

Annexes

A. Advice for Staff

Q1. Why is it important for staff to promote the NSS?

Around 37% of online respondents (that responded to the optional marketing question at the end of the online NSS) identified that they were told about the survey by a lecturer/member of staff.

Institutional staff are often best placed to communicate the benefits and importance of the survey. Their objectivity is crucial because of the way the results will be used by prospective students, institutions, SUs and other stakeholders. The following guidance should be issued to staff to help them understand the nature of the NSS, what eligible students will be asked and to ensure that they do not inappropriately influence students in completing the survey.

In summary, staff should be clear on:

- Who is eligible to complete the survey
- The importance of the NSS results
- What the NSS is, why it is important and how the survey is administered
- The guidelines relating to the promotion of the NSS
- The rules regarding [inappropriate influence](#)

Q2. Which students should I communicate with?

Staff should take care to ensure that they are only asking **eligible** students to complete the survey. They should work with the relevant departments within their institutions to clearly understand which of their students are on the NSS target list. They should understand the purpose of the NSS and clearly communicate to students that it is their opportunity to provide honest feedback.

Q3. Who is eligible to complete the NSS?

All students studying on courses leading to undergraduate credits or qualifications (such as Bachelor's Degrees, Foundation Degrees and Higher Education Diplomas) will be surveyed in their expected final year of study.

In addition:

- Students on more flexible part-time programmes (whose final year cannot be easily predicted) will normally be surveyed during their fourth year of study.
- Students who have withdrawn from study during their final year will be included in the survey as their feedback is equally valuable.
- Students repeating their penultimate year in 2018 will be surveyed (NOT when they eventually progress to their final year), unless they are specifically submitted for removal.
- Students who have changed their course arrangements, but were originally expected to graduate in 2018, will be eligible this year and not when they eventually reach their final year, unless specifically submitted for removal.
- Students who were already surveyed in 2017 will not be surveyed in 2018, unless removed by HEFCE.

Q4. Why is it important to meet the threshold for publication of results?

In order for results to be made publically available on the HEFCE and Unistats website, a publication threshold of **a minimum of both 10 respondents and 50% response rate** has to be met.

NSS data remains an important tool for helping prospective students make decisions about what and where to study in the future. Staff should encourage eligible students to complete the NSS in an honest way.

Please note that Ipsos MORI cannot provide the details of students that have/have not completed the survey. Regular [response rate reports](#) are provided to institutions, which will identify response rates by courses, departments, subjects and survey methods.

Q5. What is being asked in the NSS?

The survey asks undergraduates to provide feedback on their courses in a nationally recognised format.

There are 27 questions, relating to the following aspects of the student learning experience:

- Teaching on my Course
- Learning Opportunities

- Assessment and Feedback
- Academic Support
- Organisation and Management
- Learning Resources
- Learning Community
- Student Voice
- Overall Satisfaction

Students are also given the opportunity to give positive and/or negative comments on their student learning experience as a whole.

Q6. How can students access the NSS?

Online

All students with a valid email address will be sent an email invitation to take part in the survey. This email will contain a personalised survey link - when clicked, students must enter their date of birth and this will take them directly into the survey.

Students can also go online to complete the survey directly at www.thestudentsurvey.com between **8 January 2018** and **30 April 2018**, regardless of whether they have received an email or not. Via this route, they are required to enter the following personal data (as provided in your institution's sample file) in order for us to verify that they are eligible to take part:

- Registering institution
- Known ID (student number)
- First and third letter of forename
- First four letters of surname
- Day and month of birth

The online survey is mobile-friendly, so if accessed via a smartphone or tablet device, students will be automatically taken to the mobile version of the site.

Once a validated response has been received from a student, then they will receive an automated confirmation email and should not be contacted by Ipsos MORI again. If students complete the survey and are still being contacted by us, or if they have not received a confirmation email, it may be that they either did not fully complete or submit the survey, or they did not enter enough information to allow us to match them up to an eligible student on our database.

What does the online survey look like?

The questions are all in the displayed format below with each one on a separate screen – this format applies to the core questions as well as the banks and additional questions.



The screenshot shows a survey question: "Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course." Below the question is a sub-instruction: "Please show the extent of your agreement by selecting the box that reflects your current view of your course as a whole." There are six radio button options listed vertically: "Definitely agree", "Mostly agree", "Neither agree nor disagree", "Mostly disagree", "Definitely disagree", and "Not applicable". The "Mostly agree" option is highlighted with an orange background, while the others have a blue background.

