



Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute



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The National Student Survey

Good Practice Guide



Marketing and Promoting the National Student Survey 2018

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I. Introduction

In order for NSS data to be made publicly available to prospective students, each institution needs to achieve a minimum of 10 respondents and 50% response rate from the students eligible at overall institution level and by each JACS Level 3 subject.

To achieve these thresholds, all institutions are encouraged to promote the NSS to optimise survey participation among eligible students. Local marketing and promotion are essential to ensuring good [response rates](#).

Institutions can devise their own internal NSS marketing materials and/or use those supplied by Ipsos MORI to promote the survey. Although local promotion is supported, please note that the marketing guidelines in this Good Practice Guide must be adhered to and all eligible students must be given every opportunity to give honest feedback on their experience.

This Good Practice Guide provides guidelines and instructions on promoting the NSS 2018 within institutions, including details on inappropriate influence and how to avoid this when encouraging student participation. It also outlines the marketing package that will be issued to institutions in December 2017 (if selected via the 'Survey Options' form on the NSS Extranet), and advice for institutions that wish to create their own campaigns. Please take the time to familiarise yourself with these guidelines, particularly the information on inappropriate influence. Allegations of inappropriate influence are taken very seriously by HEFCE and may result in the suppression of data for the affected course/subject when the NSS results are published.

Should you have any questions regarding the content of this guide or wish to discuss your NSS marketing and promotion more generally, please contact Ipsos MORI on 020 8861 8110 or email nss@ipsos.com.



II. Promoting the NSS

The following sections outline the NSS promotional guidelines and provide supporting materials to help plan the institution's marketing and promotional activity, specifically:

- HEFCE's¹ [guidelines](#) for institutions' own marketing campaigns and [inappropriate influence](#)
- Guidelines on using the 2018 [Ipsos MORI produced marketing materials](#)
- Guidelines for [prize draws](#)
- A [Social media toolkit](#) containing advice on the best ways to use social media to promote the survey
- Ideas for planning your [NSS communications](#) around the Ipsos MORI fieldwork schedule
- Tips and tricks for [boosting your response rates](#)

Please note that all information contained in this document and the Ipsos MORI marketing materials will be available on the [NSS Extranet](#).

Why should institutions promote the NSS?

Findings of the NSS are made publicly available to prospective students to help them make informed decisions about what and where to study. Results are also used widely by institutions to enhance the student experience.

The purpose of the NSS promotional campaign is to raise awareness of the survey amongst eligible students so that the institution can achieve good [response rates](#). For results to be published, the threshold of **both 10 respondents and 50% response rate** must be met overall and by each JACS Level 3 subject. Data must reach the required threshold in order to be made publically available to prospective students. Aggregated results that meet the threshold are made publically available via the [HEFCE](#) and [Unistats](#) websites and detailed results are made available to institutions in the summer of each year. Good [response rates](#) ensure that institutions can benefit from robust data that can help identify areas of good practice and improvement.

¹ In partnership with the relevant funding partners

Institutions are invited to engage with the eligible students and wherever possible to try to encourage completion of the survey online at www.thestudentsurvey.com. Please ensure you refer to these guidelines.

1. HEFCE's Guidance for Promoting the Survey

Institutions are encouraged to promote the NSS internally and are permitted to create their own internal marketing materials and activities to promote the survey to eligible students. This section outlines HEFCE's² guidelines for internal campaigns. Before any activity is put into practice, the following guidance should be considered.

This guidance is for anyone who is involved in the planning and delivery of the communication for the NSS. Institutions are asked to ensure that all members of staff involved in NSS communications are briefed on the following guidelines, including lecturers/tutors. By adhering to the guidelines, institutions will minimise the potential for inappropriate influence. This will safeguard the integrity of the data and avoid subject/institutional data suppressions, should it be proven that students were inappropriately influenced in their responses.

This section outlines the guidelines for creating internal marketing campaigns, including:

- The rules regarding inappropriate influence;
- Restrictions relating to embedding your NSS campaign into your broader institutional campaign; and
- Information relating to the national NSS brand and adaption of the Ipsos MORI produced materials.

² In partnership with the relevant funding partners

2. Institutions' Own Marketing Campaigns

Institutions can create their own marketing campaigns, however, the campaign must be standalone and reaffirm the values of the NSS clearly reflecting the NSS as an independent survey that seeks to gather honest opinions.

Q1. Can institutions embed their NSS campaign in their broader institutional promotions?

In the past, some institutions have combined the promotion of the NSS with their own institutional campaigns, in order for the survey to benefit from existing campaign channels and identities. In light of experience, HEFCE (in partnership with the other funding partners) advise that institutions **are not** to embed their NSS marketing activity in broader institutional promotional activity, for example 'Pride' and 'I Love' campaigns.

The reasons why institutions are not permitted to embed their NSS campaign into broader institutional campaigns are as follows:

- It is important that the NSS is treated as an independent social research survey; this requires clarity of purpose and assurance that risk of bias is minimised. As a result, marketing campaigns should focus on the survey rather than the institution.
- Institutional campaigns are generally designed to encourage those it targets to respond positively with regards to the institution. In this context, HEFCE is not assured that a clear division can be made between the positive institutional messages in this type of campaign and the required neutrality of NSS materials.
- Students and institutions have raised concerns about embedded campaigns and inappropriate influence.
- If an institution does not comply with this guidance and it is brought to the attention of the funding bodies, the allegation will be investigated as potential inappropriate influence.

Q2. Do institutional campaigns need to include anything from the Ipsos MORI supplied marketing materials?

Wherever possible, internal promotions should complement the NSS branding and Ipsos MORI's poster campaign.

All internal marketing campaigns should include:

- The NSS logo – please ensure the updated logo is used on any institutional materials (available from the [NSS Extranet](#)); where any materials make use of the old NSS logo, they will be asked to replace it
- The survey web address www.thestudentsurvey.com (or portal address to redirect to this site)
- The relevant funders and Ipsos MORI logos

Institutions have a responsibility to ensure that the message around the NSS is clearly communicated to their eligible students. If customised text is used, it should:

- Aim to encourage students to voice their opinion (what they liked and did not like about their student experience);
- State the purpose of the NSS and the target audience (mainly final year undergraduates);
- Encourage students to complete the survey and invite honest feedback;
- Not influence responses inappropriately; and
- Inform students that the survey is run by Ipsos MORI, an independent research agency.

Please also note that the NSS has a strict policy of not making any references to commercial brands. Promotion of the NSS must not include any defamatory, offensive, political or unlawful content.

3. Inappropriate influence

Institutions are encouraged to communicate with their students to engage them in the survey. They have a responsibility to ensure that their students are encouraged to give honest feedback on their learning experience. Communications and/or institutional marketing materials must not attempt to sway the opinion of students in any way.

Q1. What is inappropriate influence?

HEFCE (in partnership with the relevant funding partners) defines inappropriate influence as **any activity which may encourage students to reflect anything other than their true opinion of their experiences during their course in their NSS responses.**

Inappropriate influence can emerge in several ways, for example:

- Explicitly instructing 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.
- Linking 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.
- Arranging 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.
- Taking 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.
- Comparing the NSS scale to other scales with different purposes, i.e. assignment marking schemes.

This is not an exhaustive list and institutions should be alert to other possible types of inappropriate influence.

Q2. What questions should my institution consider to help avoid inappropriate influence in our NSS campaign?

When promoting the survey, institutions should take into consideration whether the campaign could inappropriately influence the type of responses participants may give. HEFCE (in partnership with the relevant funding partners) expect institutions to have processes in place to ensure that all staff (both academic and professional services) have engaged with the guidance and that measures are in place to prevent inappropriate influence throughout their NSS activities. They advise that institutions should consider the following when developing marketing materials:

- The campaign should not influence the results of the survey but rather should boost response rates;
- The campaign should promote the survey, **not** the institution;
- The campaign should be a 'call to action' for students and should encourage all eligible students to participate, whatever their opinion of the institution or course;
- The campaign should not be interpreted by a student or an external person as an attempt to influence the answers they might give; and

With regards to direct communications with students (e.g. emails to eligible students or lecture shout outs), institutions should ensure that all those responsible for communicating with students regarding the NSS are aware of the key messages, the purpose of the research and the particular guidance on inappropriate influence. [Annex A](#) is a document to circulate for this purpose. Key tutors and staff should be wary of their tone when discussing the survey and asking students to complete it. They should always give them privacy if completing in class; tutors and staff should **not** take students through the survey or complete on their behalf.

If there is any uncertainty about any of these items, please speak to the survey manager at the institution or to the person who deals with the institutional data submissions, who should be able to provide further guidance regarding 'influence' in student surveys.

Q3. What could the consequences of inappropriate influence be for my institution?

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 results would be published for the affected courses at the institution in the specific year, nor would it be available to use in marketing activities, learning enhancement work or inclusion on Unistats, HEFCE's 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](#). HEFCE and the UK funding bodies will update this guidance in due course.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these issues, please do not hesitate to contact us at 020 8861 8110 or nss@ipsos.com.

III. NSS National Marketing Campaign

1. NSS 2018 Campaign

Institutions will be sent an NSS marketing pack by Ipsos MORI, if selected in their Survey Options form. This pack will contain hard copy marketing materials such as posters and flyers. A range of electronic and supporting documentation will also be uploaded to the [NSS Extranet](#) to help institutions promote the NSS. It is not compulsory to use the marketing materials provided (free of charge), however we encourage selecting them in support of other marketing efforts.

The following section outlines the materials and support available to institutions to help promote the NSS. All the materials detailed here are made available from Ipsos MORI. This section includes:

- Items provided by Ipsos MORI for 2018
- General promotional guidance
- Supporting tools, such as social media advice
- Communications advice
- How to use response rate updates/reports
- Examples of [good practice](#) from institutions

1.1. Ipsos MORI marketing packages

In order to receive hard copy marketing materials and promotional tools, please state the type of materials required via the '[My Survey Options](#)' form on the [NSS Extranet](#). Please ensure you provide detailed information of whom and where materials should be delivered to. See **Chapter IV** of the NSS Set up Guidance for more details.

