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Cylchlythyr

Circular

## Plans for the National Student Survey 2012

**Date:** 31 October 2011  
**Reference:** W11/38HE  
**To:** Heads of higher education institutions in Wales  
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in  
Wales  
**Response by:** 25 November 2011  
**Contact:** Name: Gemma Long  
Telephone: 029 2068 2285  
Email: [gemma.long@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:gemma.long@hefcw.ac.uk)

This circular provides information on the plans for the 2012 National Student Survey (NSS). It also provides further information about outcomes from earlier surveys and general features of the survey. Institutions should review their NSS contact details and provide contact details for students to Ipsos MORI by **25 November 2011**.

This document is available online, in large print, Braille, on CD and on audio CD and cassette. Should you or someone you know require this in an alternative format, please contact us on (029) 2068 2225 or email [info@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk).



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**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
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## Introduction

1. This circular announces the plans for the 2012 National Student Survey (NSS). It also provides further information about outcomes from earlier surveys and general features of the survey.
2. In Wales, the survey includes all higher education (HE) provision provided in higher education institutions (HEIs), all HE franchised to further education institutions (FEIs) and, for the first time, HE in FE provision that is directly funded by HEFCW.
3. Details of plans for the 2012 NSS and the action required are at **Annex A** for higher education institutions (HEIs), and **Annex B** for directly funded FEIs. Action is needed by all institutions by 25 November 2011.

## Actions for institutions

4. All HEIs and directly funded FEIs should review, and update if necessary, their NSS institutional contact details. This information should be supplied to Ipsos MORI by **25 November 2011** using the 'HEI & FEC Details' form, which is available on the Ipsos MORI NSS extranet at [www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet](http://www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet)<sup>1</sup>.
5. All institutions should populate their 2012 NSS target lists with the requested contact details for students on these lists and supply them to Ipsos MORI, also by **25 November 2011**.
6. Instructions on how to supply this information are included in the NSS 2012 guidance for institutions, which will be available on the Ipsos MORI NSS extranet by the end of October. The guidance includes information regarding appropriate promotion of the survey.

## Results of the 2011 NSS

7. The 2011 NSS results have been published on the Unistats web-site, [www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com), with more detailed results available to institutions via the Ipsos MORI NSS results site, [www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results](http://www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results). The results are once again very positive, and demonstrate that universities and colleges provide a high-quality experience for their students. The overall satisfaction rate for 2011 was 83 per cent in Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a password-protected site and login details were sent to the nominated contacts by Ipsos MORI at the end of October.

8. Our Corporate Strategy notes that we will monitor institutional performance, 'including through the National Student Survey results.' It identifies a measure relating to the NSS as follows: 'The three year rolling average score for Wales in the National Student Survey 'overall satisfaction' question will be equal to, or greater than, the comparative score for the UK.'
9. The rolling average for the UK as a whole from 2009-2011 for overall satisfaction was 82.7%, and the rolling average for Wales for the same period was 82.7%. Therefore for 2011 our Corporate Strategy target was achieved.
10. Approximately 265,000 students completed the survey this year, including over 21,000 from Wales. This is an increase of approximately 12,000 respondents across the UK, and takes the response rate to 65% for the UK, and 66% in Wales, the highest response rate the NSS has achieved in its seven years. A total of 153 HEIs and 99 FECs across the UK took part.

### **Publication of Time series**

11. In April 2011, HEFCE published a five-year time series, covering the period between 2006 and 2010, of the overall scores for the higher education sector across the UK<sup>2</sup>. HEFCE intend to publish these data annually, providing details of satisfaction scores split by student and course characteristics.

