

Press release

Date: 23 August 2006

Title: STUDENTS RATE THEIR COURSES HIGHLY

The results of the National Student Survey (NSS), released today, showed that around four in five of university students who responded to the survey in 2006 were satisfied with their higher education courses.

The survey, now in its second year, provided a snapshot of the higher education sector and asked students in their final year to respond to 22 questions relating to their learning and teaching experiences. It covered mainly higher education students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Not only was there, on the whole, an improvement in the level of satisfaction over last year in a response to a number of questions, but students indicated that they were particularly satisfied that:

- Their course was intellectually stimulating (81 per cent definitely or mostly agreed);
- Their communications skills had improved (79 per cent definitely or mostly agreed);
- Staff were enthusiastic about what they were doing (80 per cent definitely or mostly agreed); and
- They had been able to contact staff when they needed to (77 per cent definitely or mostly agreed).

Jamie McIndo, President of NUS Wales said:

"NUS Wales welcomes this year's results from the National Student Survey.

"The survey provides final year students with an opportunity to give a honest assessment of the course they have studied as well as providing valuable information for future students.

"The survey helps to develop a closer working relationship between higher education institutions and individual students' unions and the results show that students are keen to make an active contribution to the survey."

Professor Phil Gummatt, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said:

"I'm delighted to see this evidence from students directly, and independently, confirming their very high level of satisfaction with higher education in Wales."

A spokesperson for Higher Education Wales, the representative body of Vice Chancellors and Principals in Wales, said:

"These results are confirmation of the ongoing commitment of our higher education institutions to provide a high quality student experience and further evidence of the significant return universities make on Assembly Government investment.

"However, sustainable investment in the HE sector is essential if Welsh HEIs are to continue to attract and support local and national students while remaining globally competitive."

Jane Davidson, the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, said:

"This is great news for Welsh higher education institutions.

"It is essential that with the changing tuition fee regimes across the UK students can be confident in the high quality teaching and the whole student experience that they will get in Wales.

"We want to make sure that Welsh HEIs are first choice for students wherever they are from. Excellence of educational provision is something we must all strive for and these results prove that we are moving in the right direction."

The full results will be available on the Teaching Quality Information website, www.tqi.ac.uk, from 12 noon today.

Ends

Media contacts

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The National Student Survey

The second NSS was carried out in the spring of 2006 and 56 per cent of final year students responded (see note 6). The results show that over 30 per cent definitely agreed and 50 per cent mostly agreed that overall they were satisfied with the quality of their course; only 10 per cent mostly or definitely disagreed.

As well as providing useful information for prospective students, the NSS data show universities and colleges how they can improve the quality of the student experience. A wide range of innovations and improvements were spurred by the results of last year's survey, including new facilities and student support schemes; extended opening hours for libraries and other services; new assessment and feedback systems, and more effective student consultation procedures.

Responding to 22 questions in the NSS, covering six main areas of learning and teaching, responses indicated high levels of satisfaction. For example:

- 'The course is intellectually stimulating' (81 per cent definitely or mostly agree)
- 'My communications skills have improved (79 per cent definitely or mostly agree)
- 'Staff are enthusiastic about what they are doing (80 per cent definitely or mostly agree)
- 'I have been able to contact staff when I needed to' (77 per cent definitely or mostly agree).

The satisfaction level was based on responses from over 157,000 students in their final year (note 6). This represents 56 per cent of the 279,000 eligible students at 145 higher education institutions. Some 129 institutions achieved a return rate higher than 50 per cent, with the highest at 80 per cent. Included in the UK total were roughly 11,000 respondents attending an institution in Wales.

The Teaching Quality Information web-site

The TQI web-site helps prospective students make choices about what and where to study. It was launched in 2005, and recent improvements will make the site easier to

use. Further major improvements will be made in 2007, including closer links with the UCAS applications web-site.

The TQI site brings together a range of official, impartial, and up-to-date information about the quality of education offered by universities and colleges, including:

Statistics:

- data on students' entry qualifications, their continuation through their studies, awards achieved and the types of jobs obtained after graduation.

National Student Survey results:

- students' feedback ratings on key aspects of their education, such as academic support and learning resources.

Subject reports:

- reports and information published by each institution about the quality and standards of awards in specific subjects.

The site provides this information for each subject offered by each institution, and also allows users to generate side-by-side comparisons across several institutions at a time.

Notes to editors

1. The percentages used in this press release relate to full-time students. The proportion of part-time students who took part in this year's survey is lower than last year which means that the total of full and part-time students is not comparable for 2005 and 2006. Data for part-time students are however, available from HEFCE and will be on the TQI web-site.

2. The National Student Survey (NSS) is part of the Teaching Quality Information web-site which was launched in September 2005. The NSS covers higher education students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This year, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Glasgow, St Andrews University and the independent University of Buckingham are also taking part, as are students on initial teacher training courses funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools.

3. The NSS was carried out by Ipsos MORI. The data are available on the TQI web-site which is developed and maintained by HERO Ltd.

4. The TQI web-site brings together key sources of official information about the quality of UK higher education. It is part of an initiative to make more information

available to applicants and their advisers, and will help prospective students make better informed decisions about what and where to study.

5. Due to differences in quality assurance arrangements in different parts of the UK, some types of information are not published for all institutions.

6. Most students who were near the end of undergraduate courses (bachelors degrees, foundation degrees, higher education certificates and diplomas) were invited to take part, totalling 279,000 full-time and part-time students. A very small proportion of part-time students who completed the survey may not have been in their final year. The selection of students invited to take part was the same for all institutions, using data collected centrally by the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

7. Students responded to questions on the quality of teaching on their own particular courses. Courses were then grouped into 41 different subject areas in order to present the results in a more accessible way.

Background - HEFCW

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body, established in May 1992, which assumed responsibility for funding higher education in Wales on 1 April 1993.

Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the Council is responsible for the administration of funds made available by the Assembly in support of the provision of education, the undertaking of research by higher education institutions, and the provision of prescribed courses of higher education at further education institutions.

Under the Education Act 1994, the Council is responsible for accrediting providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, the Council provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.

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