National Student Survey 2020
Good Practice Guide

Marketing and Promoting the National Student Survey

NSS

National Student Survey

Contents

This version has been edited slightly for the purposes of public dissemination. A detailed version is available to HE providers through the NSS Extranet.

Introduction

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) is a high-profile annual census of nearly half a million students across the UK. Conducted each year since 2005, the NSS has become renowned for producing robust and reliable data. The survey asks undergraduates to provide feedback on their course.

2. The NSS is managed by the Office for Students (OfS) and undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies - the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland), the Scottish Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

3. The NSS gathers students' opinions on the quality of their courses which helps to:

    - inform prospective students' choices;

    - supply data that supports providers in improving the student experience; and

    - support public accountability.

4. Every university in the UK takes part in the NSS, as do many colleges and alternative providers. NSS response rates have been consistently high.

5. The OfS recommends that all providers run their own internal promotional campaigns, to ensure the survey produces robust data that can be used to further improve the student experience.

Using this Good Practice Guide

6. In order for NSS data to be made publicly available to prospective students, each provider needs to achieve a minimum of 10 respondents and 50% response rate from the students eligible at overall provider level and by each Common Aggregation Hierarchy group (CAH). To achieve these thresholds, all providers are encouraged to help promote the NSS to optimise survey participation among eligible students. This Good Practice Guide is intended to help staff who have a role in promoting or delivering the NSS.

7. The following sections contain guidelines and instructions on promoting the NSS 2020, including details on inappropriate influence and how to avoid this when encouraging student participation. It also outlines the marketing materials that will be sent to providers, by Ipsos MORI, in November 2019 (if requested via the new order form), and advice for providers that wish to create their own campaigns.

8. Please take the time to familiarise yourself with these guidelines, particularly the information on inappropriate influence. Allegations of inappropriate influence are taken very seriously by the UK Funding Bodies and may result in the suppression of data for the affected course(s)/subject(s) when the NSS results are published.

9.   Should you have any questions regarding the content of this guide or wish to discuss your NSS marketing order or promotion more generally, please contact Ipsos MORI on 020 8861 8110 or email nss@ipsos.com.

National Student Survey Pilot 2020

10.   As part of the NSS 2020, we are running the first stage of a pilot looking at the feasibility of expanding the NSS to students on 1-year FTE courses- these students have previously been excluded from the survey population. This forms part of a wider programme of exploratory work designed to assess the feasibility of including students across all years of study in the survey.

11.   The OfS has invited eligible providers to contact Ipsos MORI to express their interest in being included in this pilot study. If your university or college is interested in taking part, please contact Ipsos MORI at nss@ipsos.com.

12.   It is anticipated that subject level data and anonymised open comments at provider level from the pilot will be made available to participating universities and colleges only, subject to existing data publication thresholds and checks for robustness. Data from the pilot will not be part of the NSS data published on Discover Uni or the OfS website.

13.   More information and guidance on the delivery of this pilot has been sent directly to participating providers.

14.   The following guidance relates to **all students who are eligible to complete the NSS**, covering both those in the NSS target population and those that we want to survey through the National Student Survey Pilot 2020.

About the NSS

When is the NSS run?

15.   The NSS will go live on **6 January 2020** and will remain open until midnight on **30 April 2020**.

How will students access the NSS?

16.   The NSS can be completed online or by telephone.

17.   All students with valid email addresses **will be sent email invitations to take part in the survey by Ipsos MORI**. These emails will be sent on the Thursday of your provider's chosen start week. They will contain personalised survey links- when clicked, students must enter their date of birth which will take them directly into the survey.

18.   **Students can also go online to complete the survey directly** at www.thestudentsurvey.com at any time while the survey is live, regardless of nominated start weeks or whether they have received an email invitation. When accessing the survey in this way, students are required to enter personal data in order for us to verify that they are eligible to take part.

19.   Once a valid response has been received from a student, they will receive an automated confirmation email and should not be contacted by Ipsos MORI again. If students complete the survey and are still being contacted by us, or if they have not received a confirmation email, it may be that they either did not fully complete or submit the survey, or they did not enter enough information to allow us to match them up to an eligible student on our database.

20.   The online survey is mobile-friendly, so if accessed via a smartphone or tablet device, students will automatically be taken to the mobile version of the survey.

21.   The questions are all displayed in the format below with each one on a separate screen – this format applies to the core questions as well as the bank of questions and any additional optional questions.

22.   **Telephone**

From the third week of each provider's fieldwork schedule, Ipsos MORI will begin follow up calls to non-responding students where valid UK telephone numbers are available. Ipsos MORI will attempt calls at different times and days of the week to optimise the opportunities for response. Student numbers are called a maximum of 8 times. Please note that students cannot call Ipsos MORI directly to complete the survey but may arrange an appointment if they wish by contacting thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com. Calls are made on the following days/times: Monday to Friday – 9am to 9pm; Saturday and Sunday – 10am to 7pm.

How will the results of the NSS be released?

23.   The results of the NSS 2020 will be published in Summer 2020, via three channels:

- Public findings and summary data will be published on the OfS website, including benchmarked findings at the provider level. This will be accessible in both Excel spreadsheet form and through the Tableau visualisation platform.

- These public data will later be made available in a resource for prospective students, along with results at course level. This resource is called Discover Uni, which has replaced Unistats this academic year.

- More detailed results will be made available to providers via the NSS data dissemination portal hosted by Texunatech Ltd. This includes anonymised open text comments from students who have completed the survey.

24.   **Response Thresholds**

To protect student anonymity and ensure the robustness of the findings from the NSS, the OfS operates a strict data threshold policy.

25.   For NSS data to be published on the OfS website or on Discover Uni, the provider needs to achieve **a minimum of 10 respondents and 50% response rate** from eligible students, both overall and by each Common Aggregation Hierarchy group (CAH). The results from any providers who have not reached the threshold will not be published.

26.   The NSS data dissemination portal also applies a threshold to the data that providers can see, to protect the anonymity of the respondents. In order to see the open text comments for a particular category of responses, a provider must have achieved **a minimum of 10 responses in that category**. Otherwise, the data will not be displayed. Users should not use the data to attempt to identify individuals, or in a way that is likely to facilitate their inadvertent identification.

27.   To achieve these thresholds, we encourage all providers to promote the NSS to optimise survey participation among eligible students. Ipsos MORI will follow up with providers where response rates seem likely to fall short of the publication thresholds. The funding bodies reserve the right to agree changes to the survey period with individual providers at risk of not meeting the 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.

About the Questionnaire

28.   There are 27 core questions, relating to the following aspects of the student learning experience:

- Teaching on my Course

- Learning Opportunities

- Assessment and Feedback

- Academic Support

- Organisation and Management

- Learning Resources

- Learning Community

- Student Voice

- Overall Satisfaction

Students are also given the opportunity to give positive and negative comments on their student learning experience as a whole.

29.   Other questions included in the NSS include the following:

- NHS practice placement questions. Please note that students will only be asked the NHS questions if they have been flagged as being on an NHS-funded course. These questions will be included before question 27 in the core questionnaire.

- Degree Apprenticeship questions. Students will only be asked to respond to these questions if they have been flagged as being on a degree apprenticeship. These questions will be asked after the optional bank of questions.

- Students on 1-year FTE courses who will be included, this year, through the National Student Survey Pilot 2020 will be asked one additional question on whether they are willing to be re-contacted to participate in further follow-up research.

- Providers can add up to six optional modules from a bank of questions, and up to two questions of their own.

- Marketing question. Students will be asked to tell us where/how they found out about the NSS after their online response has been submitted. This question is optional and can be skipped.

- Please note that from the NSS 2020, students will no longer be asked to complete the Intentions After Graduation Survey.

30.   The full questionnaire and optional banks can be found on the NSS Extranet.

Promoting the NSS

31.   Local marketing and promotion are essential to ensure good response rates are achieved. It is for this reason that we recommend that providers undertake their own internal campaigns to complement communications by Ipsos MORI. NSS findings will allow providers to benefit from robust data that can help identify areas of good practice, and areas in need of improvement.

32.   This section details the recommended strategy when promoting the NSS to your students.

33.   Providers can choose to design their own NSS marketing materials, and/or use those supplied by Ipsos MORI. Please see NSS Marketing Materials for more information.

34.   **Please note that promoting the NSS locally is subject to strict guidelines, to avoid the sharing of confidential information, or influencing students' responses inappropriately. More information is available in the** Inappropriate Influence **section.**

Student Eligibility

35.   Staff should take care to ensure that they are only asking **eligible** students to complete the survey. They should work with the relevant departments within their providers to clearly understand which students are on their NSS target list.

36.   Those studying on courses leading to undergraduate credits or qualifications (such as bachelors' degrees, foundation degrees and higher education diplomas) will be surveyed in their expected final year of study.