Promotional materials must be ordered with Ipsos MORI by **Monday 27 November 2017** and will be delivered to the nominated addressee by **mid-December 2017** (Ipsos MORI will confirm the date).

i) Posters

Institutions can request NSS posters in three sizes: A4, A3 and A0 (portrait format). Posters should be displayed in prominent positions of the institution's buildings where there is a lot of student traffic.

Please note that the poster design is different each year. The 2018 design has been developed by Ipsos MORI working with professional designers and in consultation with students.

Institutions are permitted to request the poster design files from Ipsos MORI to adapt the poster for their own institution. However, they are only permitted to add an institutional logo and/or institution-specific text e.g. prize draw information. Any adaptations of the poster have to be approved by Ipsos MORI and HEFCE.

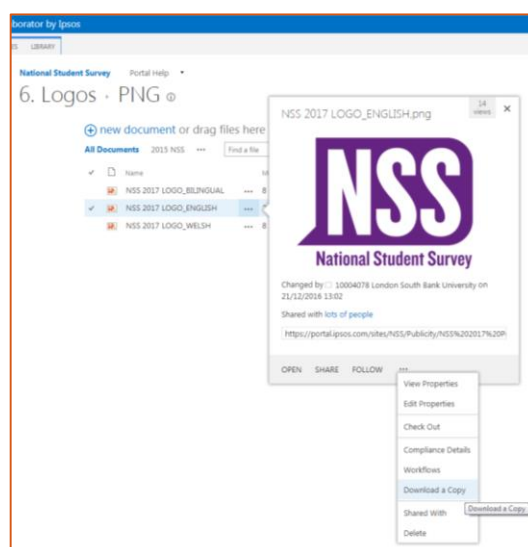
ii) Flyers

Flyers are provided in A6 format and institutions should request these in the marketing choices in the '[Survey Options](#)' form on the [NSS Extranet](#). The flyer design is based on the poster and contains key information to encourage students to complete the survey.



The flyers can be made available/handed out in high traffic areas, including reception areas, communal areas (e.g. libraries and cafeterias), in lectures, seminars and teaching sessions, placed in students' pigeonholes, sent to students when communicating by post, etc. They can also be sent to distance learners, students on placement or learners who are not campus based.

iii) Electronic items

Ipsos MORI will also provide institutions with a range of electronic marketing materials. Within the e-marketing pack you will receive screensavers, wallpapers and e-banners and the design will be based on the main poster design. All electronic items will be available to download from the 'Digital Materials' area on the [NSS Extranet](#) home page by **December 2017** (Ipsos MORI will confirm dates in due course). Listed Main, Second and Marketing contacts will be notified when the materials are available.



- The screensavers and wallpapers can be installed on PCs in IT suites frequented by eligible students. They are also ideal for display on computer screens and plasma screens around campus.
- Static and animated e-banners can also be provided. Please place the e-banners on the relevant institution websites (VLE, intranet, etc.). Banners will be produced in horizontal and vertical designs and can be used on electronic communications from the institution, e.g. an email signature, internet/intranet/extranets, articles/newsletters as well as social media.
- There are hyperlinked animated banners provided (vertical and horizontal), which once clicked, will direct students to www.thestudentsurvey.com.
- Institutions can add html code to the non-hyperlinked banners when they install them, either to direct to an internal portal that redirects to the official survey website or to www.thestudentsurvey.com.
- Desktop wallpapers are supplied in a range of sizes. For optimum display at the institution, use a wallpaper that corresponds (if not exactly, then as close as possible) to the resolution of your computer/device screens.

Please download these items from the 'Digital Materials' area on the [NSS Extranet](#) home page. Once in the area, please click on  next to each file,  again and select 'Download a Copy' (please see picture above).

A guide to using and installing electronic items is provided with the materials on the [Extranet](#).

iv) NSS Video and YouTube Channel

A short advert and video will be available for institutions. The animation is linked to the poster design and conveys the key messages of the NSS and how students can complete the survey. These should be played on plasma screens around campus as well as placed on institution websites, as well as any social media profiles to promote the survey. Low resolution versions of the video will be available to download from the 'Video & Advert' area on the [NSS Extranet](#) home page. Higher quality versions will be hosted on YouTube and the URL will be communicated to institutions.

Please note that Ipsos MORI manages a dedicated NSS YouTube channel 'TheStudentSurvey': <https://www.youtube.com/user/thestudentsurvey>. If you have your own NSS videos and advertisements, please send the URL to Ipsos MORI and we will upload it to the NSS channel.

In accordance with the Welsh Language Act, all videos and advertisements will be translated into Welsh.

v) Logo template

We will also provide other promotional templates for institutions who would like to print/create additional marketing materials themselves. These templates will include:

- NSS flattened logo for use on promotional giveaways e.g. stationary, USBs, shopping bags
- NSS t-shirt template
- NSS sticker template

Please note that only the logo and templates are downloadable; Ipsos MORI will not produce these additional items. The NSS approved logos and QR codes will be available in the 'Logos & Icons' area on the [NSS Extranet](#) home page.

If you have any queries about using these items, or require any additional posters or flyers during fieldwork, please contact the NSS Helpline at nss@ipsos.com.

vi) Supporting materials

Ipsos MORI will also provide template examples of popular communications which can be found in [Annex B](#).

Newspaper articles – Template newspaper articles have been prepared for use in both institution papers/magazines, to raise awareness and provide information on the survey.

Circular letters – Template circular letters aimed at both academic staff and students will be provided to raise awareness and encourage online completion of the survey. Please ensure that variations of the template are signed off by a senior member of staff.

NSS 2018 Presentation slides – A set of PowerPoint slides will be made available to raise awareness and encourage survey completion. The slides can be used to communicate the purpose of the NSS at the beginning or end of lecture sessions with final year students.

Survey timetable – A quick view NSS timetable will be available on the [NSS Extranet](#), which will provide an overview of actions and key dates between October 2017 and May 2018.

Staff briefing – A summary document outlining what the NSS is and what/how students should be asked to complete the survey is provided in [Annex A](#) of this document. This summary is aimed at institutional staff to help them understand the implications of inappropriate influence and what they can do to avoid this when promoting the survey.

2. Promotional Guidelines

Promotion of the NSS at a localised level is key to achieving the required response rates. Good [response rates](#) ensure that NSS data can be made available to prospective students and institutions to support student choice and quality enhancement.

Although Ipsos MORI can communicate with non-responsive students and encourage participation, institutions are in the prime position to raise awareness of the survey, convey its importance and encourage participation. All internal marketing activities should aim to raise awareness of the NSS amongst mostly final year undergraduate students (and directed at eligible students only where possible) encouraging students to give honest and anonymous feedback on their course experience. Please ensure that all staff directly involved with the NSS, and those who will be actively encouraging student participation, are familiar with the rules and regulations of promoting the survey. In particular, they must be provided the [HEFCE guidelines](#) on inappropriate influence and the guidance in [Annex A](#), so they are made aware of what they can and cannot do when encouraging completion, and what the consequences may be if inappropriate influence is discovered.

It is recommended that institutions utilise the national promotional materials provided by Ipsos MORI to promote the NSS. However, institutions are also encouraged to develop their own marketing and communication plans: promotion of the survey through internal web portals, direct email communications and word-of-mouth. Nevertheless, institutions should review the Ipsos MORI communications schedule to ensure that internal communications have the maximum impact.

The timing of promotional activity is important and will be dependent on the institutions' chosen survey start week. Spreading the word about the NSS, and ensuring students are aware it is coming, is an ongoing process; this should begin before the launch of the survey with pre-emptive emails to students and continue throughout the fieldwork period.

Q1. When should we display promotional materials?

It is recommended to display promotional materials around your institution before the launch of the survey. This is to ensure it is visible to students and fresh in their minds before they receive their email invitations. The survey website will remain live until **30 April 2018**. Please continue to display the materials until this date.

The survey start date chosen by the institution can be found on the [NSS Extranet](#) within the 'Survey Options' form.

2.1. Creating your own promotional materials

Institutions can create internal promotional materials. If you do decide to create your own artwork, please ensure that the guidelines in [Chapter II](#) are adhered to.

In summary:

- The National Student Survey (NSS) marketing campaigns must not be embedded into broader institutional campaigns.
- The key message of internal marketing must be to encourage students to give their honest opinion and make it clear that the NSS is an independent survey.
- Marketing campaigns and images must be balanced and must not be seen as attempting to influence responses, or self-promoting the institution. For example, 'I love my institution' or 'My institution is the best' taglines are not permitted.
- Materials should promote online completion at www.thestudentsurvey.com.
- The NSS logo, funder logos and Ipsos MORI logos should be present. Please contact nss@ipsos.com if you require the artwork.

Customised text should:

- Aim to encourage students to voice their opinions (what they liked **and** did not like about their student experience).
- State the purpose of the NSS and the target audience (mainly final year undergraduates).
- Encourage students to complete the survey and only invite honest feedback.
- Not attempt to influence responses inappropriately.
- Inform students that the survey is run by Ipsos MORI, an independent research agency, on behalf of all HE funding bodies.

Using the new NSS logo

The NSS logo was updated in 2017. Any materials that are created by institutions to promote the NSS should include the **official NSS logo** and branding and be in line with the images used across the NSS campaign. **Please do not use the old logo. All iterations of the old NSS logo should be removed from institutions' websites and promotional materials.** English and Welsh versions of the logo can be downloaded from the 'Logos & Icons' area on the [NSS Extranet](#)

home page.

Quick response (QR) code

A QR code will be included in all hard copy promotional materials. Students with access to mobile devices can scan the image and be redirected to www.thestudentsurvey.com to complete the online survey. The QR code will be available to download from the 'Logos & Icons' area on the [NSS Extranet](#). We would encourage institutions to use the QR code on all hard copy materials that they create internally.

Q1 What is the process for adapting the Ipsos MORI provided marketing materials?

