Harnessing the power of student and parent opinion

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Welcome

Workshop content

- About OSFC and i-graduate
- How the research came about and how we worked together
- Research programme and selection of findings
- OSFC actions following on from the research
- Next steps in the programme
Oldham Sixth Form College

- Oldham Sixth Form College was established in 1992 with a clear focus on improving the outcomes of young people in Oldham.
- The College is located in Oldham town centre, which brings both advantages and disadvantages!
- Outcomes and progress are consistently above the national average.
- Originally built for 800 students, the cohort is now approaching three times this size.
- We are currently graded as ‘Good’ by Ofsted, the College has been graded as ‘Outstanding’ in the previous two inspections.
- The College caters for a very broad range of students in terms of social and cultural diversity as well as ability and prides itself on being inclusive.
- Like all Colleges, we are aware of the increase in competition from other providers. In our area this is healthy and good natured but has for us it has placed a stronger emphasis on how we market ourselves.
- We have subsequently become very interested in how we are perceived.
Background to the OSFC/i-graduate survey

In early 2015, the OSFC Governing Body and SLT therefore decided that external research was required to:

• Assess the college’s competitive position
• Help understand perceptions, strengths and weaknesses identified by the different groups with whom the college interacts,
• Build insights for the future that will help inform the college’s, admissions, enrolment and marketing strategy

Our relationship with i-graduate grew from a recommendations from a mutual contact at the University of Manchester - and a joint initiative between OSFC and i-graduate began to develop a programme of research to achieve these aims

We worked together for about 6 months, mainly by email & phone contact, agreeing method, developing questionnaires, conducting the surveys and finalising results
Introducing i-graduate

- i-graduate – specialist education market research company, with strong presence in higher education, established in the UK in 2005, now part of the Tribal Group
- We work with many of the world’s top universities in the UK and overseas, providing an established benchmark on the student experience
- In the UK we work closely with the University of Oxford, delivering key feedback across their various colleges – and many other UK institutions
- We also work with government departments & organisations, education boards and curricular organisations
- Building on our strengths in the university sector, i-graduate has expanded its services for schools and Sixth Form Colleges
Participating institutions spread across 32 worldwide include:

Participating governments and consortia include:
i-graduate service range: understanding the entire student journey

Implemented in UK and Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Dubai, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, USA, Vietnam.
Our work with schools

i-graduate began working with schools 2009 and we have gradually established our presence in the schools and Sixth Form Colleges sector in the UK and internationally.

Survey approaches are online, telephone and paper based.

Projects examples:

- Student Destinations research the UK and six other countries
- Research into the student experience amongst international pupils
- Annual parent satisfaction studies - ParentPulse
- Strategic research into competitive school positioning and brand recognition
- Development research on the market potential of specific curricular developments
The OSFC Research Programme
Stakeholder groups

**Priority 1**

**College stakeholders:**
- Parents of current students
- Current students
- Parents of prospective students
- Prospective students
- Alumni

**Priority 2**

**Community stakeholders**
- Senior leaders in partner secondary schools
- Key individuals from the Local Authority
- Key individuals from employer groups
- Local businesses based close to College

Research Programme focus
## Sample sizes achieved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Description</th>
<th>Base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Parents of OSFC students</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current OSFC Students</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospective Parents – attended open mornings</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospective Students – who registered with the college and/or attended open mornings</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni – from OSFC alumni database</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey process

- OSFC sent out emails (and subsequent reminders) to respondents in the different sample groups
- Each email contained web link to appropriate survey hosted on i-graduate’s secure web platform
- Recipients then complete questionnaire by clicking on answers or writing in comments
- Questionnaire submitted online; i-graduate collates and cleans data, produces analysis
- i-graduate delivers tables, charting and/or reporting

Straightforward, light touch survey administration!
Online approach used for OSFC – advantages

- Fast and cost-effective
- Survey can be completed to respondent’s own timetable (important for parents and alumni in particular)
- Secure and anonymous
- Easy to administer and personalise
- Simple to send reminders
- Can be programmed to route respondent according to their answers, allows questions to be tailored.
- Open questions provide more detailed, qualitative feedback
Points for future online surveying at OSFC

- Build database so reaching prospective sample groups outside the OSFC community more effective
  - Take contact details of prospective students and parents visiting school/attending open events, get permission for future communication
  - Work with partner feeder schools to reach ‘prospectives’ by another route

- Alumni – good response to survey
  - Important to keep track of changing alumni email addresses as time goes by

- Engage periodically with database contacts to keep connection & enhance response rates
Selection of OSFC Results
Influencers on student choice – mainly the student

**PROSPECTIVE PARENTS**
Who will be involved in the decision to choose which sixth form college your son/daughter will attend?

- My son/daughter: 90%
- Me: 43%
- My husband/wife/partner: 31%
- Other: 6%

**PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS**
Who will be involved in the decision to choose which sixth form provider you will attend?