37.   Students are included in the 2020 survey population if they are expected to complete their course between 1 February 2020 and 31 January 2021 inclusive.

38.   In addition, students who:

- Are on more flexible part-time programmes (whose final year cannot be easily predicted) will normally be surveyed during their fourth year of study;

- Have withdrawn from study during their final year will be included in the survey as their feedback is equally valuable;

- Are repeating their penultimate year in 2020 will be surveyed (NOT when they eventually progress to their final year), unless they are specifically submitted for removal;

- Have changed their course arrangements, but were originally expected to graduate in 2020, will be eligible this year and not when they eventually reach their final year, unless specifically submitted for removal.

39.   Students are not eligible for the NSS if they:

- Study programmes that do not lead to undergraduate qualifications or credits;

- Are on a course lasting one year or one FTE (full-time equivalent) or less, unless your university or college is taking part in the National Student Survey Pilot 2020 – please see below;

- Were eligible in the NSS 2019 (whether or not they responded) and remain at the same provider, unless removed by the OfS;

- Are under the age of 16.

40.   Please liaise with the Main or Second NSS contacts at your provider to identify which students are included in the list of eligible students for the 2020 survey. You can also contact the NSS helpline at nss@ipsos.com.

41.   **Please note that Ipsos MORI cannot provide the details of students that have/have not completed the survey.**

42.   **What should we do if we identify an eligible student that cannot access the online survey?**
        Please send an email including the student's learner number and identifier (HUSID/STUDENT_ID [NI Colleges only]/LearnRefNumber) to **nss@ipsos.com** and we can check if they are in our database of eligible students.

        Students can also contact us directly at **thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com** where we can check their eligibility.

43.   **Which students are included in the National Student Survey Pilot?**
        For providers who opt to take part in the pilot, the NSS will be expanded to students on 1-year FTE courses who are currently in their final year of study.

        The NSS should be promoted in the same way to the main NSS population and those included through the pilot although we recommend keeping the contact list for the latter group separate so that providers can tailor and personalise their messages.

        More information will be sent to participating providers directly.

Planning a Communication Schedule

44.   When promoting the NSS, you may choose to deploy a range of methods, including but not limited to the following:

- Promoting on social media

- Placing posters around campus to familiarise students with the NSS

- Emails to eligible students

- Lecture shout-outs

45.   The dates when Ipsos MORI will communicate with your students are in accordance with your provider's chosen survey start week. This can be found on the NSS Extranet.

46.   We recommend using the following schedule to plan your promotion in line with the **Ipsos MORI Fieldwork Timetable**:

Autumn Term **November - December 2019**	**Provider – Promotional Materials** We recommend displaying promotional materials before the launch of the survey. This is to ensure it is visible to students and fresh in their minds before they receive their email invitations. The survey website will remain live until 30 April 2020. Please continue to display the materials until this date. **Provider – Required GDPR Pre-Notification Communication** As of 2019, we now require all providers to send a pre-notification email to their eligible students at the beginning of the academic year. See the section below for more details.
1 week before survey launch date **January 2020**	**Provider – Pre-Emptive Reminder Emails** A week before the launch date, we recommend providers send pre-emptive emails to eligible students only, outlining: • That they will receive an invitation email from Ipsos MORI containing a unique link to the survey (on which date depending on your provider's survey start week); • The importance of the NSS; • If offered, outline the details of the prize draw. This email should be signed from either an individual known to the students or a senior member of staff (e.g. Pro-Vice-Chancellor). It is important to ensure that your I.T. department/contact is aware that students' email accounts will be receiving emails from these domains (**@ipsos-mori.com and @thestudentsurvey.com**), and that the IT system is set up to allow these through. **For providers taking part in the National Student Survey Pilot 2020:** it is recommended that a different email message is sent to students (previously excluded), to inform them that they are being invited to take part in the NSS as part of a pilot study. These students may be aware (from other sources) that they are normally not eligible for the NSS. This email should clarify why they are being asked to take part in the survey. A suggested email template for this purpose will be included in a dedicated Pilot guidance; this guidance will be sent directly to participating providers.

Survey Week 1 **(Week 1 of chosen start week)**	**Ipsos MORI - Invitation Emails** The first email invitations from Ipsos MORI will arrive in students' inboxes on the Thursday of your chosen survey start week. Emails are sent in batches, so providers' email systems do not tag them as spam.
	Provider - Completion Sessions Arrange dedicated sessions with eligible students on Friday/Monday to maximise the use of unique email links; these should not be compulsory for students to attend. **Provider - General Promotion** Promote the NSS with reference to the invitation email that eligible students will receive from Ipsos MORI.
Survey Week 2 **(Week 2 of chosen start week)**	**Ipsos MORI – First Reminder Email** Non-responding students will receive a reminder email on Monday of the second week of the chosen schedule. **Ipsos MORI – Second Reminder Email** A second reminder email from Ipsos MORI will arrive in non-responding students' inboxes on Friday of the second survey week; these emails are also sent in batches, so providers' email systems do not tag them as spam.
	Provider – Completion Sessions Arrange dedicated sessions with eligible students on Tuesday/Wednesday to maximise the use of unique email links; these should not be compulsory for students to attend. **Provider – General Promotion** Promote the NSS with reference to the reminder emails.
Survey Week 3 **(Week 3 of chosen start week)**	**Ipsos MORI – Telephone Interviews** Ipsos MORI will begin telephone interviews with students for who we only hold telephone numbers or who have been identified as 'hard-to-reach'. **Ipsos MORI – SMS Reminders** SMS reminders from Ipsos MORI will be sent to non-responding students' mobile phones on the Thursday of your third survey week. **Ipsos MORI – Telephone – Follow-Up** Later in the week, Ipsos MORI will begin the main telephone follow-up phase.
	Provider – Completion Sessions Arrange dedicated sessions on Friday or Monday while the SMS reminders are still fresh in students' minds; these should not be compulsory for students to attend. **Provider – General Promotion** Promote the NSS with reference to the SMS reminders.

Survey Week 4-5 (Weeks 4-5 of chosen start week)	**Provider – General Promotion** Providers should send email reminders to eligible students to encourage completion. **Provider – Completion Sessions** Arrange dedicated sessions/visit lectures or teaching sessions to promote the survey; the sessions should not be compulsory for students to attend.
Survey Week 8-9 (1 March onwards for all)	**Ipsos MORI – Targeted Follow-Up** Ipsos MORI begin the targeted follow-up phase. All non-responsive students will be contacted, therefore providers and cohorts behind the publication threshold will be targeted. **Provider – General Promotion** Providers' specific communications and promotion are encouraged until the survey closes.
Final Survey Week	**Ipsos MORI – Final Reminder Emails** Reminder emails from Ipsos MORI will arrive in non-responding students' inboxes in the final survey week; these emails are also sent in batches, so providers' email systems do not tag them as spam. **Provider – Completion Sessions** Arrange final dedicated sessions to maximise the use of unique email links; these should not be compulsory for students to attend.

47. Please note that providers should use these guidelines to help plan their own communications or complement Ipsos MORI's communications. They are not intended to replace existing communication plans.

Required GDPR Pre-Notification Communication

48. **Please note – this is new for the NSS 2020**
    The OfS now requires providers to send a pre-notification email to their eligible student population in the Autumn term. This email will act as a form of promoting the survey to eligible students. It will explain what the NSS is, when/how students will be contacted by Ipsos MORI and it will also act as a GDPR notification that their details will be passed onto Ipsos MORI. Ipsos MORI will provide a template that providers should use; it is preferred that all providers send out this template which requires minimal edits to the suggested text.

49. This email should be signed from either an individual known to the students or a senior member of staff (e.g. Pro-Vice-Chancellor). More information on the pre-notification email, including a suggested email text, can be found in the NSS Set Up Guidance, available via the **NSS Extranet**.

Response Rate Updates

50. To inform your promotional strategy, Ipsos MORI will share interim **response rate reports** with providers **three times a week** whilst the survey is live. This includes response rates at the provider

overall, as well as at course, department and CAH-levels. Your NSS Main and Second contacts will have access to these reports and will either issue them to relevant members of staff or be able to provide you with more information.

51.   The sharing of this information is subject to **greater restrictions than in previous years**. Therefore, even if you are familiar with the NSS, please read the section below carefully to ensure your provider's practice is compliant with the new guidelines. NSS contacts have the responsibility to ensure that these guidelines are followed.

52.   Please note that the figures quoted in the NSS response rate reports are based on data collected during the fieldwork period. At the end of the NSS fieldwork, the NSS data undergo a cleaning process. Part of this involves removing any 'bad' interviews; these are interviews where the respondent has selected 'Not applicable' for all of the core NSS questions or for a whole section of questions (e.g. 'the teaching on my course'), as an example. Due to this cleaning process, response rates in the final data may not match the response rate reports.