### **NSS 2012**

12. The NSS will be repeated in 2012 across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and some institutions in Scotland. Ipsos MORI will continue to manage the survey process, and the 2012 NSS will have a similar format and timetable to the 2011 survey.
13. The survey questionnaire will remain the same for the 2012 NSS, except for the addition of an extra question on student satisfaction with the students' union. The Higher Education Public Information Steering Group (HEPISG), which is UK wide and advises on all matters relating to public information, has agreed to the following question being added after the main body of questions:

*Thinking of all the services, including support, activities and academic representation provided by the Students' Union at your institution, to what extent do you agree with the following statement:*

*'I am satisfied with the Students' Union at my institution'<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> National Student Survey: findings and trends 2006 to 2010', HEFCE 2011/11  
[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11\\_11/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11_11/)

<sup>3</sup> For franchise HE in FE students, it is intended that this question refers to the institution at which they are studying

14. In addition, following consultation with the sector, we outlined in [Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps \(HEFCW Circular W11/27HE\)](#) that the 2012 NSS will, for the first time, allow students' unions in Wales to select an optional question bank for their institution. This selection would be submitted by the institution to Ipsos MORI.
15. We have asked Ipsos MORI to work closely with the nominated NSS contacts for directly funded HE in FE provision to encourage high rates of student participation.
16. Ipsos MORI will continue to facilitate a centrally managed incentive scheme on behalf of institutions to encourage students to take part in the survey.
17. Ipsos MORI will liaise directly with its NSS contacts at institutions on further details of the 2012 NSS, options for timing, adding optional questions and for marketing materials. As with the 2011 survey, institutions will be able to select one of five starting weeks for their survey, between 9 January and 6 February 2012.
18. We would like to thank all those responsible for the ongoing success of the NSS. It continues to be an invaluable tool in gathering students' views about their experience of higher education, and in helping institutions to continue to improve their provision according to their students' needs. We are committed to working with all our stakeholders for the 2012 survey to maintain an impressive response rate.

#### **Further information / responses to**

19. For further information, contact Gemma Long (tel 029 2068 2285, email [gemma.long@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:gemma.long@hefcw.ac.uk)).

## Annex A

### Guidance on the 2012 NSS for higher education institutions

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) will be carried out in 2012 across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and some institutions in Scotland. Ipsos MORI will continue to manage the survey process, and the 2012 NSS will have a similar format and timetable to the 2011 survey. This annex provides guidance specifically for higher education institutions (HEIs).
2. HEIs can access their target lists for the 2012 NSS via the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data collection system. They should provide the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos MORI by **25 November 2011**. Further details can be found in the NSS 2012 guidance document, which will be published by Ipsos MORI and made available on the NSS extranet, [www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet](http://www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet), by the end of October. Additions to the target list are only permitted where a student's course length has changed such that they are now expected to complete between 1 February 2012 and 31 January 2013 inclusive. Any such additions must be agreed by HEFCE<sup>4</sup> prior to their inclusion in the final target list.
3. As in the 2011 NSS, students will be able to opt out when the institution asks if they wish to have their contact details passed on to the survey agency (Ipsos MORI) or at any stage during the survey process.
4. As in the 2011 NSS, institutions may choose up to a maximum of six banks of optional questions and may include up to two additional questions specific to their institution, to make the survey more useful to institutions. As stated in [Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps \(HEFCW Circular W11/27HE\)](#) students' unions in Wales should be able to select an optional question bank for their institution. These questions will be administered to online respondents only, after the main NSS questions have been completed. Results of the optional banks of questions are for institutions' internal use only, and are therefore not published.
5. We encourage HEIs to talk to their students' unions, and to partner FEIs delivering franchise HE in FE provision, to ensure that their input is considered in the selection of banks and wording of institution-specific questions.

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<sup>4</sup> On behalf of all funders of the NSS

## **Students of NHS and NLIAH funded provision**

6. Students of NHS and NLIAH<sup>5</sup> funded provision in Wales will continue to take part in the full survey methodology. These students will be included in the NSS target lists generated by HESA, and institutions should populate these with the relevant student contact details and return them to Ipsos MORI in the usual way.

