

## Cylchlythyr | Circular

# Plans for the National Student Survey 2015

**Date:** 30 October 2014  
**Reference:** W14/42HE  
**To:** Heads of higher education institutions in Wales  
Principals of directly-funded further education institutions  
in Wales  
**Response by:** Action required by 28 November 2014  
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This circular announces the plans for the 2015 National Student Survey (NSS), and the action requested from all institutions by **28 November 2014**. 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](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk).



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**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
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## Introduction

1. This circular announces the plans for the 2015 National Student Survey (NSS), and the action requested from all institutions by Friday 28 November 2014. 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 2015 NSS and the action requested is at **Annex A** for HEIs and **Annexes B and C** for FEIs.

## Actions for institutions

4. All directly funded FEIs and HEIs are asked to review, and update if necessary, their relevant NSS institutional contact details. This information should be supplied to Ipsos MORI by **Friday 28 November 2014** using the 'My Details' form, which is available on the Ipsos MORI NSS extranet ([www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet](http://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 2015 NSS target lists with the requested contact details for students on these lists and supply them to Ipsos MORI, also by **Friday 28 November 2014**.
6. Instructions on how to supply this information were included in the NSS 2015 'Guidance for institutions and students' unions', which was sent to institutional contacts on **Thursday 23 October 2014** and will also be available on the Ipsos MORI NSS extranet. The guidance includes information regarding appropriate promotion of the survey.

## Results of the 2014 NSS

7. The 2014 NSS results have been published on the Unistats web-site (<http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>), with more detailed results available to institutions via the Texunatech NSS results site (<https://nss.texunatech.com>). 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. We have again seen the sector respond to student feedback with improvements in overall satisfaction, now at 86 per cent for the UK and 85 per cent for Wales.

8. Approximately 321,000 students completed the survey this year, of whom 16,715 were from Wales. This takes the response rate to 70 per cent for the UK and 72 for Wales, the highest rate the NSS has achieved in its 10 years. A total of 156 HEIs, 166 FEIs and 3 alternative providers (APs) took part, across the UK.

## **NSS 2015**

9. The NSS will be administered in 2015 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 2015 NSS will have a similar format and timetable to the 2014 survey.
10. The survey questionnaire will remain the same as for the 2014 NSS. As in 2014, on completing the survey, students on first degree programmes will be invited to take part in a separate 'click through' survey asking them about their intentions after graduation. This will be asked of online respondents only.
11. Ipsos MORI will continue to facilitate a centrally managed scheme on behalf of institutions to encourage students to take part in the survey.
12. Ipsos MORI will liaise directly with NSS contacts at institutions regarding further details of the 2015 NSS. This will include selecting options for timing, the addition of optional questions and requests for marketing materials. As with the 2014 survey, institutions will be able to select one of five starting weeks for their survey.
13. 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 enhance their provision. We are committed to working with all our stakeholders to ensure that the 2015 survey maintains an impressive response rate.
14. The survey will be available bilingually, for students who wish to complete the survey in Welsh.

## **NSS review**

15. You may be aware that the funders of the NSS have been undertaking a review of the NSS which recently produced the following reports;
  - a. UK review of the provision of information about higher education: National Student Survey results and trends analysis 2005-2013  
[www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2014/201413/name,87641,en.html](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2014/201413/name,87641,en.html)
  - b. Review of the National Student Survey  
[www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2014/nssreview/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2014/nssreview/)

16. Throughout the summer and early autumn the Funding Bodies have been speaking with organisations involved in the NSS about the findings to inform our response to the research. The joint Funding Councils' response, including next steps, can be found on the HEFCE website at [www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/publicinfo/nss/reviewofthenssnextsteps/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/publicinfo/nss/reviewofthenssnextsteps/). It is expected that any developments to the survey will be implemented from 2017.
17. Thank you for your continued participation and active engagement with the National Student Survey.

**Further information**

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) ).

## Annex A

### Guidance on the 2015 National Student Survey for higher education institutions

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) will be carried out in 2015 across institutions in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, with the collaboration of the National Union of Students. Ipsos MORI will continue to manage the survey process, and the 2015 NSS will have a similar format and timetable to the 2014 survey. This annex provides guidance specifically for higher education institutions (HEIs).
2. HEIs can access their target lists for the 2015 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 28 November 2014**. Further details can be found in the NSS 2015 'Guidance for institutions and students' unions', which were sent to institutional contacts by Ipsos MORI on **Thursday 23 October 2014**. The guidance document will also be 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 admitted where a student's course length has changed such that they are now expected to complete between 1 February 2015 and 31 January 2016 inclusive. Any such additions must be agreed by HEFCE prior to their inclusion in the final target list.
3. As in the 2014 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 2014 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](#). They may also include up to two additional questions specific to the institution. Institutions should submit these to Ipsos MORI. Results of the optional banks of questions are for internal use only, and are therefore not published.

### Scope and coverage of the survey

#### Coverage

5. The following institutions are covered by the NSS 2015:
  - a. All HEIs in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.
  - b. APs that have opted in to the survey.
  - c. FEIs where there are students on directly funded or prescribed higher education courses.

6. All full-time and part-time undergraduate students registered at participating HEIs and FEIs and alternative providers 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) year and not before their third year of study) with the following exceptions:
  - a. Students on programmes that do not lead to undergraduate qualifications or credits.
  - b. Students on a course lasting one year or one FTE, or less.
  - c. Any students who were eligible in the 2014 NSS (whether or not they responded) and who remain at the same institution.
  - d. Any students who we expect to have completed one FTE or less since they were last surveyed by the end of academic year 2014/15.
7. Students are included in the 2015 survey population if they are expected to complete between 1 February 2015 and 31 January 2016 inclusive.
8. As was the case for the 2014 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 an HEI wishes to add students to the target list, they can contact Ipsos MORI at [nss@ipsos.com](mailto:nss@ipsos.com) prior to submitting their sample, stating:
  - a. the number of extra students they wish to add
  - b. the students' HESA Unique Student Identifiers (HUSIDs), how they meet the criteria in paragraph 6, and any relevant supporting information
  - c. 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. 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.
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 2015 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.