Institutions are permitted to adapt the Ipsos MORI supplied marketing materials, however, restrictions apply. You are permitted to add the institution's logo and promotional text to the poster design. However, the fundamental content of the poster cannot be adapted and the ratios of the NSS and funder logos cannot be changed. Institutions wishing to adapt the national campaign will need to request the design files from Ipsos MORI. All amended artwork must be sent to nss@ipsos.com for approval to ensure that it remains brand compliant.

Q2 What method of completion should we promote to our students?

It is highly desirable that as many students as possible complete the survey online. The survey can be completed via desktop computers or by mobile devices (e.g. smartphones and tablets). Therefore, in communications and marketing materials, we recommend advertising online completion. Institutions can direct students via institutional portals to the survey web address.

The survey website www.thestudentsurvey.com goes live on **Monday 8 January 2018**. Regardless of your institution's chosen start week, **ALL** eligible students can complete the survey from this date. However, we recommend advertising the website in line with the chosen survey start week. This year, initial email invitations will be sent on the Thursday of each start week, so institutions have the first few days of the week to launch their own promotional activities as they wish.

Please note that students can also complete the survey via the telephone. If students do have a preferred method of contact, they can select their preference online (www.thestudentsurvey.com) or can contact the Ipsos MORI student helpline at thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com.

2.2. Planning your communication schedule

Ipsos MORI operates a strict communication plan. The dates when Ipsos MORI will communicate with your students are in accordance with the institution's chosen survey start week. The following section provides guidance on how the institution can plan communications in line with the [Ipsos MORI survey schedule](#).

One week before survey launch date

Send pre-emptive emails to eligible students only, outlining:

- That they will receive an invitation email from Ipsos MORI containing a unique link to the survey (on which dates depending on your institution's survey start week);
- The importance of the NSS;
- If offered, outline the details of the prize draw.

This email should be signed from either an individual known to them or a senior representative (e.g. Pro-Vice-Chancellor).

Ensure that the I.T. department/contact is aware that institutional email accounts will be receiving emails from the domains **@ipsos-mori.com** and **@thestudentsurvey.com**, and that the IT system is set up to allow these through.

Survey week 1

- Email invitations from Ipsos MORI will arrive in student inboxes on the Thursday of your chosen survey start week; these emails are sent in batches so institutional email systems do not tag them as spam
- Arrange dedicated sessions with eligible students on Friday/Monday to maximise the use of unique email links
- Promote the NSS with reference to the invitation email that eligible students will receive from Ipsos MORI

Survey week 2

- A first reminder email will arrive in non-responding student inboxes on Monday of the second survey week
- Arrange dedicated sessions with eligible students on Tuesday/Wednesday to maximise the use of unique email links

- A second reminder email from Ipsos MORI will arrive in non-responding student inboxes on Friday of the second survey week; these emails are also sent in batches so institutional email systems do not tag them as spam
- Arrange dedicated sessions on Monday to maximise the use of unique email links
- Promote the NSS with reference to the reminder email

Survey week 3

- Ipsos MORI begin telephone interviews with students for who we only hold telephone numbers or who have been identified as 'hard-to-reach'
- Reminder SMS messages from Ipsos MORI will be sent to non-responding students' mobile phones on the Thursday of your third survey week
- Arrange dedicated sessions on Friday or Monday while the SMS messages are still fresh in students' minds
- Promote the NSS with reference to the SMS messages
- Ipsos MORI begin the main telephone follow up phase

Survey week 4-5

- Institutions should send email reminders to eligible students to encourage completion
- Arrange dedicated sessions/visit lectures or teaching sessions to promote the survey

Survey week 6

- Ipsos MORI begin the targeted follow up phase. All non-responsive students will be contacted therefore institutions and cohorts behind the publication threshold will be targeted
- Institutions' specific communication and promotion is encouraged until the survey end date

Final survey week

- Reminder emails from Ipsos MORI will arrive in non-responding student inboxes on the Wednesday of the final survey week; these emails are also sent in batches so institutional email systems do not tag them as spam

- Arrange final dedicated sessions to maximise the use of unique email links.

Please note that these guidelines should only be used as a guide to help plan or enhance the communications. It is not intended to replace existing communication plans.

Inappropriate influence reminder

It is appropriate to remind students that they should complete the NSS and that they should consider their responses carefully. However, encouraging students to reflect in their answers anything other than their genuine perceptions of their experience, such as making any link between the NSS, league tables and the perceived value of students' degrees, is not acceptable. Please see more details in [Chapter II](#).

3. Prize Draws

One way of promoting the NSS to eligible students is to communicate any prize draw on offer. When an institution selects their survey choices via the [NSS Extranet](#) (please see **Chapter IV** of the NSS Set up Guidance), they can opt to include a prize draw to encourage completion of the survey. Should the institution wish to offer a prize draw, they should adhere to the following guidance. All prize draws, run internally, should follow the [MRS Guidelines](#).

3.1. Guidelines

It is up to institutions to promote the NSS locally. Institutions may organise prize draws if they wish to do so. Ipsos MORI is able to publicise institutions' prize draws, provided that complete and timely information is submitted via the '[Survey Options](#)' form on the [NSS Extranet](#). Agreed details will be promoted in the invitation emails we send to the students, as well as through the online survey.

To be able to publicise the prize draw, a precise description of the prize offered by the institution is required. If the institution has opted to offer a prize draw, Ipsos MORI will be in contact to agree the description that will be communicated to students. In order to ensure that the survey is ready on time so that the students can access it from **8 January 2018** we cannot deviate from the standard programmed text that is communicated to students. This is because the prize draw text forms part of a very complex program that allows us to administer the NSS to over c.420 different institutions that all have different survey options.

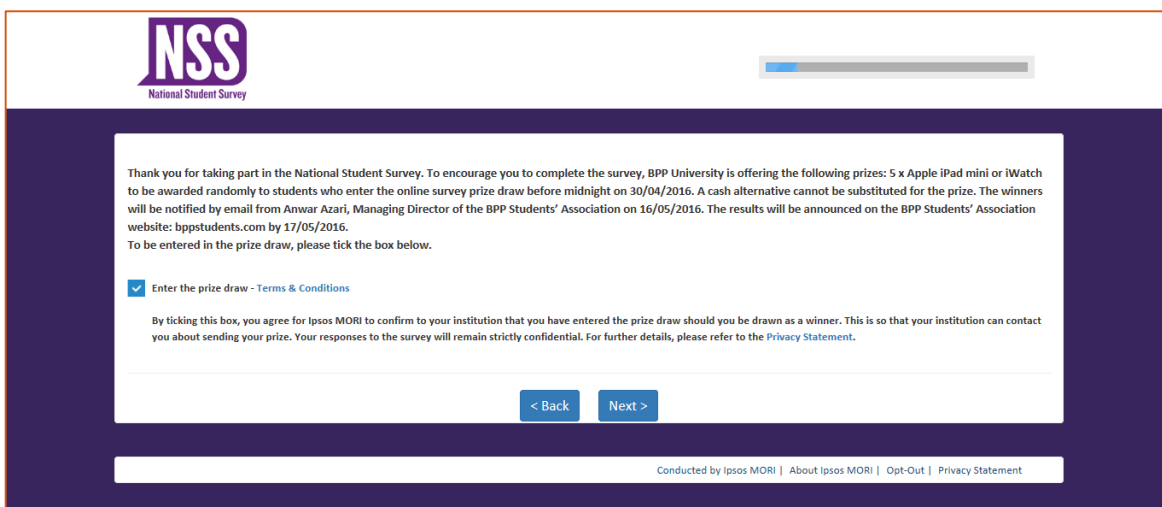
Please note that details of prize draws will only be available to students who complete the survey **online**. Students who are invited by email to take part in the survey are informed of the prize draw offered by the institution in their invitations. Students should be made aware that there is no link between how they respond and their chances of winning a prize. Completion of the survey cannot be a condition to entering the online prize draw as all eligible students have an equal chance of winning. Please see the [MRS guidelines on incentives and prize draws](#) for more information.

3.2. Opting in to a prize draw

If the institution opts to offer a prize draw, Ipsos MORI will randomly select prize draw winners within two weeks after the closing date on behalf of each participating institution. All students, including non-respondents, can enter the prize draw.

Please note that winners can only be selected from institutions as a whole. It is not possible to offer a prize that is only open to a specific cohort of students, e.g. a specific department or college. Ipsos MORI is unable to facilitate bespoke prize scenarios while fulfilling its MRS and legal obligations.

Example of prize drawn screen shown to eligible students



The screenshot shows a web interface for the National Student Survey (NSS). At the top left is the NSS logo. Below it, a message reads: "Thank you for taking part in the National Student Survey. To encourage you to complete the survey, BPP University is offering the following prizes: 5 x Apple iPad mini or iWatch to be awarded randomly to students who enter the online survey prize draw before midnight on 30/04/2016. A cash alternative cannot be substituted for the prize. The winners will be notified by email from Anwar Azari, Managing Director of the BPP Students' Association on 16/05/2016. The results will be announced on the BPP Students' Association website: bppstudents.com by 17/05/2016. To be entered in the prize draw, please tick the box below." Below this text is a checkbox labeled "Enter the prize draw - Terms & Conditions" which is checked. Underneath the checkbox, a smaller text block states: "By ticking this box, you agree for Ipsos MORI to confirm to your institution that you have entered the prize draw should you be drawn as a winner. This is so that your institution can contact you about sending your prize. Your responses to the survey will remain strictly confidential. For further details, please refer to the [Privacy Statement](#)." At the bottom of the form are two buttons: "< Back" and "Next >". At the very bottom of the page, a footer reads: "Conducted by Ipsos MORI | About Ipsos MORI | Opt-Out | Privacy Statement".

If you choose to run a tailored or multi-prize draw scheme, please ensure that the institution is able to administer these and that they comply with the law and adhere to the [MRS guidelines](#). It is a requirement to clearly advertise the prize draw in any correspondence with students and clearly communicate how and when prize winners will be drawn.

To ensure the prize draw is communicated to eligible students online, please complete the appropriate fields in the '[Survey Options](#)' form identifying whether the institution will be offering a prize draw, the total number of winners and the closing date for the draw.