Can provider campaigns share interim response rates during fieldwork?

53.   The OfS is now designated as a producer of **Official Statistics**, and therefore complies with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics. As a consequence, the release of any data produced through the NSS prior to official publication is subject to various restrictions. This applies to the release of interim data, namely response rates, whilst the survey fieldwork is ongoing.

54.   Whilst running their own marketing campaigns, providers may find it beneficial to share interim response rates with students or departments. This includes sharing by email, on their website or VLE, in lecture shout outs, faculty meetings, on campus TV screens, and in closed social media posts among other channels. Inter-departmental competitions can also be formed which has been found to boost final response rates. Both are **permitted and encouraged** under the new guidelines.

55.   Despite the changes/restrictions to the use of NSS data, providers are permitted to share interim response rates as long as this release is **documented, limited, and solely for the purposes of operational requirements and/or quality assurance**. Encouraging higher response rates is deemed to be an operational requirement of the NSS, therefore, the release of response rate data (e.g. headline figures such as the current response rate at a given department, how it compares to the overall response and to other departments to a selection of staff, student representative bodies and relevant/NSS eligible students) is permitted, provided that this release is limited and documented.

56.   Detailed response rate information must not be disclosed to third parties. This includes staff or students who are not directly involved in the operation of the NSS or for whom the information is not relevant. Please ensure that all staff and students accessing the information for promotional purposes are aware that they should consider the information confidential and not for wider or external circulation.

57.   Providers are **no longer permitted to share response rates on <u>open</u> social media platforms**. This includes Twitter, Instagram, and public Facebook groups. However, response rates can continue to be shared on closed social media platforms, such as private/closed Facebook groups which are controlled by the provider.

58.   Failure to comply with these requirements may result in the OfS reconsidering its approach to providing access to NSS response rates in advance of publication in the future.

What activities are permitted under the new guidelines?

59.   Sharing provider response rates with the following groups is **permitted**, provided that they are solely for the purpose of encouraging participation in the survey:

- **Academic colleagues**, at faculty meetings or for the purposes of running inter-departmental competitions;

- **Target student cohorts**, through the VLE, lecture shout outs, displays on campus screens (at the provider only), student mobile apps, and closed social media groups;

- **Relevant committees, Students' Unions, academic boards or other relevant bodies.**

60.   The following activities are examples of those that are **not permitted**, as they are unlikely to improve response rates at the provider:

- Sharing response rates with **anyone outside the provider** (this includes any media organisations, and any other group that is not involved in delivering the NSS at the provider in question);

- Sharing interim response rates for **any purpose other than improving response rates** to the survey, including unrelated promotional purposes.

How should the dissemination of response rate data be documented?

61.   Providers who wish to share response rates during fieldwork for the purpose of boosting responses have a duty to make sure that they will be used for this reason alone. The strategy must be documented in a **Project Communication Plan**.

62.   Keeping a **Project Communication Plan** is adequate documentation. The document must be on record for inspection by the OfS or the Office for Statistics Regulation in the event of a breach of the code of practice for statistics.

63.   This plan should form a part of your Provider's Communication Strategy for promoting the NSS, and must include the following information:

- **Details of each group the information is released to**
  "Final Year Philosophy Students"
  Documenting the **target audience** is sufficient – it is not necessary to document each individual who has had access to the information.

- **Details of the information that has been shared with them**
  "Provider-level and Philosophy department interim response rates (as of 13/03/19)"

- **Method of distribution**
  "Entry on Philosophy Department VLE"

- **Details of the time the information was shared**
  "Posted at 19:00 on 14/03/19"

- Operational justification for releasing this information
  "Philosophy Department response rate shared to encourage participation in the survey."

64. If you have any questions regarding these new guidelines, please contact the NSS Helpline at nss@ipsos.com.

Using Social Media to Promote the NSS

65.   This section outlines some social media strategies that providers can use to encourage participation in the NSS. It aims to provide an overview of social media and present ideas that may be of use. However, it is not intended to replace any existing social media plans that providers may already have in place. The ideas outlined here would work better as part of a larger promotional campaign to encourage participation.

66.   Social media sites and apps are an effective way to 'spread the word' about an activity, event or project. The marketing guidelines and rules on inappropriate influence also apply to social media posts, so please ensure that all those involved in promoting the survey on social media are aware of what they can and cannot do, as well as the consequences of inappropriate posts. See Inappropriate Influence for more information.

Facebook:

67.   **Provide updates and promote participation in the NSS**
Departments, SUs/Associations/Guilds and NSS champions with their own Facebook pages can promote general NSS activity, such as announcing the launch of the survey, offering details about dedicated completion sessions, sharing response rate updates (in closed groups), and publicising any giveaways.
You can also make use of the Facebook reaction feature where students can use one of the reaction faces (Like, Love, Wow, Angry and Sad) to engage with your posts.

68.   **Publicising competitions and prize draws**
For example, if you embed an 'enter the survey' button as a post, which will take students to www.thestudentsurvey.com, students who share it will be entered into a prize draw. Please find more information in the competition and prize draws section below.

69.   **Create a Facebook photo album**
Post pictures or video clips of activities that are happening on your campus in a dedicated Facebook album.

70.   **Make use of live broadcasting/streaming**
Broadcast live streams of NSS-themed events or sessions; students can interact with these streams by commenting/reacting to the feed.

Twitter:

71.   **Post a 'call to action' Tweet that includes a direct link to the NSS**
Students can click the link and complete the NSS straight away. Tweets can also be used to spread the word about dedicated completion sessions, how long students have left to take part in the survey, when they will be contacted by Ipsos MORI, incentives, the nature of the survey, why it's important, details of any NSS-related events, the impact of results and the survey more widely.

72.   **Retweet the Official NSS Twitter account**
Starting in 2020, the official NSS Twitter account will not be directly targeting students. Instead it will post regular updates on the survey that providers' social media accounts can utilise by re-tweeting to their student population.

@nss_ipsos

73.   **Engage with students**
Twitter is a social dialogue. Therefore, we recommend responding to students and retweeting posts that others make. 80% of Tweets should focus on driving interactions with followers, such as retweets, replies, and favourites. Once you have built some rapport, call to action tweets, such as participating in the NSS, can be posted.

74.   **Make use of NSS related hashtags**
In 2020, the hashtags #NSSWhatDoYouThink and #NSS2020 will be used widely.

75.   **Use as many visual elements as possible**
Photos average a 35% boost in retweets, while videos get a 28% boost. Animations can be used to tell a story, while YouTube videos can be shown natively in the Twitter app.

Instagram:

76.   **General NSS promotion**
Providers can post pictures or videos of their NSS campaigns in action alongside their custom hashtag campaigns, e.g. #NSS2020, etc.

77.   **Setting up Instagram 'booths' across campus**
Here, students can take photos for their provider's Instagram accounts which can then be shared across linked social media accounts e.g. adding to their Instagram 'stories', a function similar to the Snapchat story feature detailed below.

Snapchat:

78.   **General NSS promotion, particularly using Stories**
Providers can take pictures and videos of their promotional campaigns and compile them into one chronological storyline, their 'NSS Story'. Each snap added to the storyline lasts for 24 hours, allowing providers to document each day of their campaign from start to finish.

79.   **Create an NSS-themed filter**
The custom geofilter function could be used to create an NSS-themed filter to use over any photos or videos taken after dedicated sessions or specific areas on campus where students complete the survey. This can also be used on Instagram Stories.

YouTube:

80.   **Create and share videos about the NSS**
Such videos can inform students of the purpose of the NSS and how to complete it. These can be embedded into other social networking sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, as well as on providers' websites/portals and shared amongst eligible students. You can develop an

engaging video that students would be encouraged to share. Remember to share your videos with the official NSS YouTube Channel by sending the link to **nss@ipsos.com**. You may also share the video produced by Ipsos MORI, by embedding a YouTube link (which will be sent to providers when it is uploaded), or by downloading the file available via the NSS Extranet. See **Digital Materials** for more information.

Using Prize Draws to Promote the NSS

81.   One way of promoting the NSS to eligible students is to communicate any prize draws on offer. When a provider makes their survey choices via the NSS Extranet (please see the **NSS Set up Guidance**, available via the NSS Extranet), they can opt to include a prize draw to encourage student participation. Should the provider wish to offer a prize draw, they should adhere to the following guidance. All prize draws that run internally should follow the **MRS Guidelines**.

82.   In the online survey, students can enter the prize draw on offer by ticking the relevant box which appears on screen before the main NSS questions. Students do not need to complete the survey in order to enter the prize draw.

83.   After the prize draw closing date, Ipsos MORI will draw the required number of winners at random and notify the necessary NSS contacts at the provider.