- Me: 92%
- My parents: 55%
- Other family members: 13%
- Teacher or other staff at current school: 2%
- Other: 1%
Q. Thinking back to when you applied to this Sixth Form College, why did you apply to this college?*

*showing top 5 factors

**Encouragement from others, particularly parents or guardian, teachers or family members = important stimuli; College publicity also plays a role**

- My parent/guardian encouraged me to apply: 33%
- Through the College's publicity: 28%
- My previous teacher/school encouraged me to apply: 26%
- Another family member encouraged me to apply: 21%
- A friend encouraged me to apply: 20%
- A careers advisor encouraged me to apply: 11%
Sources of information – Current Students

Visit to the College/Open morning, printed prospectus and opinions of past & current students = top 5 sources of information. NB low % social media

- A visit to the College: 42%
- Attending an Open Morning at the College: 42%
- The printed Prospectus/guide from the College: 37%
- Previous students from the College: 32%
- Current students at this College: 26%
- Meeting staff from the College: 16%
- The website of this College: 14%
- Social networking, e.g. Facebook, Twitter: 3%
- Another printed document/guide: 2%
- A sponsor, e.g. employer: 1%
- A newspaper advert: 1%
- Another website: 1%

Q. Which of these helped you to select this College?
### Sources of information – Prospective Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Information</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opinions/advice of students already attending...</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending an Open Morning/Evening</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A visit to the school/college</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions/advice of parents &amp; other family members</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions/advice from staff at my current school</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed prospectus/guide from the school/college</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions of students at my current school</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking, e.g. Facebook, Twitter</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another printed document/guide</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A newspaper advert or article</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An advertising poster</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. How important are each of the following to you as sources of information when choosing where to study at sixth form?*
## Attending the Open Morning

Open mornings are well attended by parents & students – most popular with students as main decision makers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS (73)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, attended</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT STUDENTS (436)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, attended</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROSPECTIVE PARENTS (45)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, attended</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT PARENTS (455)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, attended</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key selection criteria – Current students & parents

**Academic factors: teaching & reputation, opportunity to progress to university & choice of courses = key criteria**

- Quality of teaching and learning: 67% (84%) – Current Students; 62% (71%) – Current Parents
- The opportunity to progress to university: 46% (69%) – Current Students; 46% (69%) – Current Parents
- Academic reputation of this College: 46% (69%) – Current Students; 46% (69%) – Current Parents
- Choice of courses: 43% (61%) – Current Students; 43% (61%) – Current Parents
- Quality of support: 39% (52%) – Current Students; 39% (52%) – Current Parents
- Friendly atmosphere at the College: 31% (43%) – Current Students; 31% (43%) – Current Parents
- The Learning Resource Centre and learning support: 31% (43%) – Current Students; 31% (43%) – Current Parents
- Ease of access to the College: 32% (42%) – Current Students; 32% (42%) – Current Parents
- Quality of careers guidance: 28% (39%) – Current Students; 28% (39%) – Current Parents
- Opportunities for work experience: 23% (39%) – Current Students; 23% (39%) – Current Parents
- The sports facilities and opportunities for sport: 18% (23%) – Current Students; 18% (23%) – Current Parents
- Range of trips offered and extra-curricular activities: 12% (18%) – Current Students; 12% (18%) – Current Parents

**Key:***
- Current Students
- Current Parents

*percentage showing very important only

Q. How important were the following factors to you when selecting this college?*
### Key selection criteria – Prospective students & parents

#### For prospective students & parents teaching and opportunities to progress & choice of courses and academic reputation also key; plus range of criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Prospective Students</th>
<th>Prospective Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of teaching and learning</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to progress to university</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of courses</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly atmosphere</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic reputation of the institution</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of careers guidance</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning resources and learning support</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of support for students that require it</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for work experience</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of access from where we live</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment opportunities including sport</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of trips offered and extra-curricular activities</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. Please indicate how important each of the following is to you when choosing where to study at sixth form*

**Key:**
- **Prospective Students**
- **Prospective Parents**

*percentage showing very important only
Experience vs expectations

And how strongly would you agree or disagree that your expectations have been met on each of them from your experience so far?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice of courses</th>
<th>The opportunity to progress to university</th>
<th>Academic reputation of this College</th>
<th>Quality of teaching and learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Current Parents

*Current Students
Alumni connections with OSFC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you visit:</th>
<th>Every 6 months or more often</th>
<th>Once a year</th>
<th>Less than once a year</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSFC homepage (243)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSFC Facebook page (244)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSFC Twitter feed (244)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you still in touch with fellow former students from OSFC? (243)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How connected do you feel with OSFC? (243)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very connected</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconnected</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unconnected</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Good news - Alumni are interested in helping!