Following this, Ipsos MORI will agree with the institution the text that will be communicated to eligible students, including:

- Description of the prize(s) to be offered
- How and when the prize winner(s) will be notified?
- Where and when the prize winner(s) will be announced?
- Whether the prize(s) can be substituted for cash?

Regarding the notification and announcement dates, please allow up to two weeks after the prize draw closing date for us to draw the winners.

The following text will be displayed to your students at the start of the online survey:

"To encourage you to complete the survey {your institution} is offering the following prizes: {description or amount} to be awarded randomly to (a) student(s) who enter(s) the online survey prize draw before midnight on {date/default date is 30 April 2018}. A cash alternative {can/cannot} be substituted for the prize. The winner(s) will be notified {by email/letter/...} from {who} on {date}. The results will be announced {where} by {when}".

As mentioned previously, in order to ensure that the survey is programmed on time so that students can access the survey from the day it goes live, we cannot agree to bespoke messages or deviate from the uniformed programmed text that is communicated to students. We can only tailor the wording in brackets highlighted above.

If the institution wishes to run a prize draw for the NSS 2018, Ipsos MORI will assist in this process. Institutions must opt in or out of the prize draw by **27 November 2017**. After this date, we will contact the institution to agree the wording to be displayed to students. We will not be able to advertise prize draws or draw prize winners for any institution that does not provide Ipsos MORI with the prize draw details and wording by mid-December 2017. All eligible students must have a fair and equal chance of entering the prize draw; therefore, we cannot introduce a prize draw after the survey has gone live in January 2018, regardless of later start weeks.

While the conduct of prize draws is the responsibility of the institution, we want to ensure that these are in accordance with the MRS code of conduct. A copy of the [MRS Guidelines](#) is available on the [NSS Extranet](#). Please make sure that you are familiar with the guidelines and act in accordance with these.

The prize draw is the responsibility of the institution and should comply with the relevant legislation. The cost and purchase of the prizes on offer are entirely the responsibility of the institution; Ipsos MORI only supports prize draws through promotion in communications to students.

Please see **Chapter IV** of the NSS Set up Guidance for full details of how to opt into the prize draw option.

Prize draw administration

Ipsos MORI will provide the student identification codes (such as HUSID) of the selected prize winners to the NSS Main, Second and Marketing Contacts at the institution by the **end of May**

2018 (or up to two weeks after the prize draw closing date if an earlier date is selected). Those who enter the prize draw are asked to give consent that their contact details can be passed on to their institution should they win a prize.

4. Social Media

This section outlines some **social media strategies** that institutions can use to encourage participation in the National Student Survey. It aims to provide an overview of social media and to present ideas that may be of use. It is not intended to replace any social media plans that institutions may already have in place. The ideas outlined here would work better as part of a larger promotional campaign to encourage participation.

4.1. Creating a buzz through social media

Social media sites or apps are an effective way to ‘spread the word’ about an activity, event or project. The most popular social media platforms used by students and institutions alike include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube. In fact, all these sites and apps can be linked together, allowing institutions to share the same post across different social media platforms. Social media applications are already utilised by institutions in a range of ways and some ideas for ‘creating a buzz’ about the NSS are included below.

The [marketing guidelines](#) and rules on [inappropriate influence](#) also apply to social media posts, so please ensure that all involved in promoting the survey on social media are aware of what they can and cannot do, as well as the consequences of inappropriate posts.



Some institutions have dedicated **YouTube** channels and they may wish to create their own NSS videos to inform students of the purpose of the NSS and how to complete it. **YouTube** videos and links can be embedded into other social networking sites, such as **Twitter** and **Facebook**, as well as on institutional websites/portals and shared amongst eligible students. You could try to develop a “fun” video that students would be encouraged to share. Remember to share your videos with the official [NSS YouTube Channel](#) by sending the link to nss@ipsos.com.



Facebook is a useful way to ‘spread the word’ about the NSS among final year students. Some institutions host their own internal campaigns or use the theme of the Ipsos MORI campaign to raise awareness and engage students with the NSS. You could create a **Facebook** photo album to post pictures or video clips of activities that are happening on your campus. You could also create posts based on how NSS results have been used to make improvements at your institution.

A recent feature added to **Facebook** allows users to post live videos across the site. Institutions can make use of this by broadcasting live streams of NSS-themed events or sessions; students can watch these streams online and comment/react to the feed.

Departments, SUs and NSS champions with their own **Facebook** page can also promote general NSS activity, such as announcing the launch of the survey, offering details about dedicated completion sessions, sharing response rate updates, and publicising giveaways. In particular, institutions can create awareness of the survey through competitions on Facebook, encouraging students to use the different functionalities of the site in order to win a particular prize. For example, if you embed an 'enter the survey' button as a post, which will take students to www.thestudentsurvey.com, students who share it will be entered into a prize draw. You can also make use of the Facebook reaction feature where students can use one of the reaction faces (Like, Love, Wow, Angry and Sad) to engage with your posts. You could donate money to charity for every 'like' and 'love' received, or award prizes to students under each reaction. Please find more information in the [competition and prize draws section](#) below.



Twitter is another popular Social Media website that allows users to post their thoughts in the form of 'tweets' in a maximum of 140 characters. They are specifically short and therefore present a challenge in ensuring that the right information is relayed effectively.

In 2017, Ipsos MORI monitored the public tweets relating to the NSS. Tweets about the NSS regularly included direct links to the survey or served as 'calls to action' to encourage students to complete the survey. Tweets are also used by students or union reps to promote their completion of the survey or to publicise previous results and subsequent changes made at institutions.

Institutions can post photo cards on their Twitter accounts in the form of images, which when clicked by students, open to more detailed information about the survey. This can be used to spread the word about [response rates](#), dedicated sessions, how long students have left to complete the survey, when they will be contacted by Ipsos MORI, incentives, the nature of the survey, why it's important, details of any NSS related events, the impact of results and results more widely.

A key aspect of **Twitter** communication is ensuring that you are sending a succinct message and encouraging the message to trend. Try making use of the hashtag functionality - using

the “#” symbol followed by a key word. This can be your NSS campaign title, the survey or just a word that summarises the message, for example #HaveYourSay.

Remember that **Twitter** is a social dialogue – so respond to students and remember to retweet messages that others make. When doing so:

- **Use the 80/20 principle.**
80% of your Tweets should focus on driving interactions with your followers, such as Retweets, replies, and favourites. Once you've built some rapport, you can mix in tweets that get followers to take actions, such as participating in the NSS.

Remember to use as many visual elements as possible to provide an uplift in engagements:

- **Photos** average a 35% boost in Retweets
 - You can include animations as well which can tell a story
 - YouTube videos (and SlideShares) show natively within the app
- Other **videos** get a 28% boost in Retweets
- **Quotes** get a 19% boost in Retweets³

To further boost the presence of the NSS on Twitter, Ipsos MORI has an official NSS Twitter account to retweet your social media postings and create some unique social media content to interact with eligible students.

Smartphone apps. Making use of some of the most popular smartphone apps to promote the



NSS would ensure that messages are reaching them through as many means as possible.

Instagram is a social networking app that allows users to share pictures and videos with others, and to other social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Institutions can link their Instagram accounts with their Twitter and Facebook pages so any pictures or videos posted on the app are shared across other social media websites as well, ensuring a wide spread of the message.

Institutions can post pictures or videos of their NSS campaigns in action alongside their custom hashtag campaigns, e.g. #NSS2018, etc. They can also implement NSS Instagram booths across campuses where students can take photos for their institutions' **Instagram** accounts – these can then be shared across the linked social media accounts to spread the word or added to their **Instagram** 'stories', a function similar to the Snapchat story feature detailed below.

³ https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/a/2014/what-fuels-a-tweets-engagement.html



Snapchat is also a popular smartphone app that institutions can use to 'spread the word' about the NSS. The app allows users to post pictures and videos for a temporary amount of time. When this time is up, they are removed.

A function of the app that makes this useful for promoting the NSS is the 'My Story' area. Institutions can take pictures and videos of their promotional campaigns and compile them into one chronological storyline, their 'NSS Story'. Each snap added to the storyline lasts for 24 hours, allowing institutions to document each day of their campaign from start to finish. The custom geofilter function could be used to create an NSS-themed filter to use over any photos or videos taken after dedicated sessions or specific areas on campus where students complete the survey.

4.2. Competitions and prize draws

This section outlines some of the key messages that institutions could use via social media to promote the survey and boost [response rates](#).

i) Create a challenge

Institutions could use social media as an avenue to create an internal or external competition to boost [response rates](#). This can be done in many ways, including:

- Using **Datawrapper** to post an **interactive chart** to your intranet or Moodle pages to show the current response rate versus your overall targets;
- Post response rates to your **Facebook** or **Twitter** page and challenge other departments, campuses or schools to beat your score;
- Post a link to the online survey and encourage students to 'share' it in order to be in with a chance to win a small prize;
- Create a competitive element **among campuses** and **other departments** for participation to help make sure as many subject areas meet the threshold for publication;
- Regularly tweet updates on response rates using a **custom hashtag** and encourage further participation through the institution **Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat** and **Facebook** accounts while the survey is open;

- Take to **Twitter** and **Instagram** to encourage students to spread the word, for example offering a reward for the best **NSS tweet** or **Instagram** post of the week or for the best method of promotion;
- Run a campaign to boost response rates over fieldwork, for example a member of staff or a rep undertaking a forfeit if internal response rate targets are met. Progress can be posted on **Twitter** and **Facebook**, and final challenges can be filmed/photographed and promoted on social media sources, such as **Instagram** or added to your **Snapchat** story. In 2013, one SU representative had an NSS logo permanently tattooed to his foot!

ii) Promote institutional prize draws and competitions

Many institutions organise prize draws to encourage eligible students to enter the survey. Prizes are a useful thing to communicate via social media sources.