## **Scope and coverage of the survey**

7. The coverage of the 2012 NSS is:
  - a. All HEIs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, most Scottish HEIs and the independent University of Buckingham. Students on initial teacher training courses in Wales, and those funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools in England are also included.
  - b. All students studying on directly funded higher education courses at FEIs in England and Wales. FEIs in Wales that are directly funded by HEFCW will be taking part for the first time in 2012.
  - c. All full-time and part-time undergraduate students registered at these HEIs and FEIs, during their final year of study (or, for flexible programmes where the final year cannot be predicted, after they are expected to have undertaken more than one full-time equivalent (FTE) and not before their third year of study) with the following exceptions:
    - i. Students on programmes that do not lead to undergraduate qualifications or credits;
    - ii. Students on a course lasting one year or one FTE, or less;
    - iii. Any students who were eligible to complete the 2011 NSS (whether or not they responded) and who remain at the same institution; and
    - iv. Any students who we expect to have completed less than one FTE since they were last surveyed by the end of academic year 2011/12.
8. Students are included in the 2012 survey population if they are expected to complete between 1 February 2012 and 31 January 2013 inclusive.
9. As was the case for the 2011 survey, it will not be possible to add extra students to the NSS target list once it has been generated. The one exception to this is where the length of a student's course has decreased after an institution has submitted its HESA return, so that they now finish their course within the dates stipulated in paragraph 8 of this annex and meet the eligibility

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<sup>5</sup> National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare

criteria more generally for the survey. If you wish to add students to the target list, contact Ipsos MORI at [nss@ipsos.com](mailto:nss@ipsos.com) prior to submitting your sample, stating:

- the number of extra students you wish to add;
- the HESA unique student identifiers (HUSIDs); and
- for each student, how they meet the criteria in paragraph 7, with any supporting information you consider relevant.

Once extra students are added to the target list, it is not possible to remove them.

10. Taught postgraduate students are not included in the NSS. This may change in the future, but it is unlikely that the NSS, designed for undergraduates, could simply be extended to postgraduates without significant adaptation of the questionnaire design, administrative methodology, timing and reporting methods.

### **Reasons for excluding individuals from the survey**

11. Since the survey began, we have enabled institutions to exclude students from the target population and will continue to do so for the 2012 NSS. Therefore, the following are to be excluded from the survey:
  - a. Students who are deceased;
  - b. Students with serious health difficulties (including mental health difficulties) where seeking a response may be distressing for the student; and
  - c. Students who, having been informed that their contact details will be passed onto the survey agency (Ipsos MORI) for the purposes of the NSS, request that they do not wish to be contacted (students will also be able to opt out during the survey process).

These are the only grounds on which students may be excluded from the target population.

12. As in the 2011 NSS, institutions should code all excluded students on their sample submission as category c (regardless of whether they meet criteria a, b or c above) and institutions should not provide contact details for these students.
13. If a HEI identifies an error after it has submitted data to HESA but then wishes to remove students, we require it to submit a revised return to HESA that generates a revised target list. HESA will apply a charge of 20 per cent of the institution's annual subscription to meet the costs of processing this change.

14. To enable us to monitor exclusions and verify their consistent application, institutions should retain evidence to support exclusions. Where a student asks that their details are not passed on, we would expect institutions to retain evidence of this request. If the number of such requests at any HEI is so high as to affect our ability to conduct the survey successfully, we will discuss this with the institution.
15. However, students should not be removed from the file even though their contact details are not supplied.
16. Although some students may withdraw in their final year, they will have had a significant interaction with the institution, so their opinions are valuable and they should be included.

#### **Process for supplying student contact data**

17. Following submission of the HESA data, a target list of students to be included in the NSS will automatically be generated. The institution should then provide contact details, according to the standard template that will be supplied by Ipsos MORI, for all students on the list.
18. As in the 2011 NSS, students should be informed by the institution that their contact details may be passed on for the 2012 survey. For HEIs, text to explain this has been added to the model HESA student data collection notice.
19. Institutions have the opportunity to define their own structure for receiving institutional feedback, through an optional field on the student target list to indicate the internal 'department code' for each student. This would be instead of, or in addition to, feedback using the structure of the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS). These codes, where provided, will be used solely for providing feedback to the institution.
20. Institutions should provide the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos MORI by **25 November 2011**. Ipsos MORI will provide guidance to its contacts on how to supply these lists. We have achieved a high response rate for the survey to date, and to ensure this continues it is important that institutions provide robust contact details to Ipsos MORI by this date.