- 12. As in the 2014 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 HEI identifies an error after they have 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 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.
- 15. Students should not be removed from the file even when 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. 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 2014 NSS, students should be informed by the institution that their contact details may be passed on. For HEIs, text has been added to the model HESA student data collection notice to explain this.
- 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 28 November 2014**. 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 complete and robust contact details by this date.

### **Administration of the survey**

21. As in previous years, the 2015 survey will be conducted during the spring term so that the results can be published in summer 2015, 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. brand the NSS independently, which clearly distinguishes its purpose
  - b. 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 12 January and 9 February 2015 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 (KIS) 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 28 November 2014**.

### **Branding and awareness-raising**

25. Comprehensive guidance on the NSS 2015, 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.

26. As in previous years, Ipsos MORI will produce promotional materials for institutions and students' unions to distribute locally. Promotional materials will be bi-lingual, giving equal prominence to the Welsh and English text. However, if an institution or students' 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 2014 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 2014 NSS, 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 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 available.
31. 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.

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 monitored continuously 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.
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 look as if they will be below those that can be published (see paragraph 38). 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 2015 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](http://www.unistats.direct.gov.uk), in summer 2015.
37. Following advice from the former Teaching Quality Information for Higher Education in FEIs Steering Group, the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group agreed that, in principle, the results from students on collaborative and/or franchise higher education programmes in FEIs will be shown as being from the institution which makes the KIS return<sup>1</sup>. This will help potential students make informed choices about what and where to study.
38. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> See

[www.hesa.ac.uk/includes/C14061\\_resources/download/KIS\\_collaborative\\_provision.pdf?v=1.9](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/includes/C14061_resources/download/KIS_collaborative_provision.pdf?v=1.9)  
for more information

39. 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 Texunatech via its results web-site, <https://nss.texunatech.com>.

## Annex B

### Guidance on the 2015 National Student Survey for further education institutions

1. The 2015 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 2015 NSS will have a similar format and timetable to the 2014 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 **14 November 2014**. For further information please contact [hestats@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:hestats@hefcw.ac.uk). They should then provide the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos MORI by **Friday 28 November 2014**. Further details can be found in the NSS 2015 'Guidance for institutions and students' unions', which was published by Ipsos MORI and sent to institutional contacts on **Thursday 23 October 2014**. The guidance document is also available on the NSS extranet, [www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet](http://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 2015 and 31 January 2016 inclusive. Any such additions must be agreed by HEFCW in the process outlined in the HEFCW guidance referred to earlier in this paragraph.
4. As in the 2014 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](#). They may also include up to two additional questions specific to the institution. Institutions should submit these to Ipsos MORI. Results of the optional banks of questions are for internal use only, and are therefore not published.

5. As in the 2014 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**

### **Coverage**

6. The following institutions are covered by the NSS 2015.
  - a. All HEIs in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.
  - b. Alternative providers that have opted in to the survey.
  - c. Further education institutions (FEIs) where there are students on directly funded prescribed higher education courses.
7. All full-time and part-time undergraduate students registered at participating HEIs, FEIs and alternative providers 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) year and not before their third year of study) with the following exceptions:
  - a. Students on programmes that do not lead to undergraduate qualifications or credits.
  - b. Students on a course lasting one year or one FTE, or less.
  - c. Any students who were eligible in the 2014 NSS (whether or not they responded) and who remain at the same institution.
  - d. Any students who we expect to have completed one FTE or less since they were last surveyed by the end of academic year 2014/15.
8. Students are included in the 2015 survey population if they are expected to complete between 1 February 2015 and 31 January 2016 inclusive.
9. As was the case for the 2014 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. For directly funded FEIs, such additions will have been agreed with HEFCW in the process outlined in paragraph 3. Once extra students are added to the target list, it is not possible to remove them.
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 2015 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 2014 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 HEFCE<sup>2</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 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.

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<sup>2</sup> On behalf of all the funding bodies

## 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 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.
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 8). 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.
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 28 November 2014**. 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 2015 spring term so that the results can be published in summer 2015, 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. brand the NSS independently, which clearly distinguishes its purpose
  - b. 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 12 January and 9 February 2015 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 (KIS) 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 28 November 2014**.

### **Branding and awareness-raising**

25. Comprehensive guidance on the NSS 2015, 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 students' unions to distribute locally. Promotional materials will be bi-lingual, giving equal prominence to the Welsh and English text. However, if an institution or students' 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 2014 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.

## 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 ask institutions to provide students' landline and mobile phone numbers where available.
30. 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.
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 monitored continuously 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 are looking as if they will be below those that can be published (see paragraph 37). 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 2015 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](http://www.unistats.direct.gov.uk), in summer 2015.
36. Following advice from the former Teaching Quality Information for Higher Education in FEIs 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 against the institution that submits the KIS return. This will help potential students make informed choices about what and where to study.
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](http://www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/results).

## Annex C

### **Suggested wording for further education colleges 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 colleges. 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 2015 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](http://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 colleges are included. All students who are currently in their final year on such courses, and expect to complete their studies between 1 February 2015 and 31 January 2016, 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 2015 spring term. However, if you would prefer not to be contacted, please let **xxxxx (contact name)** know by **xxxxx (date)**.