Guidelines

84.   It is up to providers to promote the NSS locally. Providers may organise prize draws if they wish to do so. Ipsos MORI is able to publicise providers' prize draws, provided that complete and timely information is submitted via the NSS Extranet. Agreed details will be promoted in the invitation emails sent to students, as well as through the online survey.

85.   To be able to publicise the prize draw, a precise description of the prize offered by the provider is required. If the provider has opted to offer a prize draw, Ipsos MORI will be in contact to agree the description that will be communicated to students. In order to ensure that the survey is ready on time so that students can access it from **6 January 2020**, we cannot deviate from the standard text that is communicated. This is because the prize draw text forms part of a program that administers the NSS across all providers that have different survey options. Once the survey is live, no changes can be made to this text.

86.   Please note that details of prize draws will only be available to students who enter the survey **online**. Students are invited to take part in the survey and are informed of the prize draw offered by the provider in their email invitations. Students should be made aware that there is no link between how they respond and their chances of winning a prize. Completion of the survey cannot be a condition to entering the online prize draw as all eligible students have an equal chance of winning. Please see the **MRS guidelines on incentives and prize draws** for more information.

Opting into a Prize Draw

87.   If the provider opts to offer a prize draw, Ipsos MORI will randomly select prize draw winners within five working days after the closing date on behalf of each participating provider. All eligible students, including non-respondents, can enter the prize draw. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure

the prize draw complies with the relevant legislation. The cost and purchase of the prizes on offer are entirely the responsibility of the provider; Ipsos MORI only supports prize draws through promotion in communications to students.

88.   Please note that prize draws must include all eligible students at a provider. It is not possible to offer a prize that is only open to a specific cohort of students, e.g. a specific department or college. Ipsos MORI is unable to facilitate bespoke prize scenarios while fulfilling its MRS and legal obligations.

89.   If you choose to run a tailored or multi-prize draw scheme, please ensure that the provider is able to administer these while complying with the law and adhering to the **MRS guidelines**. It is a requirement to clearly advertise the prize draw in any correspondence with students and clearly communicate how and when prize winners will be drawn.

90.   To ensure the prize draw is communicated to eligible students online, please complete the appropriate fields in your form, identifying whether the provider will be offering a prize draw, the total number of winners and the closing date for the draw. Following this, Ipsos MORI will agree the text that will be communicated to eligible students with the provider.

91.   **Regarding the notification and announcement dates, please allow five working days after the prize draw closing date for Ipsos MORI to draw the winners.**

92.   The deadlines to opt in to the prize draw is **28 November 2019**. After this date, we will contact the provider to agree the wording to be displayed to students. We will not be able to advertise prize draws (or draw winners) for any provider that does not supply Ipsos MORI with the required details and wording **by mid-December 2019**. All eligible students must have a fair and equal chance of entering the prize draw; therefore, we cannot introduce a prize draw after the survey has gone live in January 2020, regardless of later start weeks.

93.   Please see the **NSS Set up Guidance**, via the NSS Extranet, for full details of how to opt into the prize draw.

94. **Prize draw administration**

   Ipsos MORI will communicate the student identification codes (such as HUSID) of the selected prize winners to the NSS Main, Second and Marketing Contacts at the provider by **the end of May 2020** (or up to five working days after the prize draw closing date if an earlier date is selected). Those who enter the prize draw are asked to give consent that their contact details can be passed on to their provider should they win a prize.

How to Improve Response Rates – Examples of Good Practice

Create a Challenge

95. Providers could use social media as an avenue to create an internal or external competition to boost **response rates**. This can be done in many ways, including:

   96. Using **Datawrapper** to post an **interactive chart** to your intranet or Moodle pages to show the current response rate versus your overall targets (as documented in your provider's **Project Communications Plan**);

   97. Posting response rates in various closed **Facebook** pages and challenging other departments or campuses to beat your score (as documented in your provider's **Project Communications Plan**);

   98. Share a link to the online survey and encourage students to 'share' it in order to be in with a chance to win a small prize;

   99. Creating a competitive element **among campuses** and **other departments** for participation to help make sure as many subject areas as possible meet the threshold for publication;

   100. Regularly posting updates using a **custom hashtag** and encourage further participation through the provider's **Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat** and **Facebook** accounts while the survey is open;

   101. Taking to **Twitter** and **Instagram** to encourage students to spread the word, for example, offering a reward for the best **NSS Tweet** or **Instagram** post of the week, or for the best method of promotion;

   102. Running a campaign to boost response rates over fieldwork. For example, a member of staff or a rep could undertake a forfeit or a dare if internal response rate targets are met. Progress can be posted on closed **Facebook** groups (as documented in your provider's **Project Communications Plan**), and final challenges can be filmed/photographed and promoted on social media sources, such as **Twitter** and **Instagram**, or added to your **Snapchat** story. In 2013, one SU representative had an NSS logo permanently tattooed to his foot!

Promote Providers' Prize Draws

103. Many providers organise prize draws to encourage eligible students to enter the survey. Prizes are a useful element to communicate via social media platforms. Details of the prize draws that have been identified to Ipsos MORI can be shared to encourage students to complete the survey online, as well as any internal rewards and prizes to help boost **response rates**. To do this, you can:

104.   Have a "**complete the NSS**" day or week by booking a computer room and providing snacks and sweets so groups of students can complete the survey together. These sessions should not be made compulsory and can be promoted using social media. Please be mindful of student privacy during these sessions. **Staff or students running the sessions must not monitor students in any way while they complete the survey and cannot complete the survey on anyone else's behalf.**

105.   Provide extra incentives for people to complete the survey using their **smartphone or tablet.** For example, a dedicated stall on campus that has any freebies on offer to students that complete the survey via a mobile device then and there. **Again, be mindful of students' privacy when they are completing the survey at organised events.**

106.   Encourage students to tweet when they have completed the survey or received a reward for doing so using custom hashtags such as **#NSSRewards or #NSSComplete**. Pictures or videos of students participating in the survey can be uploaded, with their permission, to **Instagram** and **Snapchat**.

107.   Drive participation using the SU's **Twitter, Instagram** and **Facebook** accounts; for example, organising a social event for students who complete the survey (using **#NSSReward** to claim entry).

108.   Post real pictures of incentives with SU representatives or an NSS mascot. Share pictures of eligible students claiming prizes as well, with their permission. Adding a caption such as "Would you like to get your hands on these?" will contribute towards attracting students' attention and encouraging completion. These pictures can be shared across all social media platforms via **Instagram** or added to your NSS storyline on **Snapchat**.

109.   You can also communicate the outcome of the prize draws once fieldwork has closed or the winners have been drawn. Some ideas include:

    - Sharing the number of rewards that have been claimed, e.g. the number of coffees given away. In 2019, several providers used their response rate reports to monitor the number of students that had responded and made a charitable donation for every completed response. They communicated the total raised throughout fieldwork using social media. Please note this must be treated the same as response rate data and must be documented in your provider's **Project Communications Plan**.

    - Posting a picture or a video of the winners claiming their prize, as above.

Engaging Departments and Teaching Staff

110.   Support 'from the top' – from senior and academic staff- can be key to the success of the NSS at a provider. 4 in 10 students hear about the NSS through a member of staff. Therefore, they are often best placed to communicate the benefits and importance of the survey. They can directly communicate how the results will be used by prospective students and to improve the learning experience at the provider more generally. See <u>Inappropriate Influence</u>.

111.   Providers have identified that they encourage staff to get involved in the following ways:

Pre-survey launch:

- Brief staff to explain the nature and purpose of the survey, how to engage students, an overview of eligibility, how the prize draw process works (if offered), as well as to remind them (and students) about the conduct of the survey (e.g. anonymity and inappropriate influence).

- Hold meetings with senior management, heads of schools and marketing teams to discuss an action plan and form a clear communication strategy for engaging students and encouraging completion. Building a thorough communications plan into the student and staff calendar, and around Ipsos MORI's survey schedule, is highly useful to avoid over-contacting students.

112. **During fieldwork.** Encourage staff to:

- Sign up to 'key responsibilities', e.g. distributing promotional materials, implementing an NSS feature on their department website, and co-ordinating email communications to students making them aware of the oncoming survey and the email invitation they will receive from Ipsos MORI.

- Deliver lecture shout outs to final year students using the Ipsos MORI produced presentation slides and video, or own provider materials. NSS flyers can be handed out to students during classes/lectures/seminars.

- Arrange course-specific dedicated sessions for the NSS, possibly incentivised, so students can make use of their personalised links. These can be built into tutors' timetables from the outset. Students should be told that these sessions are **not** compulsory.

- Use social media platforms to reach out to students about the survey.