## Administration of the survey

21. As in previous years, the survey will be conducted during the 2012 spring term so that the results can be published in summer 2012, in time to inform the next cohort of applicants to higher education. To avoid concerns regarding impact on internal surveys, Ipsos MORI will continue to:
  - a. Independently brand the NSS, which clearly distinguishes the purpose of the NSS; and
  - b. Centrally manage the survey's distribution, so that institutions are not involved in contacting students to complete the NSS.
22. The five-week 'window' approach will continue, so institutions can choose to start the survey at a time that does not clash with examinations, fits with term timetables and so on. Institutions may select a week between 9 January and 6 February 2012 for the survey to start.
23. Ipsos MORI will conduct the survey at each institution using a set sequence of e-mail, postal and telephone surveying. This will take up to eight weeks at each institution (although there may be a need for some targeted follow-up during and beyond this time to increase response rates). To personalise the survey to the student and to institutions, Ipsos MORI will deploy the survey modes more tactically to help increase online responses and reduce survey costs.
24. We wish to avoid extending this window because that could jeopardise publication of the results in time for them to be useful for the next cohort of students. However, we will consider individual requests for a short extension, where the activities of students during the window make it impractical to conduct the survey at that time. Any institution that wishes to make a case for an extension should contact Ipsos MORI by **25 November 2011**.

## Branding and awareness-raising

25. Comprehensive guidance on the NSS 2012, including guidelines on appropriate promotion of the survey, is available from the Ipsos MORI NSS extranet.
26. As in previous years, Ipsos MORI will produce promotional materials for institutions and students' unions to distribute locally. Promotional materials will be bilingual, giving equal prominence to the Welsh and English text. However, if institutions and/or students' unions wish to use the NSS branding to develop their own marketing material they may do so, and should discuss this with Ipsos MORI. Ipsos MORI will advise on good practice and offer guidelines to ensure a reasonable degree of consistency across the sector. When it contacts

institutions, Ipsos MORI will discuss who in the institution is best placed to coordinate promotional activity.

27. As in the 2011 NSS, Ipsos MORI will manage an incentive scheme for institutions that wish to take part. This is a centrally managed scheme that enables institutions to provide an incentive to students to complete the NSS. For example, some institutions have provided printer credits for students who completed the survey online.
28. For the 2012 survey, students on flexible programmes will receive tailored communication that more accurately reflects their participation in higher education.

### **Questionnaire distribution**

29. Ipsos MORI manages the NSS centrally. There are three methods of data collection: online, post and telephone. Ipsos MORI operates a live, open-access web-site, so that students can log in and complete the survey (this is in addition to the option to respond by following the link in a personalised e-mail). The site verifies the identity of students at the point of logging in; once students have completed the survey and their response is validated, they will be automatically removed from the target list and not contacted further. To enable this, and to enable efficient working of the survey more generally, institutions should adhere to the deadline for supplying student contact details.
30. Although there are three methods of data collection, we are committed to increasing the online response rate and so reducing the amount of postal and telephone contact. We have had some success in achieving this since the 2005 survey. However, telephoning remains an important element of the survey and will continue, so we expect institutions to provide students' landline and mobile telephone numbers where possible.
31. In order to monitor responses and to process data for analysis and reporting, all responses are linked to students' HESA student identifier. Postal questionnaires will be personalised and include the student identifier. Telephone interviewers will have automatic access to identifiers. Once students have completed the survey, they will be removed from the target list and not contacted further.
32. Throughout the process Ipsos MORI will send reminders to students who have not responded.

33. Response rates will be continuously monitored during the process, by institution and by JACS-based subject area. During the telephone stage, response rates will be reviewed and some areas may be identified for additional, targeted follow-up activity, to bring response up to a sufficient level to report results. This additional activity would involve reminders by e-mail, text message and post.
34. At any stage during the survey process students may opt out of the survey and will not be contacted again. To do this, students will need to verify their identity by providing some data such as their date of birth.
35. Ipsos MORI follow up with students and institutions where response rates are looking as if they will be below those that can be published (ie 50% and 23 students responding). The completeness and accuracy of students' contact data, as supplied by institutions, will be a significant factor in the survey's ability to achieve this.