**Top 5 ways in which Alumni are interested in helping OSFC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote the College to prospective students</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join an online community/a social group to stay in touch with other alumni</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a career/personal profile for marketing purposes</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer as a student/alumni career mentor</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take part in fundraising activities for the College</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you be interested in helping Oldham Sixth Form College in any of the following ways?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information/news interested in receiving from OSFC</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information relating to your career e.g. job opps (90)</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News/information about alumni of the College (46)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General news about the college (33)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Recommendation levels

Strong levels of recommendation: 86% of current students and 84% of alumni recommend OSFC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likelihood to recommend OSFC to others</th>
<th>Current Students</th>
<th>Alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither/nor</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Actions taken & evaluation of process
Conclusions:

- The respondents were generally representative of the College population, although there were more response from females than males.
- There were many positive findings, such as high numbers saying that they would recommend the College and our alumni really valuing the positive experience and strong relationships they had with staff at the College.
- The biggest draws to the College tend to be: academic reputation, quality of teaching and learning, the potential for progression to HE and the friendly, supportive atmosphere.
- ‘Ease of access’ is an advantage for students considering attending the College.
- It was recognised across the surveys that the College has established high expectations of students.
- Parents feel well informed regarding their son or daughter’s progress.
- Visits to College, parents and alumni are key ‘opinion formers’ when students elect to study at College.
- Quite a high number of students and their parents feel anxious about studying at College.
Data in action – applying survey results at OSFC

**Actions:**

- To focus more on using social media to promote the College and communicate with important groups
- To review the College website, especially in terms of content and ease of access
- To improve attendance at the College’s Year 11 Open Days
- To look at the content and presentation of the College prospectus, which remains an important opinion former
- To focus marketing strategies around the themes identified as the most important when students decide where to study
- To use some of the quotes that were provided in the surveys in promotional materials and to display around the College to inspire current students
- To promote areas that deserve greater attention and credit, such as careers support, work experience, sports achievements, trips and visits
- To enhance and promote links with employers and HE providers, which are increasingly valued by students and their parents
Benefits of the programme

OSFC gained a **clear understanding** of the Sixth Form College or school’s **strengths and weaknesses** from the stakeholders’ perspectives

- Ensured that the normally silent satisfied majority could express their opinions, giving OSFC a **balanced view**

- Provided any dissatisfied minorities with **an opportunity to voice their frustration**, diluting their need to broadcast views via other channels

- When part of a sector-wide survey with other colleges undertaking same research, this would enable you to compare your college or school’s results with the **benchmarked** results at a regional or national (dependent on subscribers)

- Allows Sixth Form Colleges to **align marketing strategies** to students’ and parents’ needs and successfully manage the expectations of future students/parents

- Strengthens the relationship with the Alumni community
The value of the different surveys in programme

Each survey provided useful insights:

- For on-going management, the surveys of current students and parents were invaluable.

- For marketing and recruitment strategy, the survey of prospective students & parents gave important insights to guide future policies.

- Alumni survey pointed to the need to strengthen connections with OSFC and alumni desire to become more involved, helping the College.

- Importance attached by students to progression onto university as a reason for attending Sixth Form College, highlighted need for information on student intentions, which i-graduate are taking forward as the next survey in the series.
Next steps in the research programme
Introducing Student Compass 2016/17

**Scope:**
Investigating student intentions on their destination after Year 13: whether education, training or employment; specific options considering and if university, comparative attractiveness and attractiveness of specific universities.

**Relevance:**
Building relationships with universities, FE colleges and employers is an important part of helping your students move on and up in the world after Sixth Form College.

This study will provide reliable information on your students’ intended destinations and help you to demonstrate your College’s performance against the DfE headline measures on Progress & Destinations, benchmarked against the aggregate levels.

Open to all SFCA members, we are inviting you & your colleagues to join the Founders’ Group and develop this survey with i-graduate.
Student Compass – aims and applications

- Student Compass is designed to give an overview of your students’ intentions and aspirations, benchmarked alongside the results from other SFCs.
- Identifying the differences across the various groups of students, using WP indicators and other profiling measures.
- You will be able to illustrate the ambitions of your student body to prospective applicants and parents, to universities and other education providers, employers and the wider community – and the DfE & Ofsted.
- Develop an understanding of which are the most attractive institutions, career paths, potential employers for your student body.
- Inform your discussions with universities and employers, enable you to focus on the key relationships required to help your students realise their ambitions.
- Demonstrate to the College’s stakeholders how your Sixth Form College contributes as students take their next steps along their career path.

We hope you join the Founders’ Group to develop this initiative for the sector!
THANK YOU!

TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST IN FINDING OUT MORE ABOUT STUDENT COMPASS OR TO JOIN THE FOUNDERS’ GROUP, PLEASE EMAIL: info@i-graduate.org

Further questions please email Tasie.Axel-Berg@i-graduate.org or telephone 01737 77 22 50