

## Cylchlythyr | Circular

# National Student Survey outcomes for part-time students

**Date:** 05 April 2012  
**Reference:** W12/13HE  
**To:** Heads of higher education institutions in Wales  
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales  
**Response by:** No response required  
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This Circular provides information on the National Student Survey outcomes for part-time students in 2011. We encourage you to investigate the data further in your own context, including that for franchise provision, and to take action as appropriate.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please telephone us on (029) 2068 2225 or email [info@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk).



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## Introduction

1. This Circular provides National Student Survey outcomes for part-time students in 2011. We encourage you to investigate the data further in your own context, including that for franchise provision, and to take action as appropriate.

## Background

2. The National Student Survey (NSS) has been carried out annually with final year undergraduate students since 2005. Therefore 2011 was the seventh year in which the survey was operated. HEFCE coordinates the NSS on behalf of all the funding bodies.
3. The results are published annually on the [Unistats website](#), the contract for which is currently held by a UCAS-Hotcourses consortium. In the course of 2009/10 this became integrated with the Directgov website. From September 2012 the NSS results will be presented on a new website, which will also host Key Information Sets (KIS).
4. In 2010 HEFCE identified a benchmark for each institution for question 22 of the NSS, on overall satisfaction. This took account of factors such as age, sex, ethnicity, disability, subject and mode of study, which were previously proven to have a statistically significant impact on NSS outcomes.
5. Institutions' performance against their benchmarks was then calculated in a similar manner to the Adjusted Sector Benchmarks for Performance Indicators, ie the figure for the institution was considered to be significantly different to its benchmark if the difference was both greater than three percentage points and greater than three standard deviations (99%). This is because the differences are required to be significant in both the statistical and the practical senses.
6. Part-time provision is a particular priority of the Welsh Government. [For our Future](#) included expectations relating to part-time provision, including that:
  - 'Participation is maximised through different ways to experience higher education, including through part-time study';
  - 'Improved part-time learning opportunities are offered';
  - 'Develop greater diversity and flexibility in programme design, duration and delivery to match need and demand'.
7. We have a [Corporate Strategy](#) target to increase part-time learning opportunities so that:

*'The total number of part-time students studying higher education courses in higher education institutions and further education institutions in Wales will rise from 54,714 in 2008/09 to 59,000 in 2012/13'.*

8. The sector forecast for 2012/13 is 46,112 students, which falls short of the Corporate Strategy measure by 12,888 students.
9. Additionally, the strategic theme of Skills within our Corporate Strategy acknowledges the role of part-time provision in ensuring that learners are equipped for the world of work and for their role as citizens, and that higher education contributes to workforce development.
10. Our [remit letter for 2011-12](#) from the Welsh Government asked us to take account of research and evidence to inform future actions and build on revised arrangements for widening access, with particular emphasis on *'part-time employer focussed provision and opportunities for progression from further education,'* reporting on progress and initial findings by March 2012.
11. Our Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee (SETQC) considered the 2011 NSS outcomes and advised that part-time student satisfaction needed further consideration. We subsequently discussed the data with SETQC's Quality Assessment and Enhancement Sub-Group.

### **NSS outcomes for part-time students**

12. The overall satisfaction outcomes for part-time and full-time students in each Welsh institution in the 2011 NSS appear to show some differences. The data are attached at **Annex A**.
13. The satisfaction outcomes for part-time and full-time students for each question in the 2010 and 2011 NSS are provided at **Annex B**. The data are provided for each country of the UK. In some areas the outcomes for part-time students are better than those for full-time students, for example assessment and feedback. However, in other areas the outcomes for part-time students are poorer than those for full-time students, for example learning resources and communication skills.
14. We recognise that the numbers of part-time students in some institutions may be small compared to the numbers of full-time students, which means that the data are not as robust. However, given the profile of part-time students, the outcomes have potential equality and diversity implications.
15. The Higher Education Academy is undertaking further analysis on the 2011 NSS results, which will include analysis of the outcomes for part-time students compared to those studying full-time, and discipline-level analysis. We will write to you again once this analysis is complete, and the implications are clearer. We are also considering whether actions in relation to the NSS outcomes for part-time students should be built into the part-time action plan arising from our advice to the Minister.
16. In the context of the importance of the part-time agenda in Wales, HEFCW's submission of advice to the Minister in March 2012, and

changes to the part-time fees and funding regime from 2013/14, we wish to bring these outcomes to the attention of institutions, and to encourage you to investigate it further in your own context. This includes in relation to any franchise provision which you may have. We consider it appropriate for you to do this in advance of completion of the further analysis of these data, and to take actions as appropriate.

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

17. We do not require a response to this circular.
18. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email [cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk) ).