### **Publication of 2012 NSS results**

36. A major purpose of the NSS is to provide information to help potential students and their advisers make choices about higher education (It also has an important function in enhancement by helping institutions to identify areas that students have concerns about). Therefore all results that meet the publication threshold will be published in summer 2012. Following advice to HEPISG, it agreed that the results from students studying on directly funded higher education programmes in FEIs will be shown as being from the institution at which the student studied for the majority of their first year. This will help potential students make informed choices about what and where to study. The primary place where 2012 NSS results will be published will be as part of a replacement for Unistats that will include the KIS (which contain some of the NSS questions - for further information see [HEFCW Circular W11/33: Key information sets: further information and request for feedback on technical guidance](#)).
37. The current publication threshold for NSS results on the Unistats web-site is a 50 per cent response rate and at least 23 students responding. This threshold will be maintained in the new arrangements.
38. We will also make more detailed data available to institutions to help them to identify good practice and improve the student experience. This is currently undertaken by Ipsos MORI via its results web-site<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results](http://www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results)

## Annex B

### Guidance on the 2012 NSS for further education institutions directly funded by HEFCW

1. The 2012 National Student Survey (NSS) will take place across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and some institutions in Scotland. Ipsos MORI manages the survey process. This annex provides guidance specifically for directly further education institutions (FEIs), who will be participating in the NSS for the first time in 2012.
2. In collaboration with Colegau Cymru, we have developed the HE in FE Guide to the National Student Survey, which we hope will be of use to institutions<sup>7</sup>.
3. Guidance on extracting the NSS target list of students eligible to be surveyed from the LLWR has been issued by HEFCW to data contacts at FE institutions with directly funded HE provision in Wales. Initial spreadsheets can be downloaded from <https://www.hefcw.ac.uk/unistatsnss/>. Data contacts are reminded that guidance already provided has asked for final lists of eligible students to be agreed with HEFCW by **18 November 2011**. For further information please contact [hestats@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:hestats@hefcw.ac.uk).
4. Institutions may choose up to a maximum of six banks of optional questions and may include up to two additional questions specific to their institution, to make the survey more useful to institutions. As stated in [Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps \(HEFCW Circular W11/27HE\)](#) students' unions in Wales should be able to select an optional question bank for their institution. These questions will be administered to online respondents only, after the main NSS questions have been completed. Results of the optional banks of questions are for internal use only, and are therefore not published.
5. Students will be able to opt out when the institution asks if they wish to have their contact details passed on to the survey agency (Ipsos MORI) or at any stage during the survey process.

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<sup>7</sup> Available on the Colegau Cymru website, <http://www.colegaucymru.ac.uk>

## Scope and coverage of the survey

6. The coverage of the 2012 NSS is:
  - a. All HEIs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, most Scottish HEIs, and the independent University of Buckingham. Students on initial teacher training courses in Wales, and those funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools in England are also included.
  - b. All students studying on directly funded higher education courses at FEIs in England and Wales.
  - c. All full-time and part-time undergraduate students registered at these HEIs and FEIs, during their final year of study (or, for flexible programmes where the final year cannot be predicted, after they are expected to have undertaken more than one full-time equivalent (FTE) and not before their third year of study) with the following exceptions:
    - i. Students on programmes that do not lead to undergraduate qualifications;
    - ii. Students on a course lasting one year or one FTE, or less;
    - iii. Any students who were eligible to complete the 2011 NSS (whether or not they responded) and who remain at the same institution; and
    - iv. Any students who we expect to have completed less than one FTE since they were last surveyed by the end of academic year 2011/ 12.
7. Students are included in the 2012 survey population if they are expected to complete between 1 February 2012 and 31 January 2013 inclusive.
8. It will not possible to add extra students to the NSS target list once it has been generated. The one exception to this is where the length of a student's course has decreased, so that they now finish their course within the dates stipulated in paragraph 7 of this annex and meet the eligibility criteria more generally for the survey. If you wish to add students to the target list, contact Ipsos MORI at [nss@ipsos.com](mailto:nss@ipsos.com) prior to submitting your sample, stating:
  - the number of extra students you wish to add;
  - the learner identifiers (LEARN\_ID); and
  - for each student, how they meet the criteria in paragraph 6, with any supporting information you consider relevant.Once extra students are added to the target list, it is not possible to remove them.
9. Taught postgraduates are not included in the NSS. This may change in the future, but it is unlikely that the NSS, designed for undergraduates, could simply be extended to postgraduates without significant adaptation of the

questionnaire design, administrative methodology, timing and reporting methods.