- Circulate weekly response rates to teaching staff/department heads, highlighting areas of good and bad performance and pointing out departments' progress compared to others. Please note this must be documented in the provider's <u>Project Communications Plan</u>.

113. Many providers identify staff support as essential in meeting response rate targets, given their ability to directly engage with students. Some ideas implemented include:

- **Monitoring response rates.** Use the thrice-weekly response rate reports provided by Ipsos MORI to guide internal promotion of the NSS.

- **Creating competitions.** Introduce a table for departments/subjects to identify top and bottom performers. Some providers have implemented prizes for those who get the overall best response rate. Social media is particularly effective in creating a sense of competition among students and boosting response rates.

- **Keeping staff abreast of survey progress.** Forward response rate reports to course leaders, heads of departments and senior management so that they are aware of the targets. If they are /are not being met and staff can act on it effectively. Please note this must be documented in the provider's <u>Project Communications Plan</u>.

- **Building a social media presence.** Use departments' social media profiles to post reminders about the survey, response rate updates (in closed groups) and details of any incentives and/or prize draws on offer.

Email Communications

114.   Electronic communication has been identified (by respondents and providers) as an important way to promote the NSS. Providers should:

- Send a pre-notification email to students at the beginning of their final academic year to inform them what the National Student Survey is, that their details will be passed onto Ipsos MORI and how they will be contacted to complete the survey.

- Send introductory emails before the survey launch to forewarn students that the survey will be coming and to look out for their email invitations. These emails should include a link to the survey website www.thestudentsurvey.com so students can find out more.

- Include messages addressed from named contacts such as the Principal, Dean of the provider or Pro-Vice-Chancellor to email communications, which can add weight to the email and can be more effective.

- Provide the email details of eligible students to teaching staff to enable them to send targeted emails. Introductory and reminder emails regarding the NSS should only be sent to eligible students rather than all final year students to avoid confusion for those who are not eligible.

Redirecting to the NSS Website

115.   Some providers have established a pre-survey webpage, which can be branded locally to help them manage their own incentives more effectively. These micro-sites link directly to the survey and provide some background information and details about any incentives.

116.   Other internal sites used to promote the survey include:

- The providers' intranet sites. Information can be subject-specific or generic.

- Virtual learning environments (VLE), which publicise the NSS, e.g. Moodle. Information can be subject-specific or generic.

- IT terminals within the provider, on computers, plasma screens, etc.

Promotional Materials

117.   Providers use a range of promotional tools and methods to improve awareness of the survey and to encourage eligible students to participate, including:

118.   **Using Ipsos MORI supplied promotional materials**. Display official NSS branded materials around campuses and buildings. Some methods used to maximise the coverage include:

- Placing materials in areas where final year students will see them. Identify 'traffic hotspots' such as learning resource centres/PC laboratories, classes, lecture theatres, seminar rooms, the library, shops or bars. The NSS video can also be played in these areas and presentation slides can be displayed in final year classes.

- Targeted distribution of materials. For example, hand out flyers in classes (e.g. with low response rates) or mail them to any online or distance learners to promote the survey and encourage completion.

119. **Create provider-specific marketing materials.** Some providers prefer to create their own branded posters, flyers, banners and screensavers. Others employ innovative promotional ideas such as NSS stickers on food labels, catering cards that are displayed on tables in cafes, bars, etc., and NSS-branded clothing for representatives to wear on campus or to be given away as incentives. Internal promotional materials must adhere to the **OfS's guidelines**. Other promotional tools used include:

- *Communicating change*. Showing students what has changed as a result of the NSS and how staff are listening, e.g. "You Said, We Did" campaigns.

- *On screen promotions.* Displaying information about the NSS on plasma screens and IT terminals around the provider.

- *Provider/NSS mascot.* Some providers introduce a mascot that visits during specific events/stalls to encourage final year students to complete the survey.

- *Social media.* Build and maintain a social media presence for the NSS, where you can inform students of the dates of the survey, as well as provide them with links to more information on what the survey is, the NSS video, and how the results have been used at your provider to implement change.

Internal Communication and Press Releases

120. Providers may choose to publish feature articles on their staff intranet to provide background information and tips for engaging students. This can include articles to raise awareness such as "spotlight" interviews, publicising the previous year's prize draw winners and communicating changes that have been implemented as a result of the NSS. It can also include features in student papers and/or radio stations to encourage completion.

121. **Annex 1** provides examples of articles that can be used as a basis for communications.

Engaging Student Bodies and Representatives

122. The role of the Students' Union, Association or Guild (SU) is important to the promotion of the NSS. SU support can give the NSS a student-friendly face and can run alongside the provider's main campaign, giving a student-led and student-focused approach. Furthermore, early engagement of the SU, such as involving them in planning, can prove beneficial.

- **Creating a buzz.** The SU would have an understanding of what appeals to potential respondents and can spread the word.

- **Targeting promotion.** Some providers consult their SU on the best places to display promotional materials, e.g. traffic hotspots such as the SU offices/facilities, shops, bars, etc.

- **Communicating with students.** Use weekly SU newsletters to promote the NSS.

- **NSS ambassadors.** Dedicated student/course reps that can help to spread the word about the NSS. Some providers have NSS champions/ambassadors to help formulate campaigns and promote the survey to final year students.

- **Student events.** Include NSS promotions in any upcoming SU events, e.g. reps can ask students to complete the survey there and then or hand out NSS-branded giveaways. Some providers find that it is easier to approach students at these types of events, where they are all gathered together.

- **Social media**. Encourage SU reps to promote the NSS on their social media profiles; it is an effective way to encourage participation.

Incentives

123.   Providers can offer a range of incentives to encourage students to complete the NSS. Some providers have identified that they work with their SUs to identify the incentive that would be most appropriate for their students.

Word of Mouth

124.   Providers recognise the importance of word of mouth promotion. This can be achieved through SU representatives, department heads, administrators and/or tutors speaking directly with eligible students about the NSS. Remember:

- **Lecture shout-outs.** During classes, encourage staff to include a dedicated slide at the end of every lecture, play the NSS video or give out flyers with any other handouts.

- **Student representatives.** Reps can spread word about the NSS among their peers and illustrate the value of student opinion. They can create a presence for the survey on campus through NSS mascots and engage different clubs/societies/associations.

Dedicated Time to Complete the Survey

125.   Most providers set up dedicated time or space for final year students to complete the NSS. These sessions must be held in neutral environments, e.g. computer rooms or study centres. Staff must not oversee students' responses or make them feel that they must answer in a certain way. Students should be aware that these sessions are **not** compulsory. Please ensure all staff understand the rules and regulations surrounding inappropriate influence.

126.   Dedicated NSS sessions can include:

- **Allocating time in tutorials to complete the NSS**. Providers can build time into their timetables to encourage students to complete the NSS by visiting PC labs or Learning Resource Centres.

- **Dedicated PCs or 'hubs' available for completion**. Allocate computers or areas called 'hubs' in places where students tend to visit, specifically for the completion of the NSS during fieldwork.

- **Subject sessions.** Introduce NSS sessions to entice eligible students to participate in the survey by offering an incentive. For example, book a room and offer free pizza/lunch.

- **Dedicated stalls.** Student reps with mobile devices can be sent to areas frequented by eligible students. This could be in the form of a stall with incentives for those who complete it there and then.

Planning and Coordination

127.   Setting up a formal procedure can ensure response rates meet the publication threshold. This can include:

128.   **Dedicated NSS Operations Team and/or an NSS Steering Group:**

- Ensure representatives from across the provider meet regularly (e.g. once every 2 weeks) to discuss response rates and how to boost them.

- Get a group together to brainstorm promotional ideas. Discuss areas of low response and when appropriate, invite department/subject representatives to discuss areas of lower performance.

- Track email conversations between representatives to communicate weekly response rates and discuss promotional actions.

- Regularly meet with department representatives and encourage them to pass on information to their colleagues in department meetings.

129.   All meetings that involve the sharing of interim response rates must be documented in the provider's [Project Communications Plan](#).

130.   **Communications planning.** In order to maximise response rates, some providers have developed a communications plan for the NSS Fieldwork before the launch of the survey.

131.   **Preparing for fieldwork.** Set out a structured, formal plan to ensure that staff are fully briefed on the NSS process, the importance of reaching required response rates, and the start and end dates of fieldwork.

132.   **Timetable for promotional activity**. Providers can produce a detailed plan of promotional activity so that they target students appropriately. This includes:

- Ensuring students are aware of how to claim any prizes/incentives on offer.

- Developing complementary email communications to reach students between Ipsos MORI mail outs.

  - Highlighting key dates in the student and staff calendar that may affect participation, e.g. holidays, exams, and coursework deadlines.

133.   **Identify key responsibilities.** Some providers have a formal document which identifies who will have responsibilities for which communications, e.g. those best placed to engage with students and what their key responsibilities should be.