Promote the prize draws that have been identified to the Ipsos MORI team to encourage students to complete the survey online, as well as internal rewards and prizes to help boost response rates. Some ways you can do this include:

- Having a “**complete the NSS survey**” day or week by booking a computer room and providing snacks and sweets so groups of students can complete the survey together. You can promote the session using social media. Please be mindful of student privacy during these sessions. Staff or students running the sessions must not be seen to stand behind students while they complete the survey and cannot complete the survey on anyone else’s behalf.
- Providing extra incentives for people to complete the survey using their **smartphone or tablet**. Maybe have a dedicated stall on campus that has NSS giveaways to students that complete the survey via a mobile device then and there. Again, be mindful of student privacy when they are completing the survey at your stall.
- Encouraging people to tweet when they have completed the survey or received a reward for doing so; custom hashtags such as **#NSSRewards** or **#NSSComplete** can be used for this. You can even take their picture or a video of them completing the survey, with the students’ permission, to upload to your **Instagram** accounts or add to your **Snapchat** stories.
- Encouraging participation through the SU **Twitter, Instagram** and **Facebook** accounts; for example, the Students’ Union (Association or Guild) could arrange a social event for students who complete the survey (using **#NSSReward** to claim a place).
- Post real pictures of incentives with an SU representative or NSS mascot. Perhaps you could post pictures of eligible students claiming prizes as well, with their permission.

Adding a caption such as “Would you like to get your hands on these?” will contribute toward attracting and encouraging completion. These pictures can be shared across all social media platforms via **Instagram** or added to your NSS storyline on **Snapchat**.

You can also communicate the outcome of the prize draws, once fieldwork has closed or the winners have been drawn. Some ideas include:

- Posting on **Facebook** or **Twitter** the number of rewards that have been claimed e.g. how many coffees have been given away. In 2017, several institutions used their response rate reports to monitor the number of students that had responded and made a charitable donation for every completed response. They communicated the total throughout fieldwork via **Facebook** and **Twitter**.
- Posting a picture or video of the winners claiming their prize, as above.

4.3. Top tips for social media

Social media can be a useful tool for promoting the NSS to students as well as making future students aware of the impact of the survey. We advise that any social media strategies are planned in line with wider promotional activities within institutions and adhere to the NSS promotional guidelines set by HEFCE (in partnership with the relevant funding partners) to avoid any attempts of inappropriate influence, whether intentional or not.

Some tips for planning social media activity include:

- Know your audience and the social media they use;
- Involve faculties, staff and the SU where possible. Send out the staff briefing document in [Annex A](#) of this guidance, and ensure they fully understand what they can and cannot say. Encourage them to spread the word throughout the fieldwork period;
- Social media: **Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat** are all popular platforms among student groups and can be used to raise awareness of the NSS, communicate the latest response rates and share results after the survey closes;
- Involve students: Collaborate with supportive Students’ Unions (Associations or Guilds) wherever possible, as well as organisations, clubs and societies to agree a social media communications plan;
- Look at previous years’ response rates – are there any student cohorts that struggled to meet the response rate thresholds; if so, do they have any dedicated social media channels you could make use of?
- Explore how your messages will ‘call students to action’ to take part in the survey. For example, rewarding participation;

- Everywhere you talk about the survey (online, on posters, in meetings), make sure you are reinforcing the same message. Perhaps come up with some custom hashtags and use or refer to them in all your social media conversations;
- Plan your communications so that you have something new and exciting to say throughout the fieldwork period;
- Be responsive – build in resources to respond to students and retweet/repost things that others are saying;
- Build a year-round NSS presence, by posting features on NSS results and documenting ‘real change’ at the institution.

IV. Improving Response Rates

In order for NSS results to be published, a threshold of 10 respondents and 50% response rate has to be met.

These thresholds are set by UK Higher Education funding bodies for the purpose of ensuring that the survey data published is useful to the participating institutions. Thresholds are applied to ensure that there are enough responses to preserve individuals' anonymity. Data not meeting these thresholds can therefore not be published.

Ipsos MORI will follow up with providers where response rates look as if they will be below those that can be published. The funding bodies reserve the right to agree changes to the survey period with individual providers at risk of not meeting the publication threshold. HEFCE will publish information on its website about its approach and the actions it may take by January 2018. The completeness and accuracy of students' contact data, as supplied by providers, will be a significant factor in achieving a publishable level of responses.

This briefing sheet provides an overview of some of the measures employed by institutions to improve their annual response rates.

1. Tips to boost response rates

Engaging Departments and Teaching Staff

Support 'from the top' - from senior and academic staff - can be key to the success of the NSS at an institution. Four in ten students told us that they heard about the NSS through a member of staff. Institutional staff are often best placed to communicate the benefits and importance of the survey - they can communicate directly with students about how the results will be used by prospective students and to improve the student learning experience at the institution more generally.

Institutions identify that they encourage staff to get involved in the following ways:

Pre-survey launch. Briefing staff to explain the nature and purpose of the survey, how to engage students, an overview of eligibility, how the prize draw process works (if offered), as well as to remind them (and students) about the conduct of the survey (e.g. anonymity and inappropriate influence).

Holding meetings with senior management, heads of schools and marketing teams to discuss an action plan and form a clear communication strategy for engaging students and encouraging completion. A thorough communications plan built into the student and staff calendar, and around Ipsos MORI's survey schedule, is highly useful to avoid over-contacting students. Please see below for more information on communication planning.

During fieldwork. Encourage staff to:

- Sign up to 'key responsibilities', e.g. distributing promotional materials, implementing an NSS feature on their department website, and co-ordinating email communication to students making them aware of the oncoming survey and the email invitation they will receive from Ipsos MORI.
- Deliver lecture shout outs to their final year students using Ipsos MORI produced presentation slides and video/advert, or materials created by your own institution. They can also help to promote the survey by handing out flyers to students during seminars.
- Arrange course-specific dedicated sessions for the NSS, possibly incentivised, so students can make use of their personalised links. These can be built into tutors' timetables from the outset.
- Use their social media platforms to reach out to students about the survey.
- Circulate weekly response rates to teaching staff/department heads, highlighting areas of good and bad performance and pointing out where their department is compared to others.

Many institutions identify staff support as essential in meeting response rate targets, given their ability to directly engage with students. Some ideas implemented include:

Monitoring response rates. Using the weekly response rate reports provided by Ipsos MORI to guide internal promotion of the NSS.

Create a competition. Introducing a table for departments/subjects to identify top and bottom performers. Some institutions have implemented prizes for those who get the overall best response rate. Social media is particularly effective in creating a sense of competition among students and boosting response rates.

Keep staff abreast of survey progress. Forward response rate reports to course leaders, heads of departments and senior management so that they are aware of where targets are and are not being met and can act on it effectively.

Building a social media presence. Use departments' social media profiles to post reminders about the survey, response rate updates and details of any incentives and prize draws on offer.

Email Communication

Electronic communication has been identified by respondents and institutions as an important way to promote the NSS fieldwork. 25% of students who answered the 2016 marketing question stated they found out about the NSS through an email link and 33% through links on their institution's website or portal. Institutions:

- Send introductory emails ahead of fieldwork to students to forewarn them that the survey will be coming and to look out for their email invitations. These emails should include a link to the survey website www.thestudentsurvey.com so students can find out more.
- Send emails to students addressed from the Principal, Dean of the institution or Pro-Vice-Chancellor. This adds weight to the message. Messages from a named contact, known to the individual student (e.g. course leader/head of department), are more effective.
- Provide the email details of eligible students to institutional staff to reduce burden on them. This enables them to target messages more efficiently. Introductory and reminder emails regarding the NSS should only be sent to eligible students rather than all final year students to avoid confusion for those students who are not eligible.

Redirecting to the NSS Website

Some institutions have established a pre-survey webpage, which can be branded locally and helps them to manage their own incentives more effectively. These micro-sites link directly to the survey, and provide some background information and details about any incentives.

Other internal sites used to promote the survey include:

- The institutions' intranet sites. Information can be subject-specific or generic.
- Institutions with virtual learning environments (VLE) publicise the NSS via this tool, e.g. Moodle. Information can be subject-specific or generic.
- Institutions advertise the NSS on IT terminals within the institution, on computers, plasma screens, etc.

Promotional Materials

Institutions use a range of promotional tools and methods to improve awareness of the survey and to encourage eligible students to participate. These include:

Using Ipsos MORI prepared promotional materials. Displaying official NSS branded promotional materials around the institution. Some methods used to maximise the coverage of these materials include:

- Targeting materials in places where final year students will see them. Some institutions work with course reps to identify 'traffic hotspots' such as learning resource centres/PC laboratories, lecture theatres, seminar rooms, the library, shops or bars. The NSS video/advert can also be played in these areas and screensaver/presentation slides can be displayed in final year lectures/tutorials.
- Targeted distribution of materials. For example, some institutions hand out flyers in lessons (e.g. with low response rates) or send them out in the post to any online or distance learners to promote the survey and encourage completion.

Creating institution-specific marketing materials. Some institutions prefer to create their own institutional branded posters, flyers, banners and screensavers. Others employ innovative promotional ideas such as NSS stickers on food labels, catering cards to be displayed on tables in cafes, bars, etc. and NSS branded clothing for representatives to wear on campus. Internal promotional materials must adhere to HEFCE's guidelines. Other promotional tools used include:

- *Communicating change.* Showing students what has changed as a result of the NSS and how they are listening, e.g. "You Said, We Did" campaigns.
- *On screen promotions.* Displaying information about the NSS on plasma screens and IT terminals around the institution.

- *Institutional mascot.* One institution has introduced a mascot that visits campuses with a laptop talking to final year students to encourage them to complete the survey.
- *Social media.* Building and maintaining a social media presence for the NSS at your institution throughout fieldwork where you can inform students of the dates of the survey, as well as providing them with links to more information on what the survey is and the survey video, and how the results have been used at your institution to implement change.

Internal communication and PR

- Publishing feature articles on the staff intranet to provide background information and tips to staff for engaging students.
- Articles to raise awareness such as feature interviews, publicising the previous year's prize draw winners and communicating changes that have been implemented as a result of NSS findings.
- Features in student papers and/or radio stations to encourage completion.

[Annex B](#) provides examples of articles that could be used as a basis for communication.