### **Reasons for excluding individuals from the survey**

10. Since the survey began, we have enabled institutions to exclude students from the target population and will continue to do so for the 2012 NSS. Therefore, the following are to be excluded from the survey:
  - a. Students who are deceased;
  - b. Students with serious health difficulties (including mental health difficulties), where seeking a response may be distressing for the student; and
  - c. Students who, having been informed that their contact details will be passed onto the survey agency (Ipsos MORI) for the purposes of the NSS, request that they do not wish to be contacted.

These are the only grounds on which students may be excluded from the target population.

11. Institutions should code all excluded students on their sample submission as category c (regardless of whether they meet criteria a, b or c above) and institutions should not provide contact details for these students (students will also be able to opt out during the survey process)
12. If an FEI identifies an error after the target list has been finalised, but then wishes to remove students, it will need to explain to HEFCE<sup>8</sup> the nature of the error, the students affected and provide an explanation of how it will ensure the error does not occur again. HEFCE will then decide if these students should be removed from the target list.
13. To enable us to monitor exclusions and verify their consistent application, FEIs should retain evidence to support exclusions. Where a student asks that their details are not passed on, we would expect institutions to retain evidence of this request. If the number of such requests at any FEI is so high as to affect our ability to conduct the survey successfully, we will discuss this with the institution.
14. Although some students may withdraw in their final year, they will have had a significant interaction with the institution, so their opinions are valuable and should be included.

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<sup>8</sup> Acting on behalf of all funders of the NSS

## Process for supplying student contact data

15. HEFCW are working with FE colleges with directly funded HE provision on deriving the target list of students for inclusion in the NSS (see paragraph 3 of this Annex). When the target list of students to be included in the NSS has been verified the institution should then provide contact details, according to the standard template that will be supplied by Ipsos MORI, for all students on the list.
16. FEIs should check the wording of the Privacy Notice which students sign at enrolment to ensure that students have been asked for permission and/or provided the opportunity to opt out of contact for general surveys (see wording of Privacy Notice supplied in the latest LLWR manual at Annex 14). If the Privacy Notice that students in the target list were last provided with did not request this permission or give the opportunity to opt out, then FEIs will need to contact these students and obtain permission before the list is provided to Ipsos MORI. HEFCW will provide FEIs with suggested wording for students if needed. Discussions about the suitability of privacy notices at FEIs are ongoing between HEFCW statisticians and data contacts at FEIs. For further information please contact [hestats@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:hestats@hefcw.ac.uk).
17. Institutions have the opportunity to define their own structure for receiving institutional feedback, through an optional field on the student target list to indicate the internal 'department code' for each student. This would be instead of, or in addition to, feedback using the structure of the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS). These codes, where provided, will be used solely for providing feedback to the institution.
18. Institutions should provide the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos MORI by **25 November 2011**. Ipsos MORI will provide guidance to its contacts on how to supply these lists. We have achieved a relatively high response rate for the survey to date, and to ensure this continues it is important that institutions provide robust contact details to Ipsos MORI by this date.

## Administration of the survey

19. The survey will be conducted during the 2012 spring term so that the results can be published in summer 2012, in time to inform the next cohort of applicants to higher education. To avoid concerns regarding impact on internal surveys, Ipsos MORI will continue to:
  - a. Independently brand the NSS, which clearly distinguishes the purpose of the NSS; and

- b. Centrally manage the survey's distribution, so that institutions are not involved in contacting students to complete the NSS.
20. The five-week 'window' approach will continue, so institutions can choose to start the survey at a time that does not clash with examinations, fits with term timetables and so on. Institutions may select a week between 9 January and 6 February 2012 for the survey to start.
  21. Ipsos MORI will conduct the survey at each institution using a set sequence of e-mail, postal and telephone surveying. This will take up to eight weeks at each institution (although there may be a need for some targeted follow-up during and beyond this time to increase response rates). To personalise the survey to the student and to institutions, Ipsos MORI will deploy the survey modes more tactically to help increase online responses and reduce survey costs.
  22. We wish to avoid extending this window because that could jeopardise publication of the results in time for them to be useful for the next cohort of students. However, we will consider individual requests for a short extension, where the activities of students during the window make it impractical to conduct the survey at that time. Any institution that wishes to make a case for an extension should contact Ipsos MORI by **25 November 2011**.