134.   **Innovative ideas.** Test different ideas to engage your students with the NSS, including involving those from relevant specialisms to get involved with the promotion, e.g. Art & Design, Marketing and/or Communications to develop NSS strategies for the provider.

135.   **General awareness.** Explore ways to raise awareness of the NSS amongst non-final year students. This can include poster campaigns to promote changes that have been implemented as a result of NSS findings.

136.   **Contacting students.** Survey fatigue and general annoyance from being over-contacted can prevent eligible students from participating in the survey. To avoid this, providers can:

- Plan communications according to the Ipsos MORI timetable.

- Be aware of any other internal research that is being undertaken by the provider and plan communications, so students are not overwhelmed by emails.

- Ensure communication with students is staggered.

- Personalise or sign emails from representatives that are recognised by students, e.g. Dean or subject head.

Communications Checklist

137.   Findings from previous surveys suggest that contact from the provider plays a key role in boosting **response rates**.

138.   Providers have kindly shared a number of initiatives that they have found to be helpful in encouraging students to respond to the survey. The following pages summarise several of the initiatives adopted in the form of a checklist, which providers can follow before and throughout the fieldwork period.

139.   **Pre-survey launch check list**

    i.   Send pre-notification email to eligible students. ☐

    ii.   Organise staff briefing(s). ☐

    iii.   Develop a clear strategy and timeline for contacting students. ☐

    iv.   Display promotional materials in high traffic areas. ☐

    v.   Organise meetings with student representatives. ☐

    vi.   Inform student media and PR of the survey launch. ☐

    vii.   Develop electronic presence. ☐

    viii. Build a social media presence for the NSS at your provider. ☐

    ix.   Send a pre-emptive email to students just before the survey launch. ☐

140.   **During fieldwork check list**

    i.   Lecture shout-outs. ☐

    ii.   Regular staff updates. ☐

    iii.   Email reminders. ☐

    iv.   Organise dedicated sessions to complete the online survey. ☐

    v.   Implement a dedicated Survey Day/Week for completing the NSS. ☐

    vi.   Consider offering incentives. ☐

    vii.   Run PR/media activity throughout the fieldwork. ☐

    viii. Word of mouth. ☐

    ix.   Create response rate competitions between different departments. ☐

    x.   Maintain NSS social media presence. ☐

    xi.   Senior management support. ☐

    xii.   Students' Union (Association or Guild) or student rep involvement. ☐

    xiii. Provider staff briefings and updates. ☐

    xiv. Online promotion. ☐

    xv.   Targeted email reminders. ☐

    xvi. Engage 'harder-to-reach' students. ☐

Inappropriate Influence

141.   Providers should communicate with students and ensure they give their honest feedback on their learning experience. Communications and/or providers' marketing materials must not attempt to sway the opinion of students in any way.

What is inappropriate influence?

142.   The OfS (in partnership with the UK funding and regulatory bodies) define inappropriate influence as **any activity or behaviour that may encourage students to reflect anything other than their true opinion of their experiences during their course in their NSS responses.**

143.   Inappropriate influence can emerge in several ways, for example:

   a.   Explicit or implicit instruction on the type of responses students should make, including the provision of standard or example responses.

   b.   How the survey is presented to students and drawing attention, explicitly or implicitly, to the consequences of negative responses, with regard to:

   i.   conflation with other surveys undertaken by providers whether internal or external
   ii.   league tables, the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) or Quality Assessment processes
   iii.   employers' perceptions of positive and negative outcomes.

   c.   Instruction on how the response scale is understood by third parties.

   d.   Encouraging students to avoid a particular point on the response scale.

   e.   Failure to ensure that methods to encourage participation in the survey, such as campaigns, the use of promotional materials (either explicitly or implicitly) or incentivisation methods (such as prize draws), do not bias responses.

   f.   Holding compulsory sessions at which the NSS must be completed.

144.   When promoting the survey, providers should take into consideration whether the campaign could inappropriately influence the type of responses participants may give. The OfS (in partnership with the UK funding and regulatory bodies) expects providers to have processes to ensure that all staff (both academic and professional services) have engaged with the guidance and measures in place to prevent inappropriate influence throughout their NSS activities.

Avoiding Inappropriate Influence – Do's and Do nots

Do:

145.   **Do run a neutral campaign that focuses solely on boosting responses in the NSS.**
It is important that the NSS is treated as an independent social research survey. As a result, marketing campaigns should focus on the survey rather than the provider and should not encourage students to respond in a particular way.

146. **Do provide examples of where NSS feedback has resulted in particular improvements in previous years.**
Demonstrating how feedback from the NSS has led to tangible changes at the provider can be a powerful way to promote the survey. For example: "Your feedback counts – in a previous NSS, students expressed that library opening hours were an issue. Since then, we introduced a 24-hour central library." However, care must be taken not to combine this with other internal campaigns – please see **'do not'** below.

147. **Do encourage eligible students to participate.**
All eligible students should be targeted in promotional campaigns.

148. **Do allow students to give their feedback regardless of their opinion.**
When promoting the NSS, providers should encourage all students to participate regardless of their opinion of the provider or course.

149. **Do be wary of tone and use of language when discussing the NSS and asking students to complete it**.
Be sure to keep promotion of the NSS as neutral as possible. Staff can explain the importance of the NSS, improvements that their feedback has led to in previous years, and how it will help prospective students. **Do not** link the NSS to league tables, a provider's performance in the TEF or to the perceived value of students' degrees.

150. **Do target promotion in departments or courses with low response rates.**
During the NSS fieldwork, Ipsos MORI will share response rate information with providers, which can be used to identify targets for promotional campaigns.

151. **Do inform students that they are free to interpret the survey questions how they wish.**
Questions for the NSS are self-explanatory. Students should be encouraged to answer the survey questions however they interpret them.

152. **Do hold voluntary NSS completion sessions**.
Organising completion sessions is an effective way to encourage students to complete the survey. However, these sessions must be voluntary.

153. **Do ensure students have total privacy when completing the survey.**
Students must not feel pressured to respond in any particular way. Therefore, staff should respect students' privacy when they are taking the survey. At voluntary completion sessions, staff must not look at students' screens or at the responses they are giving.

154. **Do use incentives or a prize draw to promote the survey.**
Incentives and prize draws are both proven to be effective in improving response rates. This can form a part of the promotional campaign. Students should be made aware that there is no link between how they respond and their chances of winning a prize. Completion of the survey cannot be a condition to entering the online prize draw as all eligible students have an equal chance of winning. Please see the MRS guidelines on incentives and prize draws for more information.

155. **Do ensure that all staff are aware of the guidelines.**
To facilitate understanding of the guidelines and to prevent inappropriate influence in the promotion of the NSS, the OfS has produced a print-out guide which can be circulated to academic staff, staff in

professional services such as administrative or student support staff, or any other members of staff in a student-facing role.

Do not:

156.   **Do not embed NSS marketing activity in broader provider promotional activities, for example 'Pride' and 'I Love' campaigns.**
A clear division between marketing campaigns must be made to ensure all promotion of the NSS is neutral. This includes 'you said, we did' campaigns, where it must be clear that particular changes came about from the NSS rather than from internal campaigns.

157.   **Do not combine the NSS with other surveys being undertaken at the provider.**
The NSS must be promoted independently, and students must not be led to confuse the NSS with other surveys, whether internal or external, undertaken at the provider.

158.   **Do not explicitly or implicitly advise students on how to interpret the survey.**
It is very important that students are not influenced on how they interpret the survey questions or response scale. These are self-explanatory and students should be left to interpret them in a way they see fit. Therefore, providers are not permitted to explain the meanings of questions or responses. This includes defining 'neither agree nor disagree' as a negative response or comparing the response scale to another scale with a different purpose (e.g. assignment marking schemes).

159.   **Do not advise or request students to respond in a certain way**.
Providers are not permitted to recommend that students respond in a certain way, e.g. 'I recommend that you select agree or mostly agree' or provide standard or example responses.

160.   **Do not make entering a prize draw or incentives conditional on completing the NSS.**
Prize draws are a good way to encourage student interest in the NSS. However, taking the NSS cannot be made an explicit condition to enter the prize draw, as this has the potential to influence responses to the survey.

161.   **Do not link the NSS to league tables, job prospects and the perceived value of students' degrees.**
Providers are **not** permitted to tell students that negative responses could make their degrees look bad to future employers. There should be no link made between completion of the survey and employers' perceptions of positive and negative outcomes. This includes links between the NSS and university league tables or the TEF.

162.   **Do not indicate that the survey is compulsory.**
Participation in the NSS, while beneficial to providers, is completely voluntary for students.