Engaging Student Bodies and Representatives

In the past few years, many institutions with a student union, association or guild (SU) identified the role of the Students' Union as important to the promotion of the NSS. SU support can give the NSS a student-friendly face and can run alongside your institution's main campaign, giving a student-led and student-focused approach. Furthermore, they identify that early engagement of the SU and involving them in planning can prove beneficial.

However, if your institution has a students' union, association or guild, you will need to establish if they are supporting the NSS this year to be able to rely on their support.

Creating a buzz. Student involvement with the SU means that they have an understanding of what appeals to potential respondents and can spread the word.

Targeting promotion. Some institutions consult their SU on the best places to display promotional materials, e.g. traffic hotspots. The SU offers a range of places to raise awareness, e.g. SU offices/facilities, shops, bars, etc.

Communicating with students. Some SUs have weekly newsletters, which can be used to promote the NSS.

NSS ambassadors. Many institutions have dedicated student/course reps that can help to spread the word to other students about the NSS. Some institutions have a dedicated NSS champion/ambassador to help formulate NSS campaigns and help promote the survey to final year students.

Student events. Institutions can include NSS promotions in any upcoming SU events, where reps can ask students to complete the survey there and then or hand out NSS-branded giveaways. Some institutions find that it is easier to approach students at these type of events where they are all gathered together.

Social media. Encouraging SU reps to promote the NSS on their social media profiles is an effective way to encourage completion.

Incentives

A range of institutions offer incentives to encourage students to complete the NSS. The most common items offered in the past included:

- Cash prizes
- High street vouchers – e.g. Amazon, book tokens, entertainment, shopping and travel
- Smartphones and tablets such as iPads and Kindles
- Graduation packages, e.g. gown hire, photo packages, champagne reception
- University Ball Tickets
- Vouchers for free coffees or meal deals
- Print and photocopy credits

Some institutions identify that they work with the SU to identify the incentive that would be most appropriate for their students.

The Power of Word of Mouth

Institutions recognise the importance of word of mouth promotion. This is achieved through SU representatives, department heads, administrators and/or tutors speaking directly with eligible students about the NSS. Remember:

Lecture shout-outs. By encouraging staff to include a dedicated slide at the end of every presentation, show the NSS video in lectures or hand out flyers with any reading lists in seminars.

Student representatives. Reps could spread the NSS word among their peers and illustrate the value of student opinion, they can create a presence for the survey on campus though creating NSS mascots and they can engage societies/associations.

Dedicated Time to Complete the Survey

The majority of institutions provide dedicated time or space to final year students to complete the NSS. These sessions must be held in neutral environments, e.g. computer rooms or study centres. Staff must not oversee students' responses or make them feel that they must answer in a certain way. Please make staff aware of the rules and regulations surrounding inappropriate influence.

Examples of how sessions are done include:

Allocating time in tutorials to complete the NSS. Some institutions build time into their timetables to ensure that students complete the NSS. Some tutors make sure that their class visits the PC lab or Learning Resource Centre.

Dedicated PCs or 'hubs' available for completion. Some institutions allocate computers or specific areas called 'hubs' specifically for the completion of the NSS during fieldwork. These labs are set up in areas visited by students.

Subject sessions. Some subject leads have introduced NSS sessions, where they try to entice eligible students to participate in the survey by offering an incentive. Some institutions hire a room and offer free pizza/lunch.

Mobile devices. Student reps with mobile devices can be sent to areas frequented by eligible students. This could be in the form of a stall with incentives for those who complete it there and then.

Planning and Coordination

Many institutions have a formal procedure for ensuring that response rates meet publication thresholds.

Dedicated NSS Operations Team and/or an NSS Steering Group

- Ensuring that representatives from across the institution meet regularly (e.g. once every 2 weeks) to discuss response rates and how to boost them.
- Getting a group together to brainstorm promotional ideas. They can openly discuss areas of low response and when appropriate, invite department/subject representatives to discuss areas of lower performance.
- Tracking email conversations between representatives to communicate weekly response rates and discuss promotional needs.
- Bringing representatives from each department together at regular meetings and encouraging them to cascade information to their colleagues in department meetings.

Communications planning. In order to maximise response rates, some institutions have developed a communication plan for the NSS Fieldwork before the launch of the survey.

Preparing for fieldwork. Formal plans to ensure that staff are fully briefed on the NSS process, the importance of reaching required response rates and the start and end dates of fieldwork.

Timetable for promotional activity. Some institutions produce a detailed plan of promotional activity so that they target students appropriately. This includes:

- Ensuring that students are aware of any prizes on offer and how the process for these works.
- Developing complementary email communications to reach students in the intervening periods between Ipsos MORI communications.
- Identification of key dates in the student and staff calendar that may affect participation, e.g. holidays, exams, and coursework deadlines.

Identification of key responsibilities. Some institutions have a formal document which identifies who will have responsibilities for communications, e.g.

those best placed to engage with students and what their key responsibilities should be.

Innovative ideas. Institutions explore different ideas to engage students with the NSS, including involving students from relevant specialisms to get involved with the promotion, e.g. Art & Design, Marketing and/or Communications to develop NSS strategies for the institution.

General awareness. Some institutions also explore ways to raise awareness of the NSS amongst non-final year students. This includes poster campaigns to promote changes that have been implemented as a result of NSS findings.

Contacting students. Survey fatigue and general annoyance from being over-contacted can prevent eligible students from participating in the survey. Institutions should be co-ordinating their contact activity to avoid this, for example:

- Planning communication in line with the Ipsos MORI timetable.
- Being aware of any other internal research that is being undertaken by the institution and planning communication so students are not bombarded.
- Ensuring that communications with students are staggered.
- Personalising emails or signing emails from representatives that are recognised by the student, e.g. Dean or subject head.

2. Communications checklist

Findings from the NSS 2017 suggest that contact from the institution plays a key role in boosting [response rates](#). Around 37% of students completing the online survey (who answered the relevant question) identified that they heard about the NSS from a lecturer/member of staff and 34% followed a link from their University or College homepage/portal.

Many institutions have kindly shared with Ipsos MORI a number of initiatives that they have found to be helpful in encouraging students to respond to the survey. The following section summarises some of the initiatives adopted, which institutions can follow both before and throughout the fieldwork period.

2.1. Pre-survey launch

- ❑ **Organise staff briefing(s).** Providing an overview of fieldwork, NSS background, how to engage students, what students will be asked and an overview of eligibility as well as the prize draw process (if offered). A useful summary document to circulate is [Annex A](#) of this document. Please ensure that all staff or colleagues involved with the NSS read and understand the guidelines on avoiding inappropriate influence and the marketing guidelines for promoting the survey and encouraging completion.
- ❑ **Develop a clear strategy and timeline for contacting students.** Hold meetings before the start of the survey with senior management, heads of school and marketing teams to discuss aims and build a communication plan around the Ipsos MORI's [survey schedule](#), as well as around any upcoming events in the student calendar. This is useful to avoid over-contacting students during stressful periods i.e. exams, or to capture them when they are all together, i.e. any SU events. This is also a good opportunity to ensure the marketing guidelines and rules on inappropriate influence are distributed across the higher levels at the institution.
- ❑ **Display promotional materials in high traffic areas.** Discuss with student reps and students where the most appropriate areas are – examples include libraries, student bars or lecture rooms.
- ❑ **Organise meetings with student representatives.** Discuss the plan for generating awareness for the survey on campus/site, as well as via the multitude of social media platforms
- ❑ **Inform student media and PR of the survey launch.** Contact institutional newspapers, radio, TV channels and resident bloggers of the survey launch, and prepare institutions' intranet/student portals – please use the supporting materials supplied by Ipsos MORI as a basis for communication
- ❑ **Develop electronic presence.** Display NSS screensavers and Powerpoint slides in all areas with PC access, lecture theatre screens and/or plasma TV screens. Play the NSS video and advert on plasma screens around campus and place on institutional websites, as well as on social media profiles to make students aware of the oncoming survey. Ensure that the NSS electronic banners are included on email signatures and that portals/intranet sites have details about the survey and a direct link to www.thestudentsurvey.com. Consider building a pre-survey micro-site, which can be branded locally and helps institutions to manage their own incentives more

effectively. These micro-sites link directly to the survey, and provide some background information and details about any incentives offered.

- ❑ **Build a social media presence for the NSS at your institution.** Inform students via your social media profiles (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) of the dates of the survey, as well as providing them with links to more information on what the survey is and the survey video, and how the results have been used at your institution to implement change ('You Said, We Did' campaign).
- ❑ **Send a pre-emptive email to students.** This can be sent the week before the launch of the survey to make eligible students aware of the email invitation they will be receiving from Ipsos MORI, any other communications they may receive regarding the survey (i.e. telephone calls if non-responsive) and what they should do with personalised email links. This is also a good opportunity to explain details of any prizes on offer and the process of how to enter any prize draws. This can be sent from a known figure at your institution and include a link to the survey website.

2.2. During the fieldwork period

- ❑ **Lecture shout-outs.** Ensure that lecturers/tutors are asking students to complete the survey and giving out the survey website. Lecturers should use the NSS video or advert to play to students or the Ipsos MORI produced PowerPoint slides. All lecturers or colleagues giving shout outs should be made aware of the guidelines for promoting the survey, particularly on what they can and cannot say in these shout outs. They should be especially wary of the tone and information they use.
- ❑ **Regular staff updates.** Circulate weekly response rate reports to staff and highlight areas that need to improve performance. Ensuring staff have a clear understanding of where their particular school/department is compared to others may aid them in how they promote the survey to their students.
- ❑ **Email reminders.** Ensure that central emails and course specific emails are sent to eligible students at times that do not disrupt the Ipsos MORI survey timetable. Please contact Ipsos MORI if you would like to discuss this.
- ❑ **Organise dedicated sessions to complete the online survey.** Many institutions hold dedicated sessions for students to complete the survey. This is done in many different ways, including:

- Teaching staff setting aside some time in their seminars to complete the survey.
- Organising sessions in a neutral environment (e.g. computer rooms or study centres).
- Sending representatives with mobile devices to places frequented by eligible students.
- Dedicated NSS stalls with mobile devices to complete the survey - some institutions offer incentives in return for students completing the survey there and then (e.g. sweets, chocolate, soft drinks...).

