

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Plans for the National Student Survey 2014

Date: 24 October 2013
Reference: W13/33HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education institutions
in Wales
Response by: No response required. Action required by 22 November
2013
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This circular announces the plans for the 2014 National Student Survey (NSS), and the action required from all institutions by **Friday 22 November 2013**. It also provides further information about outcomes from earlier surveys and general features of the survey.

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



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Introduction

1. This circular announces the plans for the 2014 National Student Survey (NSS), and the action required from all institutions by Friday 22 November 2013. 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, HE in further education provision that is directly funded by HEFCW. In England some alternative providers (APs) are also opting to participate.
3. Detailed guidance relating to the 2014 NSS and the action required is at **Annex A** for HEIs, and **Annexes B** and **C** for directly funded FEIs.

Actions for institutions

4. All directly funded FEIs and HEIs should review, and update if necessary, their relevant NSS institutional contact details. This information should be supplied to Ipsos MORI by **Friday 22 November 2013** using the 'My Details' form, which is available on the Ipsos MORI NSS extranet (www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet). This is a password-protected site and login details will be sent to nominated NSS contacts by Ipsos MORI at the end of October.
5. All institutions should populate their 2014 NSS target lists with the requested contact details for students on these lists and supply them to Ipsos MORI, also by **Friday 22 November 2013**. Information on franchise provision will be provided via the franchising institution.
6. Instructions on how to supply this information are included in the NSS 2014 'Guidance for institutions and student unions', which will be sent to institutional contacts on **Friday 25 October 2013** and will also be available on the Ipsos MORI NSS extranet. The guidance includes information regarding appropriate promotion of the survey.

Results of the 2013 NSS

7. The 2013 NSS results have been published on the Unistats web-site (<http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>), with more detailed results available to institutions via the Ipsos MORI NSS results site (www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results). The results are once again very positive, and demonstrate that universities and colleges are perceived by students to provide a high-quality experience for their students. The overall satisfaction rate in the UK for 2013 was 85 per cent, and that for Wales was 84 per cent.

8. Our Corporate Strategy 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 2011-2013 for overall satisfaction was 84.3%, and the rolling average for Wales for the same period was 83.7%. Therefore for 2013 our Corporate Strategy target was not achieved.
10. Approximately 304,000 students completed the survey this year, of whom 15,514 were from Wales. This is an increase of over 17,000 respondents, and takes the response rate to 68.6 per cent for the UK and 70.1 per cent in Wales, the highest rate the NSS has achieved to date. A total of 153 HEIs, 165 FEIs and one alternative provider took part, across the UK.

The review of the provision of information about higher education

11. The NSS is currently being reviewed as part of the Review of the Provision of Information about Higher Education. This is being coordinated by HEFCE on behalf of all the funding bodies. For more information please see the 'Review of the provision of information about higher education' (www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/it/publicinfo/review/) pages on the HEFCE web-site.

NSS 2014

12. The NSS will be carried out in 2014 across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, in collaboration with the National Union of Students. Ipsos MORI will continue to manage the survey process, and the 2014 NSS will have a similar format and timetable to the 2013 survey.
13. The survey questionnaire will remain the same as for the 2013 NSS. Students on first degree programmes who have completed the online survey will be invited to take part in a separate 'click through' survey asking them about their intentions following graduation. Assuming response rates to this second survey are good, we expect to repeat the survey in future years, to help us understand changing attitudes towards postgraduate study.
14. Ipsos MORI will continue to facilitate a centrally managed scheme on behalf of institutions to encourage students to take part in the survey.
15. Ipsos MORI will liaise directly with NSS contacts at institutions regarding further details of the 2014 NSS, options for timing, adding optional questions and marketing materials. As with the 2013 survey, institutions will be able to select one of five starting weeks for their survey, between those commencing Monday 13 January and Monday 10 February 2014.

16. The NSS 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 to ensure that the 2014 survey maintains an impressive response rate.
17. For students who wish to complete the survey in Welsh, it will be available bilingually in Wales.

Further information

18. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Annex A Further information for Higher Education Institutions

Introduction

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) will be carried out in 2014 across institutions in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, in collaboration with the National Union of Students. Ipsos MORI will continue to manage the survey process, and the 2014 NSS will have a similar format and timetable to the 2013 survey. This annex provides guidance specifically for higher education institutions (HEIs).
2. HEIs can access their target lists for the 2014 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 **Friday 22 November 2013**. Further details can be found in the NSS 2014 'Guidance for institutions and student unions', which will be published by Ipsos MORI and sent to institutional contacts on **Friday 25 October 2013**. The guidance document will also be made available on the NSS extranet, www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet, by the end of October. Additions to the target list are only admitted where a student's course length has changed such that they are now expected to complete between 1 February 2014 and 31 January 2015 inclusive. Any such additions must be agreed by HEFCE¹ prior to their inclusion in the final target list.
3. As in the 2013 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 2013 NSS, and to make the survey more useful, institutions may choose up to a maximum of six banks of optional questions, one of which can be selected by student unions, if they wish, as noted in [Circular W11/27HE Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps](#). Results of the optional banks of questions are for internal use only, and are therefore not published.