163.   **Do not make it a requirement or pressure students to attend dedicated NSS sessions.**
Arranging these sessions is allowed however providers should not enforce them or make students feel there may be consequences if they do not attend.

164.   **Do not take students through the survey on an individual basis.**

Providers should not stand or sit beside students when they are completing the survey or take them through their responses question-by-question. Students should be given due privacy so they can respond with honesty.

165.   **Do not complete the survey on behalf of the student**
The survey should not be accessed or completed on behalf of the student. The NSS is an anonymous student feedback survey and should only be completed by the eligible student.

166.   This is not an exhaustive list and providers should be alert to other possible types of inappropriate influence.

What could the consequences of inappropriate influence be for my provider?

167.   Where a concern or allegation is raised, it will be investigated by the OfS through the Allegations Procedure[1]. If an investigation were to find that promotional activities and/or marketing materials had resulted in inappropriate influence, whether intentional or unintentional, the integrity of the NSS data could be called into question. The OfS (in partnership with the UK funding and regulatory bodies) could take action to suppress the affected NSS data for the provider meaning that no NSS results would be published for the affected courses in that specific year, nor would it be available to use in marketing activities, learning enhancement work or inclusion on Discover Uni, the OfS's website etc.

168.   More information on the Allegations Procedure for raising concerns, and how the OfS deal with allegations of inappropriate influence, can be found in their guidance 'National Student Survey: Procedures for investigating allegations of inappropriate influence on survey results'; this guidance can be read in full at: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/c68e2add-7523-4feb-95e6-902d05cf7ac1/nss-allegations-procedure-2019.pdf

169.   If you have any questions or concerns regarding inappropriate influence, please speak to the survey manager at the provider or to the person who deals with the provider's data submissions, who should be able to provide further guidance regarding 'inappropriate influence' in student surveys. Alternatively, please do not hesitate to contact the OfS Allegations team at NSSAllegations@officeforstudents.org.uk or Ipsos MORI at 020 8861 8110 or nss@ipsos.com who can pass this on to the OfS for investigation.

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[1] https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/inappropriate-influence/

NSS Marketing Materials

Ipsos MORI Marketing Packages

170.   Providers will be sent hard copy marketing materials by Ipsos MORI, if they have requested them via **the new order form.** It is not compulsory to use the marketing materials provided (free of charge), however, we encourage doing so in support of other promotional efforts.

171.   This year, requests for marketing materials are not included in the survey options form. Listed contacts at providers should have received a separate form for NSS poster and flyer orders in early October; this change to the process is to ensure that providers receive the materials earlier. For more information, please see the **NSS Set up Guidance,** available via the **NSS Extranet**.

172.   The deadline for requesting posters and flyers is **24 October**. Orders completed by this date will be delivered from the **w/c 4 November**. Please contact Ipsos MORI if you require hard copy materials, but did not submit an order by this date.

Hard copy materials

173.   Posters

- NSS posters are available in three sizes: A4, A3 and A0 (portrait format). Posters should be displayed in prominent positions where there is a lot of student traffic.

- Please note that the poster design is different each year. The 2020 campaign has been designed by Ipsos MORI, working with professional designers and in consultation with students.

- Providers are permitted to request the poster design files from Ipsos MORI to adapt the poster for their own provider. However, they are only permitted to add a provider logo and/or provider-specific text, e.g. prize draw information or 'you said, we did' examples. Any adaptions of the posters have to be approved by Ipsos MORI and the OfS.

174.   Flyers

- The flyer is available in the new DL 6pp (3-fold) format and is based on the poster design. It contains key information to encourage students to complete the survey.

- Place/hand out flyers in high traffic areas, including reception areas, communal areas (e.g. libraries and cafeterias), in lectures, seminars and teaching sessions, placed in students' pigeonholes, sent to students when communicating by post, etc. They can also be sent to distance learners, students on placement or learners who are not campus-based.

Digital Materials

175.   In addition to the hard copy marketing packages from Ipsos MORI, a range of electronic materials will be available to all providers to help them promote the NSS.

Available materials:

176.   **Banners & Wallpapers**
        Ipsos MORI will provide a range of electronic banners and wallpapers for providers to use.

- The wallpapers can be installed on computers in IT suites and are ideal for display on computer/plasma screens around campus. Desktop wallpapers are supplied in a range of sizes. For optimum display at the provider, use a wallpaper that corresponds (if not exactly, then as close as possible) to the resolution of your computer/device screens.

- Static and animated electronic banners can be placed on the relevant provider websites (VLE, intranet, etc.). There are horizontal and vertical banners available which can be used on electronic communications from the provider, e.g. an email signature, internet/intranet/extranets, articles/newsletters as well as social media.
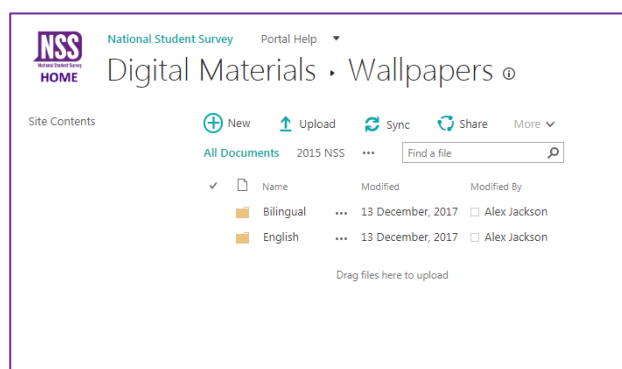
- There are hyperlinked banners provided (vertical and horizontal), which once clicked, will direct students to the official survey website: www.thestudentsurvey.com.

- All electronic items will be available to download from the 'Banners & Wallpapers' area on the NSS Extranet by the end of October 2020. These can be downloaded by clicking on the three-dotted menu next to each file and selecting 'Download'. Listed Main, Second and Marketing contacts will be notified when the materials are available. A guide to using and installing electronic items is provided with the materials on the Extranet.

177.   **Social media-specific banner**
- A static banner that can be posted on social media (e.g. Instagram story). The banner is optimised for mobile phone usage. Providers can upload the banner to their Instagram account and add a link/comment to direct students to the NSS website. For example, "swipe up to complete the NSS". Similar to Facebook's reaction feature, viewers can react to Instagram stories by selecting one of the 'quick reactions': laughing, shocked, heart-shaped eyes, sad, clapping, fire, celebration and 100. The banner will be available on the **NSS Extranet** homepage.

178.   **NSS Video and YouTube Channel**

- A short video will be available for providers. The animation is linked to the poster design and conveys the key messages of the NSS including how students can complete the survey. It can be played on plasma screens around campus and uploaded to provider websites, as well as any social media profiles to promote the survey. The video will be available to download from the 'Official Video' area on the NSS Extranet home page. Higher quality versions will be hosted on YouTube and the URL will be communicated to providers.

- Please note that Ipsos MORI manages a dedicated NSS YouTube channel 'TheStudentSurvey': https://www.youtube.com/user/thestudentsurvey. If you have your own NSS videos and advertisements, please send the URL to Ipsos MORI and we will upload it to the NSS channel.

- In accordance with the Welsh Language Act, the official video will also be available in the Welsh language. Welsh providers should dedicate equal amounts of publicity to this as they do to the English version. We recommend promoting the video in monolingual posts – for instance, providers can share the English version in a tweet composed entirely in English, then share the Welsh version in a separate tweet composed entirely in Welsh.

- Videos supplied by Welsh providers also need to be available in both English and Welsh.

179.   **Logos and icons**

- The NSS logo is available for providers who would like to print/create additional marketing materials themselves. The logo can be used on promotional giveaways, e.g. stationary, USBs, t-shirts, stickers, shopping bags, etc. as well as other marketing materials. Ipsos MORI will also provide a small icon version of the NSS logo that can be used on the relevant provider websites (VLE, intranet, etc.) for students to click to be redirected to the survey website.

- Please note that only the logos and icons are downloadable; Ipsos MORI will not produce any additional items. The NSS approved logos and icons will be available in the 'Logos & Icons' area on the NSS Extranet home page.

- If you have any queries about using these items, or require any additional posters or flyers during fieldwork, please contact the NSS Helpline at nss@ipsos.com.

180.   **Quick Response (QR) code**
A QR code will be included on all hard copy promotional materials. Students can use mobile devices to scan the image and be redirected to www.thestudentsurvey.com to complete the online survey. The QR code will be available to download from the 'Logos & Icons' area on the NSS Extranet. We would also encourage providers to use the QR code on all hard copy materials that they create internally.

181.   **Other supporting materials**
Ipsos MORI will also provide template examples of popular communications, some of which can be found in the Annexes.

- **Newspaper articles**
Template newspaper articles have been prepared for provider use (e.g. papers and magazines), to raise awareness and provide information on the survey.