### **Equality and diversity implications**

19. We have a legal responsibility to assess the impact of our work on equality groups (age, disability, gender, race, religious belief and sexual orientation), and to set out how they will monitor or address any possible negative impact. Contact [equality@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:equality@hefcw.ac.uk) for more information about EIAs.
20. A similar responsibility rest on higher education institution partners to assess the impact of your proposals to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We note in particular that equality and diversity implications may be a particular consideration where part-time outcomes are poorer than those for full-time students.
21. We also consider sustainability implications in terms of social, economic and environmental sustainability, including ensuring that:
  - any decision making (relating to the HE sector as well as internally) is undertaken within a sustainable development framework which explicitly considers social, economic, and environmental impacts and manages any ensuing conflict;
  - the organisation contributes towards the broader long term well being of the people of Wales and provides examples of this within performance reporting.

## Annex A 2011 NSS institutional question 22 by mode of study

Institution	Part-time						Full-time					
	Taught			Registered			Taught			Registered		
	Satisfaction (%)	Benchmark (%)	+/-	Satisfaction (%)	Benchmark (%)	+/-	Satisfaction (%)	Benchmark (%)	+/-	Satisfaction (%)	Benchmark (%)	+/-
Aberystwyth University	67	77		67	77		89	84	+	89	84	+
Bangor University	89	80		90	80		86	84		86	84	
Cardiff University	50	82		50	82		86	85		86	85	
Cardiff Metropolitan University	77	82		77	82		82	82		82	82	
University of Glamorgan	95	79	+	92	80		80	82		81	81	
Glyndŵr University	85	80		79	80		77	80		77	79	
University of Wales, Newport	83	82		87	82		75	79		75	79	
Swansea University	100	91		100	91		81	85	-	81	85	-
Swansea Metropolitan University	88	83		88	83		78	79		78	79	
University of Wales, Trinity Saint David	85	89		85	89		80	82		81	82	
Coleg Sir Gar	88	80					79	82				
Merthyr Tydfil College							85	79				
Neath Port Talbot College							94	83				
Pembrokeshire College	100	89					73	81				

## Annex B Outcomes for each nation by question

Question	England				Scotland			Wales				N.Ireland	
	2010		2011		2010	2011		2010		2011		2010	2011
	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	All	All
<b>The teaching on my course</b>													
1 - Staff are good at explaining things.	87	86	88	87	90	90	84	88	86	89	89	87	87
2 - Staff have made the subject interesting.	79	82	81	82	83	84	78	81	81	81	85	79	78
3 - Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.	84	86	85	87	86	86	82	85	84	85	87	83	83
4 - The course is intellectually stimulating.	82	89	83	88	86	86	83	82	83	83	84	83	83
<b>Assessment and feedback</b>													
5 - The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.	71	82	72	82	72	72	75	71	77	72	80	70	72
6 - Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.	72	84	73	83	75	75	79	75	82	75	85	72	71
7 - Feedback on my work has been prompt.	59	76	62	74	54	54	57	57	64	60	68	55	57
8 - I have received detailed comments on my work.	63	82	66	81	55	58	58	65	74	66	77	55	57
9 - Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.	58	74	61	73	54	57	57	59	67	61	71	54	56
<b>Academic support</b>													
10 - I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies.	73	78	75	78	76	76	72	74	75	76	79	72	72
11 - I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.	81	83	83	83	86	86	79	83	80	84	83	84	84
12 - Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices.	70	73	72	73	72	72	67	73	74	73	74	69	70
<b>Organisation and management</b>													
13 - The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned.	77	80	78	80	81	80	72	77	80	79	78	79	80
14 - Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively.	70	77	73	77	74	74	67	72	72	72	71	75	78
15 - The course is well organised and is running smoothly.	69	79	72	78	74	72	65	71	71	72	73	73	76

Question	England				Scotland			Wales				N.Ireland	
	2010		2011		2010	2011		2010		2011		2010	2011
Learning resources	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	All	All
16 - The library resources and services are good enough for my needs.	80	79	81	80	82	83	79	78	77	79	75	84	87
17 - I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to.	83	83	83	83	87	87	81	85	82	83	83	86	87
18 - I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities or room when I needed to.	75	63	76	65	79	80	68	76	68	76	64	79	80
Personal development													
19 - The course has helped me present myself with confidence.	78	75	79	77	80	81	78	78	75	79	80	80	79
20 - My communication skills have improved.	82	73	82	75	84	85	73	82	72	82	76	85	85
21 - As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.	78	74	79	76	81	81	74	79	74	79	80	80	80
Overall satisfaction													
22 - Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.	81	87	82	87	86	86	81	82	82	83	85	83	82