Students of NHS subjects

5. Students of NHS subjects 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.

¹ On behalf of all the funding bodies

Scope and coverage of the survey

6. The coverage of the 2014 NSS is as follows.
 - a. All HEIs in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland and participating alternative providers (APs). Students on initial teacher training courses in Wales;
 - b. Further education institutions (FEIs) where there are students on directly funded or prescribed higher education courses;
 - c. All full-time and part-time undergraduate students registered at these HEIs, FEIs and APs are eligible for the NSS 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 in the 2013 NSS (whether or not they responded) and who remain at the same institution
 - iv. Any students who we expect to have completed less than one FTE since they were last surveyed by the end of 2013/14.
7. Students are included in the 2014 survey population if we expect them to complete between 1 February 2014 and 31 January 2015 inclusive.
8. As was the case for the 2013 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 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 prior to submitting your sample, stating:
 - the number of extra students you wish to add;
 - the students' HESA Unique Student Identifiers (HUSIDs);
 - for each student, how they meet the criteria in paragraph 5, with any relevant supporting information;
 - for each student, the name of the course they are studying.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.

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 2014 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;
 - 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, state 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.

11. As in the 2013 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.
12. If an institution 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.
13. To enable us to monitor exclusions and verify their consistent application, institutions should retain evidence to support them. Where a student asks that their details are not passed on, we will expect institutions to retain evidence of this request. If the number of such requests at any institution is so high as to affect our ability to conduct the survey successfully, we will discuss this with the institution.
14. Students should not be removed from the file even when their contact details are not supplied.
15. Although some students may withdraw in their final year, they will have had significant interaction with the institution, so their opinions are valuable and should be included.

Process for supplying student contact data

16. 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.
17. For the 2014 survey as in the 2013 NSS, students should be informed by the institution that their contact details may be passed on. For HEIs, text to explain this has been added to the model HESA student data collection notice.
18. 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.

19. Institutions should provide the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos MORI by **Friday 22 November 2013**. Ipsos MORI will provide guidance to its contacts on how to supply these lists. We have achieved a high response rate for the survey so far, and to ensure this continues it is important that institutions provide robust contact details by this date.

Administration of the survey

20. As in previous years, the 2014 survey will be conducted during the spring term so that the results can be published in summer 2014, 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:
 - brand the NSS independently, which clearly distinguishes its purpose;
 - manage the survey's distribution centrally, so that institutions are not involved in contacting students to complete the NSS.
21. The five-week 'window' will operate again, 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 13 January and 10 February 2014 for the survey to start.
22. Ipsos MORI will conduct the survey at each institution using a set sequence of e-mail, postal and phone 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). Ipsos MORI will deploy the survey modes tactically to personalise the survey to students and institutions and thus help increase online responses and reduce survey costs.
23. We wish to avoid extending this window as this could jeopardise publication of the results in the Key Information Set for each course in time for them to be useful for the next cohort of applicants. 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 during that time. Any institution that wishes to make a case for an extension should contact Ipsos MORI by **Friday 22 November 2013**.

Branding and awareness-raising

24. Comprehensive guidance on the NSS 2014, including guidelines on appropriate promotion of the survey, will be available from the Ipsos MORI

NSS extranet. It is important that this guidance is adhered to and any queries raised with Ipsos MORI.

25. As in previous years, Ipsos MORI will produce promotional materials for institutions and student unions to distribute locally. Promotional materials will be bi-lingual, giving equal prominence to the Welsh and English text. However, if an institution or student union wishes to use the NSS branding to develop its own marketing material, it 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.
26. As in the 2013 NSS, Ipsos MORI will manage an incentive scheme in which institutions may take part. This is a centrally managed scheme that enables institutions to provide incentives to students to complete the NSS. For example, some institutions provided printer credits for students who completed the survey online.
27. As in the 2013 NSS, students on flexible programmes will receive tailored communication that more accurately reflects their participation in higher education.

