

Annex A – List of NSS 2018 questions

The teaching on my course

1. Staff are good at explaining things
2. Staff have made the subject interesting
3. The course is intellectually stimulating
4. My course has challenged me to achieve my best work

Learning opportunities

5. My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth
6. My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics
7. My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt

Assessment and feedback

8. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance
9. Marking and assessment has been fair
10. Feedback on my work has been timely
11. I have received helpful comments on my work

Academic support

12. I have been able to contact staff when I needed to
13. I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course
14. Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course

Organisation and management

15. The course is well organised and running smoothly
16. The timetable works efficiently for me
17. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively

Learning resources

18. The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well
19. The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well
20. I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to

Learning community

21. I feel part of a community of staff and students
22. I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course

Student voice

23. I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course
24. Staff value students' views and opinions about the course
25. It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on
26. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) effectively represents students' academic interests
27. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course

Annex B: Guidance on the 2018 National Student Survey for higher education providers

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) will be carried out in 2018 across providers in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Ipsos MORI will continue to manage the survey process, and the 2018 NSS will have a similar timetable to the 2017 survey. This annex provides guidance specifically for higher education providers (HEIs and Welsh FEIs submitting data to HESA) and participating alternative providers.
2. The responsibilities of providers in the successful management of the NSS are:
 - a. Timely submission of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record and alternative provider student record (normally in September/October 2017).
 - b. Ensuring good data quality by checking the NSS report (target list) generated by HESA. Requests for any necessary changes which cannot be resolved by correcting the student data may be directed to Ipsos MORI for HEFCE approval within the period of December 2017 to February 2018.
 - c. Timely submission of student contact details when requested by Ipsos MORI (November 2017).
 - d. Engagement with all guidance and requests issued by HEFCE (on behalf of the funders), HESA, Ipsos MORI and the dissemination contractor, and attending training and events run by the above.
 - e. Submitting survey preferences to Ipsos MORI. This includes timing of the survey and the choice of optional bank questions, which should be made in conjunction with their student representative body (Students' Union, Association or Guild).
 - f. Promotion of the survey to students, ensuring all activities meet the guidelines on avoiding inappropriate influence provided by Ipsos MORI and the funding bodies' Code of practice for higher education data collections (see www.hesa.ac.uk/about/regulation/provider-info/code-of-practice).
 - g. Monitor response rates via information provided by Ipsos MORI, and if necessary undertake additional promotional activity to encourage students to complete the survey (during the surveying period January 2018 to May 2018).
 - h. Access the responses and results of the survey via the dedicated results facility (July/August 2018), Office for Students website (including benchmarked data) and Unistats site (for students).
3. HEIs and Welsh FEIs submitting data to HESA can access their target lists for the 2018 NSS via the HESA data collection system. They should provide the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos MORI by **Monday 27 November 2017**. Further details can be found in the NSS 2018 'Guidance for providers and Students' Unions' available on the NSS extranet, <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS/> or www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet.

Additions to or removals from the target list are admitted only under specific circumstances, details of which are provided in the guidance. Any such requests for additions or removals must be submitted to Ipsos MORI and agreed by HEFCE prior to their inclusion in or removal from the final target list.

4. As in the 2017 NSS, students will be able to opt out when the provider 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.
5. As in the 2017 NSS, providers may choose up to six banks of optional questions, and may include up to two additional questions specific to the provider. Providers are asked to agree with Students' Unions their choice of optional banks of questions for inclusion. Providers should submit these to Ipsos MORI.

Scope and coverage of the survey

Coverage

6. The following providers are covered by the NSS 2018:
 - a. All HEIs in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.
 - b. Alternative providers in England with specific course designation for new students in 2017-18 who completed a HESA return for 2016-17.
 - c. Regulated further education institutions (FEIs) or those which have directly funded prescribed higher education provision. Franchise provision is administered through the franchising institution.
7. All full-time and part-time undergraduate students registered at participating HEIs, FEIs and alternative providers are eligible to undertake 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 2017 NSS (whether or not they responded) and who remain at the same provider.
 - d. Any students who we expect to have completed one FTE or less since they were last surveyed by the end of academic year 2017-18.
8. Students are included in the 2018 survey population if they are expected to complete between 1 February 2018 and 31 January 2019 inclusive.
9. It will be possible to add or remove students to the NSS target list in exceptional circumstances, for example if the length of a student's course has decreased after a provider has submitted its HESA return. The full criteria are set out in the guidance provided by Ipsos MORI. If a provider desires to add or remove students, they can contact Ipsos MORI at nss@ipsos.com or through

the NSS extranet – further details are available here: <http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/institutions.php>. Please be aware that requests for changes to the target list should be submitted as early as possible to ensure they can be processed prior to, or early in, the survey period. HEFCE will review all additions and removals and may request further details from providers where necessary.

10. Postgraduates, except for students on enhanced first degrees, are not included in the NSS.

Reasons for excluding individuals from the survey

11. Since the survey began, we have enabled providers to exclude students from the target population and will continue to do so for the 2018 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 on to 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).
 - d. For Welsh FEIs submitting HESA data for the first time this year, previous data will not be available to determine students' eligibility. Therefore, the total HE experience of continuing students in 2016/17 must be manually examined by the FEI to see if they qualify for the survey and if found to be ineligible removed from the list generated by the HESA submission system.
12. These are the only grounds on which students may be excluded from the target population. If the provider feels that students are incorrectly included in the target population due to errors in the data, then these should be submitted as removal requests, using the process in paragraph 9.
13. As in the 2017 NSS, providers should code all excluded students on their sample submission as category 'C' (regardless of whether they meet criteria a, b, c or d above), and providers should not provide contact details for these students.
14. If a provider identifies an error after it has submitted data to HESA but then wishes to remove students, we may require it to submit a revised return to HESA that generates a revised target list where we believe the errors are widespread and material. HESA will apply a charge of 20 per cent of the provider's annual subscription to meet the costs of processing this change.
15. To enable us to monitor exclusions and verify their consistent application, providers should retain evidence to support them. Where a student asks that their details are not passed on, we will expect providers to retain evidence of this request. If the number of such requests at any provider is so high as to

affect our ability to conduct the survey successfully, we will discuss this with the provider.