### **Branding and awareness raising**

23. Comprehensive guidance on the NSS 2012, including guidelines on appropriate promotion of the survey, is available from the Ipsos MORI NSS extranet.
24. As in previous years, Ipsos MORI will produce promotional materials for institutions and students' unions to distribute locally. Promotional materials will be bilingual giving equal prominence to the Welsh and English text. However, if institutions and/or students' unions wish to use the NSS branding to develop their own marketing material, they may do so and should discuss this with Ipsos MORI. Ipsos MORI will advise on good practice and offer guidelines to ensure a reasonable degree of consistency across the sector. When it contacts institutions, Ipsos MORI will discuss who in the institution is best placed to co-ordinate promotional activity.
25. As in the 2011 NSS, Ipsos MORI will manage an incentive scheme for institutions that wish to take part. This is a centrally managed scheme that enables institutions to provide an incentive to students to complete the NSS. For example, some institutions have provided printer credits for students who completed the survey online.

26. For the 2012 survey, students on flexible programmes will receive tailored communication which more accurately reflects their participation in higher education.

### **Questionnaire distribution**

27. Ipsos MORI manages the NSS centrally. There are three methods of data collection: online, post and telephone. Ipsos MORI operates a live, open-access web-site, so that students can log in and complete the survey (this is in addition to the option to respond by following the link in a personalised e-mail). The site verifies the identity of students at the point of logging in; once students have completed the survey and their response is validated, they will be automatically removed from the target list and not contacted further. To enable this, and to enable efficient working of the survey more generally, institutions should adhere to the deadline for supplying student contact details
28. Although there are three methods of data collection, we are committed to increasing the online response rate and so reducing the amount of postal and telephone contact. We have had some success in achieving this since the 2005 survey. However, telephoning remains an important element of the survey and will continue, so we expect institutions to provide students' landline and mobile telephone numbers where possible.
29. In order to monitor responses and to process data for analysis and reporting, all responses are linked to learner identifiers (LEARN\_ID) . Postal questionnaires will be personalised and include the student identifier. Telephone interviewers will have automatic access to identifiers. Once students have completed the survey, they will be removed from the target list and not contacted further.
30. Throughout the process Ipsos MORI will send reminders to students who have not responded.
31. Response rates will be continuously monitored during the process, by institution and by JACS-based subject area. During the telephone stage, response rates will be reviewed and some areas may be identified for additional, targeted follow-up activity, to bring response up to a sufficient level to report results. This additional activity includes reminders by e-mail, text message and post.
32. Students may opt out of the survey at any stage during the process and will not be contacted again. To do this, students will need to verify their identity by providing some data, such as their date of birth.

33. Ipsos MORI follow up with students and institutions where response rates are looking as if they will be below those that can be published (ie 50% and 23 students responding). The completeness and accuracy of students' contact data, as supplied by institutions, will be a significant factor in the survey's ability to achieve this.

### **Publication of 2012 NSS results**

34. A major purpose of the NSS is to provide information to help potential students and their advisers make choices about higher education. It also has an important function in enhancement by helping institutions to identify areas about which students have concerns. Therefore all results that meet the publication threshold will be published, in summer 2012. Following advice to HEPISG it agreed that the results from students studying on directly funded higher education programmes in FEIs will be shown as being from the institution at which the student studied for the majority of their first year. This will help potential students make informed choices about what and where to study. The primary place where 2012 NSS results will be published will be as part of a replacement for Unistats that will include the KIS (each of which in themselves contains some of the NSS questions (for further information see HEFCW Circular W11/33: Key information sets: further information and request for feedback on technical guidance)); the students included in each KIS will be determined by the general qualification aim of the programme (COURSEAIM) included in the collection of data for the KIS.
35. The current publication threshold for NSS results on the Unistats web-site is a 50 per cent response rate and at least 23 students responding. This same threshold will be maintained in the new arrangements.
36. We will also make more detailed data available to institutions to help them to identify good practice and to improve the student experience. This is currently undertaken by Ipsos MORI via its results web-site<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results](http://www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results)