Questionnaire distribution

28. Ipsos MORI manages the NSS centrally. There are three methods of data collection: online, post and phone. 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 aim of the site is to verify 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 again. To enable this, and to enable efficient working of the survey more generally, institutions should adhere to the deadline for supplying student contact details.
29. 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 phone contact. We have had some success in achieving this since the 2005 survey. However, phoning remains an important element of the survey and will continue, so we expect institutions to provide students' landline and mobile phone numbers where possible.
30. To monitor responses and to process data for analysis and reporting, we link all responses to students' HESA numbers or known student identifiers. Postal questionnaires will be personalised and include the student identifier. Phone interviewers will have automatic access to identifiers. Once students have completed the survey, they will be removed from the target list and not contacted again.

31. Throughout the process Ipsos MORI will send reminders to students who have not responded.
32. Response rates, by institution and by JACS-based subject area, will be continuously monitored during the process. During the phone stage, response rates will be reviewed and some areas may be identified for additional, targeted follow-up activity, to bring responses up to a sufficient level to report results. This additional activity will involve reminders by e-mail, text message and post.
33. 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.
34. Ipsos MORI will follow up with students and institutions where response rates look as if they will be below those that can be published (see paragraph 35). 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 2014 NSS results

35. 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). All results that meet the publication threshold will therefore be published on the Unistats web-site, www.unistats.direct.gov.uk, in summer 2014. Following advice from the former Teaching Quality Information for Higher Education in further education colleges (FECs) Steering Group, the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group agreed that, in principle, the results from students on indirectly funded higher education programmes in FEIs will be shown as being from the institution which makes the KIS return. This will help potential students make informed choices about what and where to study.
36. The current publication threshold for NSS results on the Unistats web-site is a 50 per cent response rate with at least 23 students responding.
37. We will 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, www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results.

Annex B

Guidance on the 2014 National Student Survey for directly funded further education institutions

1. The 2014 National Student Survey (NSS) will be carried out across institutions in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, with the collaboration of the National Union of Students. Ipsos MORI manages the survey process, and the 2014 NSS will have a similar format and timetable to the 2013 survey. This annex provides guidance specifically for further education institutions (FEIs).
2. In collaboration with Colegau Cymru, we have developed the [higher education in further education Guide to the NSS](#), which we hope will be of use to institutions.
3. Guidance on extracting the NSS target list of students eligible to be surveyed from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (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 **15 November 2013**. For further information please contact hestats@hefcw.ac.uk.
4. They should provide the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos MORI by **Friday 22 November 2013**. Further details can be found in the NSS 2014 'Guidance for institutions and student unions', which will be published by Ipsos MORI and sent to institutional contacts on **Friday 25 October 2013**. The guidance document will also be available on the NSS extranet, www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet. Additions to the target list are only admitted where a student's course length has changed such that they are now expected to complete between 1 February 2014 and 31 January 2015 inclusive. For directly funded FEIs, such additions will have been agreed with HEFCW in the process outlined in paragraph 3.
5. As in the 2013 NSS, and to make the survey more useful, institutions may choose up to a maximum of six banks of optional questions, one of which can be selected by student unions, if they wish, as noted in [Circular W11/27HE Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps](#). Results of the optional banks of questions are for internal use only, and are therefore not published.
6. As in the 2013 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.

Scope and coverage of the survey

7. The coverage of the 2014 NSS is as follows.
 - a. All higher education institutions (HEIs) in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and participating alternative providers. Students on initial teacher training courses in Wales;
 - b. FEIs where there are students on directly funded or prescribed higher education courses;
 - c. All full-time and part-time undergraduate students registered at these HEIs and FEIs, are eligible for the NSS 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 in the 2013 NSS (whether or not they responded) and who remain at the same institution
 - iv. Any students who we expect to have completed less than one FTE since they were last surveyed by the end of year 2013/14.
8. Students are included in the 2014 survey population if we expect them to complete between 1 February 2014 and 31 January 2015 inclusive.
9. As was the case for the 2013 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, so that they now finish their course within the dates stipulated in paragraph 8 of this annex and meet the eligibility criteria more generally for the survey. Once extra students are added to the target list, it is not possible to remove them. For directly funded FEIs, such additions will have been agreed with HEFCW in the process outlined in paragraph 3.
10. Taught postgraduates are not included in the NSS.

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 2014 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;
 - 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, state that they do not wish to be contacted.

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

12. As in the 2013 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 an FEI identifies an error after it has submitted data to Ipsos MORI, but then wishes to remove students, it will need to explain to HEFCE² 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 whether these students should be removed from the target list.
14. To enable us to monitor exclusions and verify their consistent application, FEIs should retain evidence to support them. Where a student asks that their details are not passed on, we will 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.
15. 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 significant interaction with the institution, so their opinions are valuable and should be included.