General NSS sessions in computer areas can possibly be incentivised (e.g. pizza, coffee, etc.). These sessions can also be course-specific where tutors' timetables are designed to fit in with specific sessions for their students, or can be timed in line with Ipsos MORI's communications to utilise personalised email links. Once students have completed the survey, there could be a dedicated area for them to take a photo or video which could then be uploaded to institutions' social media accounts.

Please see [Annex A](#) for a summary document that can be circulated to staff holding dedicated sessions; this will provide them with all the necessary information to give to students. Students should be encouraged to give their honest opinion. Please note that staff should not appear to be 'standing over students' and must not complete on behalf of students. Staff should make it clear that they are there to provide support on technical issues and not to monitor responses or attempt to influence the scores. There may be consequences where institutions are found to be inappropriately influencing students' responses. Please see [HEFCE's guidelines](#) for more information.

- Implement a dedicated Survey Day/Week for completing the NSS.** Organise a specific week during the fieldwork period when most students will be on campus, i.e. when they are back from placement and exams are not taking place. Encourage students to complete the NSS by holding activities, such as sports or party games in the same area where students can complete the survey.
- Consider offering incentives.** In addition to any prize draws being offered via the online survey through Ipsos MORI, local incentives can be used to boost flagging subjects/departments, such as free coffee in exchange for completing the survey.
- Run PR/media activity throughout the fieldwork.** Consider features on the launch of the NSS, how the results are used (you said, we did), etc.
- Word of mouth.** Create a presence on campus; consider lecture and tutorial visits, engaging societies/associations, mascots etc.

- ❑ **Creating response rate competitions between different schools/departments.** Circulating emails or PowerPoint slides to eligible students, or posting on social media profiles, each week with scores on a school by school basis may help to create a sense of competition, thus boosting [response rates](#). Offering an additional incentive to the winning school/department (e.g. money for more resources or charitable donations) can also encourage completion.
- ❑ **Maintain NSS social media presence.** Continue to promote the survey via the institution's social media profiles through regular posts including links to the online survey. For more ideas on how to use social media effectively, please see the '[Social Media](#)' section above. Consider how you may use a hashtag to support any of your campaigns, for example #NSSHadMySay.
- ❑ **Senior management support.** Support 'from the top' can be key to the success of the NSS at an institution. Senior staff may wish to write to students and departmental staff to explain the nature and purpose of the NSS as well as results relevant to your institution prior to the survey launch. Senior staff may also wish to remind staff and students that survey responses are treated anonymously, and students should feel free to express their honest opinions.
- ❑ **Students' Union (Association or Guild) or student rep involvement.** Students' Unions (Associations or Guilds) or course/student reps (if applicable) can give the NSS a student-friendly face and their support can run alongside the institution's main campaign, giving a student-led and student-focused approach. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) can also be a useful channel for communicating to students how feedback from previous years of the survey has made a difference. Lecture 'shout outs' by student representatives, handing out giveaways to students and setting up an NSS stall with dedicated mobile devices can be an excellent platform to promote the NSS during an institution's first week of the survey, as well as reminding students about the survey throughout the fieldwork period. SUs and student reps can also be instrumental in creating an on-campus buzz for the survey and reaching students through social media platforms.
- ❑ **Institutional staff.** Institutional staff and colleagues are well positioned to communicate the benefits and importance of the survey - they can communicate directly with students about how the results will be used by prospective students and to improve the student learning experience at the institution more generally. Please see [Annex A](#) for guidelines for staff to ensure that they are aware of the NSS promotional rules and regulations, particularly on avoiding anything that could be considered inappropriate influence.

Staff can utilise the promotional tools to promote the NSS during seminars and lectures, and direct emails from someone that the student is familiar with can also help boost student interaction with the survey.

- ❑ **Online promotion.** Online banners and links to www.thestudentsurvey.com make it easy for students to access the survey in their own time. The easier it is for students to log on to the survey, the more likely they are to complete it. We recommend using banners, screensavers, adverts/videos and links on institutional websites and computers made available for use by eligible students.
- ❑ **Targeted email reminders.** Sending targeted emails that invite eligible students to complete the survey at www.thestudentsurvey.com can be useful, however too many reminders may have an adverse effect. Please ensure that the content is signed off by a senior member of staff. The NSS team at Ipsos MORI is available to discuss the co-ordination of sending targeted emails to ensure that students are not over-contacted. Please see the Ipsos MORI communication schedule to ensure that direct communication happens at the optimum time during fieldwork.

Please remember when sending out reminder emails to only send these to students on your NSS target list.

- ❑ **Engaging 'harder-to-reach' students.** Some institutions undertake extra measures to engage students that have historically proved harder to reach. Some examples include:
 - **International students.** Some institutions liaise with student societies/associations to engage international students, briefing representatives on the importance of the survey and encouraging them to attend dedicated sessions.
 - **Distance learners/off site learners and students on placements.** Since these students are not necessarily exposed to the marketing materials or the 'on campus buzz', some institutions adopt additional measures to engage these students. Examples include sending flyers with any postal communication to these students, including any relevant promotions or information on student portals to engage online learners, arranging dedicated sessions through 'keep in touch days', reaching them via their social media accounts or sending direct emails from their course leaders outlining the importance of the survey and asking them to participate.

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.



Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.

Please show the extent of your agreement by selecting the box that reflects your current view of your course as a whole.

Definitely agree

Mostly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Mostly disagree

Definitely disagree

Not applicable

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

completing the survey. Staff should make it clear that they are there to provide support on technical issues and not to monitor responses.

When should I hold dedicated NSS completion sessions?

Dedicated sessions can be held at any time during the survey fieldwork. Students can log onto www.thestudentsurvey.com and select the option to 'Enter the Survey'. To utilise the personalised email links sent to student email accounts, you could also arrange sessions to coincide with their delivery:

- **Survey week 1** - arrange dedicated sessions on Friday or the following Monday
- **Survey week 2** - arrange dedicated sessions on Tuesday or Wednesday
- **Survey week 3** - arrange dedicated sessions on Monday

Sending targeted emails

Communication from someone known to the student is an effective method of promotion that encourages students to participate. In sending emails to eligible students, staff should make it clear that the NSS provides an opportunity to give their feedback in an anonymous way. Staff should encourage completion online via www.thestudentsurvey.com and acknowledge that the survey is independent of the institution.

Eligible students should not feel pressured to do the survey or told that by not responding or responding in a certain way will impact the value of their degrees.

Can I send reminders to eligible students?

Sending targeted emails that invite students to complete the survey at www.thestudentsurvey.com can be useful, however we would recommend against too many reminders as this may have an adverse effect. Staff should be aware of the impact of survey fatigue and time communications in a way that encourages participation rather than 'harass' students to complete the survey.

Please ensure that any emails sent to eligible students complement/coordinate with Ipsos MORI's and your institution's communication schedule. This helps to ensure that students are not over-contacted and that communications do not overlap with our activities. The email content should be signed off by a senior member of staff.

Please liaise with the Main NSS contact at your institution to ensure that emails are only being sent to eligible students.

Prize Draws

How does the prize draw process work?

You will be told if your institution is running a prize draw for all eligible students. If a prize draw is being run, you should communicate it to eligible students.

When entering the online survey, students can enter the prize draw on offer by ticking the 'Enter the prize draw' box which appears on screen before the main NSS questions. Students do not need to complete the survey in order to enter the prize draw.

After the closing date, Ipsos MORI will draw the required number of winners at random and notify the necessary NSS contacts at your institution.

Response rates

Will I get updates on response rates during fieldwork?

Ipsos MORI issues regular [response rates](#) to institutions throughout the fieldwork. Your NSS Main and Second contacts will have access to these reports and will either issue them to relevant members of staff or be able to provide you with more information.

Please note that the figures quoted in the NSS response rate reports are based on data collected during the fieldwork period. At the end of the NSS fieldwork, the NSS data undergoes a cleaning process. Part of this involves removing any 'bad interviews', that is interviews where the respondent selected 'Not applicable' for all of the core NSS questions or for a whole section of questions (e.g. 'the teaching on my course'), as an example. It is due to this cleaning process that [response rates](#) in the final data may not match the response rate reports.

B. Supporting Materials⁴

Intranet/news articles

Institution/subject/department intranet template:

The National Student Survey (NSS) 2018 is now live at [\[institution\]](#). The survey is open to mostly final year undergraduates, who can complete it now at www.thestudentsurvey.com.

What is the NSS?

The NSS is a nationally recognised annual survey of mostly final year undergraduates in the UK. The survey provides students with an opportunity to give their honest opinions on what they liked about their time on their course at [\[institution\]](#) as well as things that they feel could have been improved.

The survey is administered by [Ipsos MORI](#), an independent market research agency, so responses remain anonymous at all times.

Why should I take part?

- The NSS provides you with the opportunity to provide honest feedback on your student experience;
- Your feedback will be used to improve the student experience at [\[institution\]](#);
- The results are taken very seriously and inform the quality assurance system with regards to teaching quality;
- Results are used by prospective students, their families and advisors to make decisions on what and where to study.

Be heard at [\[institution\]](#).

What happens with the results?

The NSS results are made publicly available to help prospective students, their families and advisors make informed decisions of where and what to study. Institutions and supporting students' unions also use the data to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses to bring about change and enhancements to improve the learning experience for future generations of students.

Data from previous surveys are available on [Unistats](#) [more information on 'Key Information Sets' (KIS) is available at [\[institution web address for KIS widget\]](#)].

⁴ All supporting materials in Annex B will be translated into Welsh. Welsh institutions will be issued these materials once they are available.

[Institution] has been participating in the NSS for [number of years of participation] and as a result of listening to what former students had to say, the following changes have been made:

- [Insert examples of changes brought about by the by NSS results. E.g. extended library hours, review of the personal tutor system, investment in new PCs].

How do I complete it?