Telephone

From the third week of fieldwork, we will begin follow up calls to non-responding students for whom we have valid UK telephone numbers. We change the times and days of the week that call attempts are made to optimise the opportunities for response. Student numbers are called a maximum of eight times. Please note that we will telephone students to complete the survey – they cannot call us directly to complete the survey, but may arrange an appointment if they wish.

Students are called on the following days/times: Monday to Friday – 9am to 9pm, Saturday and Sunday – 10am to 7pm.

Who should I contact if I have a query about the NSS?

Please liaise with the Main or Second NSS contacts at your institution to identify which students are included in the list of eligible students for the NSS 2017. You can also contact the NSS dedicated helpline at nss@ipsos.com.

Q7. What should we do if we identify an eligible student that cannot access the online survey?

Please send an email including the student's learner number and identifier (HUSID/LearnRefNumber/STUDENT_ID [NI Colleges only]) to nss@ipsos.com and we can check if they are in our database of eligible students.

The student can also contact us directly at thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com where we can check their eligibility.

Q8. How can we boost our response rates?

There are a number of ways to promote the NSS within your subject/course including:

- Lecture shout outs to final year students;
- Arranging dedicated computer sessions;
- Add a feature about the NSS to Intranet sites/Moodle;
- Discuss the NSS via subject/course social media sites;
- Discuss with other departments that are achieving higher [response rates](#) how they are promoting the NSS.

This guidance document contains a variety of ideas that can be communicated to staff to help them promote the NSS.

Inappropriate influence

Q. What is inappropriate influence and why is it important to ensure that there is no undue influence in promoting the NSS?

All those involved in the NSS should be aware of the guidelines regarding [inappropriate influence](#). Staff can remind eligible students to complete the survey but they have a responsibility to ensure that their students are encouraged to give their honest feedback on their student experience in the NSS.

Students should not feel that they are being monitored or encouraged to answer the survey in a particular way.

Staff must not:

- Explicitly instruct students on how to complete the survey, such as explaining the meanings of questions or the NSS scale. The questions and scale are self-explanatory and students should be left to interpret these in a way they see fit. Institutions are not permitted to recommend that students respond in a certain way, e.g. 'I recommend that you select agree or mostly agree', or misrepresent the scale to students, i.e. defining the 'neither agree nor disagree' as a negative response.
- Link the NSS to league tables, job prospects and the perceived value of students' degrees. Institutions are **not** permitted to tell students that if their courses do not achieve good satisfaction scores, this will make their degrees look bad to future employers.
- Arrange compulsory sessions for students to complete the NSS. Completion of the NSS, while beneficial to institutions, is completely voluntary for students. While arranging completion sessions is allowed, institutions should not enforce them nor make students feel there may be consequences should they not attend.
- Take students through the survey on an individual basis. Institutions should not stand or sit beside students when they are completing the survey, or take them through their responses question-by-questions. Students should be given due privacy so they can respond with honesty.
- Compare the NSS scale to other scales with different purposes, i.e. assignment marking schemes.

- Look over students' shoulders when they complete the survey;
- Require students to provide evidence that they have completed the survey;
- Complete the survey on behalf of students.

It is crucial that local survey promotion is neutral and that:

- Students are targeted equally so that each eligible student is given a chance to express their views on their student experience;
- Students feel free to give honest feedback about their experiences without their responses being influenced by their institution;
- Students must not be encouraged to reflect in their answers anything other than genuine perceptions of their experience;
- Any promotional materials that are produced in addition to those provided by Ipsos MORI must be checked for suitability in accordance with NSS guidance. A senior member of staff should sign-off all materials before they are used.

Where a concern or allegation is raised, it will be investigated by HEFCE. If an investigation were to find that promotional activities and/or marketing materials had resulted in inappropriate influence, whether intentional or unintentional, the integrity of the NSS data could be called into question.

HEFCE (in partnership with the relevant funding partners) could take action to suppress the affected NSS data for the institution. This would mean that no NSS data would be published for the affected courses at the institution in the specific year and, as a result, it would not be available for marketing activities, learning enhancement work or inclusion on Unistats, the HEFCE website etc.

More information on the HEFCE concerns process, and how they deal with allegations of inappropriate influence, can be found in their guidance 'Ensuring the integrity of National Student Survey data: Reporting and investigating concerns about institutional data quality, including attempts to influence results inappropriately.;; this guidance can be read in full [here](#).

Running dedicated sessions

Staff should be encouraged to run dedicated sessions where time is set aside to allow eligible students to complete the survey. Students should be encouraged to give their honest opinion. Please note that staff should not be 'standing over students' while they are