Process for supplying student contact data

17. HEFCW are working with FEIs with directly funded HE provision on deriving the target list of students for inclusion in the NSS (see paragraph 2 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.
18. 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 with which students in the target list were last provided 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.

² Acting on behalf of all of the funders

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 **Friday 22 November 2013**. 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 so far, 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. The survey will be conducted during the 2014 spring term so that the results can be published in summer 2014, 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:
 - brand the NSS independently, which clearly distinguishes its purpose;
 - manage the survey's distribution centrally, so that institutions are not involved in contacting students to complete the NSS.
22. The five-week 'window' will operate again, 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 13 January and 10 February 2014 for the survey to start.
23. Ipsos MORI will conduct the survey at each institution using a set sequence of e-mail, postal and phone 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). Ipsos MORI will deploy the survey modes tactically to personalise the survey to students and institutions, and thus help increase online responses and reduce survey costs.
24. We wish to avoid extending this window, as this could jeopardise publication of the results in the Key Information Set for each course in time for them to be useful for the next cohort of applicants. 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 during that time. Any institution that wishes to make a case for an extension should contact Ipsos MORI by **Friday 22 November 2013**.

Branding and awareness-raising

25. Comprehensive guidance on the NSS 2014, including guidelines on appropriate promotion of the survey, is available from the Ipsos MORI NSS extranet. It is important that this guidance is adhered to and any queries raised with Ipsos MORI.
26. As in previous years, Ipsos MORI will produce promotional materials for institutions and student unions to distribute locally. However, if an institution or student union wishes to use the NSS branding to develop its own marketing material, it 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 2013 NSS, Ipsos MORI will manage an incentive scheme in which institutions may take part. This is a centrally managed scheme that enables institutions to provide incentives to students to complete the NSS. For example, some institutions provided printer credits for students who completed the survey online.
28. As in the 2013 NSS, students on flexible programmes will receive tailored communication which 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 phone. 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 aim of the site is to verify 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 again. 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 phone contact. We have had some success in achieving this since the 2005 survey. However, phoning remains an important element of the survey and will continue, so we expect institutions to provide students' landline and mobile phone numbers where possible.
31. To monitor responses and to process data for analysis and reporting, we link all responses to students' LLWR learner reference number or known student identifier. Postal questionnaires will be personalised and include

the student identifier. Phone interviewers will have automatic access to identifiers. Once students have completed the survey, they will be removed from the target list and not contacted again.

32. Throughout the process Ipsos MORI will send reminders to students who have not responded.
33. Response rates, by institution and by JACS-based subject area, will be continuously monitored during the process. During the phone 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 will 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 will follow up with students and institutions where response rates are looking as if they will be below those that can be published (see paragraph 36). 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 2014 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). All results that meet the publication threshold will therefore be published on the Unistats web-site www.unistats.direct.gov.uk, in summer 2014.
37. The current publication threshold for NSS results on the Unistats web-site is a 50 per cent response rate with at least 23 students responding.
38. We will 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, www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results.

Annex C

Suggested wording for further education institutions to invite eligible students to take part in the National Student Survey

1. We are committed to encouraging and helping institutions to improve the response rate among students studying higher education in further education institutions. Where the proportion of eligible students opting out is over 5 per cent, we expect institutions to contact such students to encourage them to participate in the survey. However, it is only fair that students who feel strongly should be able to opt out of completing the survey.
2. We therefore suggest the following wording.
You are invited to take part in the 2014 National Student Survey (NSS). The NSS, which is fully supported by the National Union of Students, is an opportunity for students to give feedback on their academic experience, for example on issues such as teaching, academic support and learning resources. The results are published online and used to help future students to choose courses that best suit their needs and interests. The NSS is conducted across the UK, so that results can be compared nationally. As well as providing important information to prospective students, the results are used by the college to inform improvements and changes that will benefit students in the future. You can see the results of last year's survey at www.unistats.direct.gov.uk.

The survey is conducted by Ipsos MORI, an independent market research agency, and has been run annually since 2005. Students studying on higher education courses run directly by further education institutions are included. All students who are currently in their final year on such courses, and expect to complete their studies between 1 February 2014 and 31 January 2015, are eligible to take part. All survey responses are treated anonymously.

The survey (which can be taken online, by post or by phone) takes about five minutes to complete. It is increasingly important in providing information to prospective students and to institutions. We very much hope that you will be willing to take part. Ipsos MORI will contact all eligible students in the 2014 spring term. However, if you would prefer not to be contacted, please let **xxxxx (contact name)** know by **xxxxx (date)**.