During [survey start week] eligible students will be sent an invitation email to complete the survey by [Ipsos MORI](#). Non-respondents may be contacted by telephone. You can complete the NSS online or via a mobile device at www.thestudentsurvey.com at any time from 8 January 2018 to 30 April 2018. As soon as you have completed the survey, you will not be contacted further by Ipsos MORI. You may opt out of the survey at any point during the fieldwork.

Letters/memos

1. Email to eligible students

[Do you want your opinions on your student experience to be heard? / Are you in your final year of a course leading to undergraduate qualifications or credits? Do you want your opinions on your student¹ experience to be heard?]

Take part in the **[National Student Survey \(NSS\) 2018!](#)** Whether you feel your time as a student at [institution] has been great, or you feel some aspects could be improved, the NSS gives you a unique opportunity to be heard at [institution].

Your opinions matter and can lead to real change within [institution]. Based on previous year's results we have implemented the following changes: [example of changes made by NSS results e.g. extended library hours, better access to personal tutors, invested in more PCs in campus].

NSS results are made publicly available through [Unistats](#) to help prospective students, their families and advisors make informed decisions of where and what to study. Be heard at [institution].

If you are eligible for the survey, [Ipsos MORI](#) will contact you by email during [survey start week] to invite you to fill in the survey online. However, you can complete the NSS online or via a mobile device at www.thestudentsurvey.com at any time from 8 January 2018 to 30 April 2018. Thank you in advance for taking part in the NSS!

2. Memo to staff

The National Student Survey 2018

The National Student Survey (NSS) 2018 will launch at [institution] on the [survey start week].

The NSS is a survey of mostly final year undergraduates in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. FE colleges with directly funded HE students (i.e. students in their final year of a course leading to undergraduate qualifications or credits) in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and Alternative Providers with specific course designation in England will also participate. The survey is part of the revised system of quality assurance for higher education, and is designed to run alongside the QAA institutional audit to generate more detailed public information about teaching quality. The NSS is commissioned by the [Higher Education Funding Council for England \(HEFCE\)](#), on behalf of the UK funding bodies and administered by [Ipsos MORI](#), an independent research company.

The NSS results are made available to participating institutions annually and are published nationally on the [Unistats](#) website.

Promotion of the NSS at a localised level is a key factor in achieving the required response rate for results to be made publicly available. Good response rates ensure that NSS data can be made available to prospective students, institutions and students' unions to support student choice and quality enhancement.

Local marketing of the survey cannot be over-emphasised. Although Ipsos MORI can communicate with non-responsive students and encourage participation, we are in the prime position to raise awareness of the survey, convey its importance and encourage participation. It is important to be aware of the marketing guidelines and what may constitute inappropriate influence. Please see the attached Staff Briefing [[attach Ipsos MORI's Advice for Staff in Annex A](#)] for more information. All internal marketing activity should have the aim to raise awareness of the NSS amongst mostly final year undergraduate students and encourage students to give honest and anonymous feedback on their course experience.

It is important that as many students as possible provide their feedback for the survey to generate reliable information. We need to achieve a response rate of at least 50% at institution level and in our subjects of study (combined with 10 respondents per cohort) in order for our data to be made publicly available. [[Last year we achieved an overall response rate of XX% and we are aiming to beat that this year](#)] [[Last year we only managed to achieve an overall response rate of XX% so we need to improve on this and reach at least 50%](#)].

During [survey start week] our eligible students will be sent an invitation email to complete the NSS. Those who have not completed the survey may later be contacted via telephone. Early online completion is desirable so please make your students aware of the NSS and encourage them to complete the survey online at www.thestudentsurvey.com (via computer or mobile device) before 30 April 2018. Students may also opt out of the survey at any point during fieldwork.

[NSS Coordinator/students' union contact] will be coordinating our NSS promotion this year and ensuring that guidelines issued by [HEFCE](#) in relation to the promotion of the survey are adhered to – more information is in the attached Staff Briefing. In short, please make sure that your students are:

- Encouraged to give their honest feedback on what they liked and did not like about their course;
- Not asked to fill in the survey while a member of staff is overseeing their responses or made to feel that their responses are being monitored;
- Not encouraged to reflect in their answers anything other than their genuine perception of their experience.

If you have any questions, please contact [NSS Coordinator] or Ipsos MORI at nss@ipsos.com. If your students have any questions, please direct them to www.thestudentsurvey.com or they can contact the student helpline at [Ipsos MORI](#) directly at thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com.

Many thanks for your help.

[NSS Stakeholder/Manager]

3. Briefing for course reps

The National Student Survey 2018

The National Student Survey (NSS) 2018 will launch at [institution] on the [survey start week].

The NSS is a survey of mostly final year undergraduates in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. FE colleges with directly funded HE students (i.e. students in their final year of a course leading to undergraduate qualifications or credits) in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and Alternative Providers with specific course designation in England will also participate. The annual survey gathers the opinions of students about their experiences on their course. It asks 27 core questions on a range of issues including the quality of teaching, learning opportunities, assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources, learning community and student voice.

The NSS provides a powerful resource for informing institutions on how to enhance the student learning experience. For course reps, the NSS provides valuable information on those that have studied on your course.

In order for the results to be made public, each institution and subject needs at least 10 students and 50% of eligible students to have responded. The higher the response rate, the better!

Student and course reps can make a real difference to response rates by raising awareness of the survey and the impact it can have, and by targeting their promotion of the survey in areas most likely to attract students, e.g. student shops or on social media sites. In order to ensure that [institution] achieves the required response rates for publication of their data, we are writing to ask for your support to help us to promote the survey to your peers.

Tips for promoting the survey include:

- Contacting those on your course informing them of what the NSS is, and why it is important to complete;
- Creating an exciting promotional campaign which will grab people's attention;
- Working with other student reps and asking for past NSS results which you can use when speaking to current students about what others have said;
- "You said, we did" campaigns are a great way of making people realise that their feedback makes a difference. It reflects how students' opinions in previous years and highlights the change that has resulted;
- Use the official NSS marketing materials, provided by Ipsos MORI;
- Read the Ipsos MORI marketing guidelines and tips in the Good Practice Guide.

During [survey start week], all eligible students will be sent an invitation email to complete the NSS. Those who have not completed the survey may later be contacted by telephone. Early online completion is desirable so please make your fellow students aware of the NSS and encourage them to complete the survey online at www.thestudentsurvey.com (via computer or mobile device) before 30 April 2018. Students may also opt out of the survey at any point during the fieldwork.

If you have any questions, please contact [NSS Coordinator] or Ipsos MORI at nss@ipsos.com. If your students have any questions, please direct them to www.thestudentsurvey.com or they can contact the student helpline at [Ipsos MORI](http://ipsos.mori) directly at thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com.

Many thanks for your help.

[NSS Stakeholder/Manager]

C. Bank of Optional Questions

B1. Personal Development

1. The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.
2. My communication skills have improved.
3. As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.

B2. Students' Union (Association or Guild)

1. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) had had a positive impact on my sense of belonging to the university or college.
2. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has had a positive impact on the local community.
3. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has helped me develop useful life skills.

B3. Careers

1. As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects.
2. Good advice is available for making career choices.
3. Good advice is available on further study opportunities.

B4. Course Content and Structure

1. All of the compulsory modules are relevant to my course.
2. There is an appropriate range of options to choose from on my course.
3. The modules of my course form a coherent integrated whole.

B5. Work Placements

Did your course involve any work placements?

- a. Yes (ask all questions in this section)
 - b. No (skip this section)
1. I received sufficient support and advice from my institution about the organisation of my placements.
 2. My placements were valuable in helping my learning.
 3. My placements have helped me to develop my skills in relation to my course.
 4. My placements have helped me to develop my general life skills.
 5. The taught part of my course was good preparation for my placements.

B6. Social Opportunities

1. I have had plenty of opportunities to interact socially with other students.
2. I am satisfied with the range of clubs and societies on offer.

3. I am satisfied with the range of entertainment and social events on offer.

B7. Course Delivery

1. Learning materials made available on my course have enhanced my learning.
2. The range and balance of approaches to teaching has helped me to learn.
3. The delivery of my course has been stimulating.
4. My learning has benefited from modules that are informed by current research.
5. Practical activities on my course have helped me to learn.

B8. The Physical Environment

1. Security has been satisfactory when attending classes.
2. My institution provides an appropriate environment in which to learn.

B9. Welfare Resources and Facilities

1. There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.
2. When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.

B10. Workload

1. The workload on my course is manageable.
2. This course does not apply unnecessary pressure on me as a student.
3. The volume of work on my course means I can always complete it to my satisfaction.
4. I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn.

B11. Assessment

1. Teaching staff test what I have understood rather than what I have memorised.
2. Assessment methods employed in my course require an in-depth understanding of the course content.

B12. Learning Community

1. I feel part of a group of students committed to learning.
2. I have been able to explore academic interests with other students.
3. I have learned to explore ideas confidently.
4. Within my course, I feel my suggestions and ideas are valued.
5. I feel part of an academic community in my college or university.

B13. Intellectual Motivation

1. I have found the course motivating.
2. The course has stimulated my interest in the field of study.
3. The course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.

B14. Entrepreneurial opportunities (NEW)

1. If I was interested in starting my own business, I know where I could find support in my institution.
2. My Higher Education experience has helped me develop skills that could help me run my own business in future.
3. As a result of my Higher Education experience, I am more likely to consider running my own business in the future.

B15. Employability and skills (NEW)

1. My Higher Education experience has helped me plan for my future career.
2. My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career.
3. The skills I have developed during my time in Higher Education will be useful for my future career.

B16. Environmental sustainability (NEW)

1. My institution encourages good environmental practice.
2. My course has encouraged me to think about environmental sustainability.
3. I have had opportunities to take part in activities supporting environmental sustainability.

B17. Student safety (NEW)

1. I feel safe to be myself at university/college.
2. My institution takes responsibility for my safety.

Please note that in nominating banks of NSS questions, institutions are advised to work with their partner institutions and students' unions, associations or guilds to ensure that their choices are taken into account.

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