16. Students should not be removed from the student data file supplied by Ipsos MORI even when their contact details are not supplied.
17. Although some students may withdraw in their final year, they will have had significant interaction with the provider, so their opinions are valuable and should be included.

Process for supplying student contact data

18. Following submission of the HESA data, a target list of students to be included in the NSS will automatically be generated. The provider should then provide contact details, according to the standard template that will be supplied by Ipsos MORI, for all students on the list.
19. As in the 2017 NSS, students should be informed by the provider that their contact details may be passed on. For HEIs, Welsh FEIs submitting data to HESA and alternative providers, text has been added to the model HESA student data collection notice to explain this.
20. Providers have the opportunity to define their own structure for receiving institutional feedback, through one of two optional fields on the sample file 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 provider.
21. Providers should submit the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos MORI by **Monday 27 November 2017**. 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 providers submit complete and robust contact details to Ipsos MORI by this date.

Administration of the survey

22. As in previous years, the 2018 survey will be conducted during the spring term so that the results can be published in summer 2018, 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 providers are not involved in contacting students to complete the NSS.
23. Providers can choose to start the survey at a preferred time that does not clash with examinations and fits with term timetables etc. Providers may select a week between 8 January and 5 February 2018 for the survey to start. There will

be no communication with students outside of the timing agreed with individual providers.

24. Ipsos MORI will conduct the survey at each provider using a set sequence of email and telephone surveying. This will take up to eight weeks at each provider (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 providers, and thus help increase online responses and reduce survey costs.
25. We wish to avoid extending this start date window, as this could jeopardise publication of the results on Unistats 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 provider that wishes to make a case for an extension should contact Ipsos MORI by **Monday 27 November 2017**.

Branding and awareness-raising

26. Comprehensive guidance on the NSS 2018, 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. The funding bodies treat seriously any breaches of this guidance, and may investigate and take action where there is evidence of a breach. We are currently reviewing the process through which we will address breaches of guidance; our final process will be published in January 2018.
27. As in previous years, Ipsos MORI will produce promotional materials for providers and Students' Unions to distribute locally. 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 providers, Ipsos MORI will discuss who in the provider is best placed to coordinate promotional activity.
28. As in 2017, Ipsos MORI will manage incentive schemes in which providers may take part. These are centrally managed schemes that enable providers to offer incentives to students to complete the NSS. For example, some providers offered printer credits for students who completed the survey online.
29. Students on flexible programmes will receive tailored communication that more accurately reflects their participation in higher education.

Questionnaire distribution

30. Ipsos MORI administers the NSS centrally. There are two main methods of data collection: online, and telephone. Ipsos MORI operates a live, open-access website, where students can log in and complete the survey (this is in addition to the option to respond by following the link in a personalised email).

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, providers should adhere to the deadline for supplying student contact details.

31. Although there are two methods of data collection, we are committed to increasing the online response rate and so reducing the amount of 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 providers to provide students' landline and mobile telephone numbers where available.
32. To monitor responses and to process data for analysis and reporting, we link all responses to students' HESA numbers or known student identifiers. 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 again.
33. Throughout the process Ipsos MORI will send reminders to students who have not responded.
34. Response rates, by provider and by JACS-based subject area, will be monitored continuously during the process. During the telephone 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 email and text message.
35. 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.
36. Ipsos MORI will follow up with students and providers where response rates look as if they will be below those that can be published (see paragraph 34). The funding bodies reserve the right to agree changes to the survey period with individual providers at risk of not meeting the provider-level and/or subject-level(s) publication threshold. The completeness and accuracy of students' contact data, as supplied by providers, will be a significant factor in achieving a publishable level of responses.

Publication of 2018 NSS results

37. 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 role in enhancement, by helping providers to identify areas for action or development). We expect the results of the 2018 NSS to feature in future exercises of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) operated by the Department for Education in England.

38. The current publication threshold for NSS results is a 50 per cent response rate with at least 10 students responding. **All results that meet the publication threshold will therefore be published on the Unistats website, <http://unistats.ac.uk/>, in early autumn 2018.** Alongside Unistats, data will also be published on the Office for Students website. This includes benchmarking data.
39. We will make more detailed data available to providers via the dissemination site to help them to identify good practice and improve the student experience.

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 providers 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 providers 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 2018 National Student Survey (NSS). The NSS 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 further education institution to inform improvements and changes that will benefit students in the future. You can see the results of last year's survey at <http://unistats.ac.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 FEIs are included. All students who are currently in their final year on such courses, and expect to complete their studies between 1 February 2018 and 31 January 2019, are eligible to take part. All survey responses are treated anonymously.

The survey (which can be taken online or by phone) takes about ten minutes to complete. It is increasingly important in providing information to prospective students and to providers. We very much hope that you will be willing to take part. Ipsos MORI will contact all eligible students in the 2018 spring term. However, if you would prefer not to be contacted, please let **xxxxx (contact name)** know by **xxxxx (date)**.