cost approx. £80-£100. Customer is encouraged to attend the session to listen to the discussion. Outputs are provided in audio format with a written report (but not a transcript) also provided if requested.

***Use of Focus Groups***

Focus groups have been used by the Library & Learning Support Services to provide student feedback on the following:

* Review of the new Learning Centre building
* Use of mobile devices by students
* Joint review with IT Services of where and how students access support for IT issues

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| **Strengths*** Ability to focus on a specific topic
* Relatively cheap
* Authentic student voice
* Students able to focus on areas of concern to them
 | **Weaknesses*** Unable to steer discussion – can lose focus and go off on a tangent
* Need strong facilitation or can be dominated by one individual
* Audio feedback not easy to reuse without a transcript which adds more expense
* Can’t always be done at short notice – needs to fit in with SU schedule
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