- **Circular letters**
Template circular letters aimed at both academic staff and students will be provided to raise awareness and encourage online participation. Please ensure that variations of the template are signed off by a senior member of staff.

- **Presentation slides**
A set of PowerPoint slides will be available to raise awareness and encourage survey completion. The slides can be used to communicate the purpose of the NSS during class time with final year students.

- Helpcards
  Summary helpcards for marketing and setting up the survey. These can be forwarded to staff to help them understand relevant areas of the survey, including the implications of inappropriate influence and what they can do to avoid this when promoting the survey.

Creation of Own Marketing Materials

182.   Providers can create their own internal promotional materials, either by adapting the marketing materials supplied by Ipsos MORI or by creating their own artwork.

183.   **Adapting Ipsos MORI marketing materials**
        Providers are permitted to adapt the Ipsos MORI supplied marketing materials, however, restrictions apply. The provider's logo and promotional text can only be added to the poster design. However, the fundamental content of the poster cannot be adapted and the ratios of the NSS and funder logos cannot be changed. Providers wishing to adapt the national campaign will need to request the design files from Ipsos MORI. All amended artwork must be sent to nss@ipsos.com for approval to ensure that it remains brand compliant.

Creating original artwork

184.   All internal marketing campaigns must include:

- **The NSS logo**
  Please ensure the updated logo is used on any provider materials (available from the NSS Extranet).

- **The survey web address**
  www.thestudentsurvey.com or portal address to redirect to this site.

- **The relevant funders logos**
  The Office for Students (OfS), Department for the Economy Northern Ireland (DfE), Higher Education Funding Council Wales (HEFCW) or Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Ipsos MORI logos (available from the **NSS Extranet** home page).

185.   Providers have a responsibility to ensure that the messages around the NSS are clearly communicated to their eligible students. If customised text is used, it should:

- Aim to encourage students to voice their opinion (what they liked and did not like about their student experience);

- State the purpose of the NSS and its target audience of mainly final year undergraduates;

- Encourage students to complete the survey and invite honest feedback;

- Not influence responses inappropriately; and

- Inform students that the survey is run by Ipsos MORI, an independent research agency.

186.   Please also note that the NSS has a strict policy of not making any references to commercial brands. Promotion of the NSS must not include any defamatory, offensive, political or unlawful content.

187.   **What method of completion should we promote to our students?**
        The survey can be taken via laptop/computers or mobile devices (e.g. smartphones and tablets). Therefore, we recommend advertising online participation in communications and marketing materials. Students can also be redirected to the survey website via provider portals.

188.   The survey website www.thestudentsurvey.com goes live on **Monday 6 January 2020**. Regardless of your provider's chosen start week, <u>ALL</u> eligible students can complete the survey from this date. Initial email invitations will be sent on the Thursday of each start week from the w/c 13 January. Providers therefore have the first few weeks of fieldwork, or first days of their start week, to launch their own promotional activities and engage students as they wish.

189.   Please note that students can also complete the survey via the telephone. If students do have a preferred method of contact, they can opt out of a contact mode online at www.thestudentsurvey.com or contact the Ipsos MORI student helpline at thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com.

Annexes

1. Intranet/News Articles

Provider/Subject/Department Intranet Template:

The National Student Survey (NSS) 2020 is now live at [provider]. The survey is open to mostly final year undergraduates, who can complete it now at www.thestudentsurvey.com.

What is the NSS?

The NSS is a nationally recognised annual survey of mostly final year undergraduates in the UK. The survey provides students with an opportunity to give their honest opinions on what they liked about their time on their course at [provider] as well as things that they feel could have been improved.

The survey is administered by Ipsos MORI, an independent market research agency on behalf of the UK Higher Education Funding Bodies and Regulators, so responses remain anonymous at all times.

Why should I take part?
- *The NSS provides you with the opportunity to provide honest feedback on your student experience;*
- *Your feedback will be used to improve the student experience at [provider];*
- *The results are taken very seriously and inform the quality assurance system with regards to teaching quality;*
- *Results are used by prospective students, their families and advisors to make decisions on what and where to study.*

Have Your Say at [provider].

What happens with the results?
The NSS results are made publicly available to help prospective students, their families and advisors make informed decisions of where and what to study. Providers and supporting Students' Unions also use the data to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, and bring about change and enhancements to improve the learning experience for future generations of students.

Data from previous surveys are available on Discover Uni.

2. Letters/Memos

1. Email to Eligible Students

Please note that this text does not apply to students included through the National Student Survey Pilot 2020. A separate email text will be provided for this purpose in the dedicated Pilot guidance sent to participating providers.

[Do you want your opinions on your student experience to be heard? / Are you in your final year of a course leading to undergraduate qualifications or credits? / What do you think about your experience as a student at (provider)?]

Take part in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2020! Whether you feel your time as a student has been great, or you feel some aspects could be improved, the NSS gives you a unique opportunity to tell us what you think of your course at [provider].

Your opinions matter and will shape the future at [provider]. Based on previous years' results we have implemented the following changes: [example of changes made by NSS results e.g. extended library hours, better access to personal tutors, invested in more PCs in campus].

NSS results are made publicly available through Discover Uni to help prospective students, their families and advisors make informed decisions of where and what to study. So, What Do You Think?

If you are eligible for the survey, Ipsos MORI will contact you by email during [survey start week] to invite you to fill in the survey online. However, you can complete the NSS online or via a mobile device at www.thestudentsurvey.com at any time from 6 January 2020 to 30 April 2020. Thank you in advance for taking part in the NSS!

2. Memo to Staff

The National Student Survey 2020

The National Student Survey (NSS) 2020 will launch at [provider] on the [survey start week].
The NSS is a survey of mostly final year undergraduates in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. UK universities, FE colleges with directly funded HE students (i.e. students in their final year of a course leading to undergraduate qualifications or credits) in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and other providers with specific course designation in England will be participating. The NSS is commissioned by the Office for Students (OfS), on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies, and will be administered by Ipsos MORI, an independent research company.

The NSS results are made available to participating providers annually and are published nationally on the OfS and Discover Uni websites.

Promotion of the NSS at a localised level is a key factor in achieving the required response rates for results to be made publicly available. Good response rates ensure that NSS data can be made available to prospective students, providers and students' unions to support student choice and quality enhancement.

Local marketing of the survey cannot be over-emphasised. Although Ipsos MORI can communicate with non-responsive students and encourage participation, we are in the prime position to raise awareness of the survey, convey its importance and encourage participation. It is important to be aware of the marketing guidelines and what may constitute inappropriate influence. Please see the inappropriate influence help card [attach Ipsos MORI's Inappropriate Influence Help Card] for more information. All internal marketing activities should have the aim to raise awareness of the NSS amongst mostly final year undergraduate students and encourage students to give honest and anonymous feedback on their course experience.

It is important that as many students as possible provide their feedback for the survey to generate reliable information. We need to achieve a response rate of at least 50% at provider level and in our subjects of study (combined with 10 respondents per cohort) in order for our data to be made publicly available. [Last year we achieved an overall response rate of XX% and we are aiming to beat that this year] [Last year we only managed to achieve an overall response rate of XX% so we need to improve on this and reach at least 50%].

During [survey start week] our eligible students will be sent an invitation email to complete the NSS. Those who have not completed the survey may later be contacted via telephone. Early online completion is desirable so please make your students aware of the NSS and encourage them to take part in the survey online at www.thestudentsurvey.com (via computer or mobile device) before 30 April 2020. Students may also opt out of the survey at any point during fieldwork.

[If participating in the National Student Survey Pilot 2020: Furthermore, this year [provider] has chosen to participate in the new pilot activity expanding the NSS to students previously excluded. This will, for the first time, extend the survey to cover students in their final year on 1-year FTE courses. These students may be targeted in the same promotional campaigns as students who are normally eligible. However, the data from these students will not be published on the OfS and Discover Uni websites. If targeting these students directly in communications, we advise you remove references to this, to avoid confusion. In addition, students that fall into this category may read elsewhere that they are not eligible – you may wish to use this opportunity to explain the pilot to them.]

[NSS Coordinator/students' union contact] will be coordinating our NSS promotion this year and ensuring that guidelines issued by the OfS in relation to promotion are adhered to – more information is in the attached Staff Briefing. In short, please make sure that your students are:

- *Encouraged to give their honest feedback on what they liked and did not like about their course;*
- *Not asked to fill in the survey while a member of staff is overseeing their responses or made to feel that their responses are being monitored;*

- *Not encouraged to reflect in their answers anything other than their genuine perception of their experience.*

If you have any questions, please contact [NSS Coordinator] or Ipsos MORI at nss@ipsos.com. If your students have any questions, please direct them to www.thestudentsurvey.com or they can contact the student helpline at Ipsos MORI directly at thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com.

Many thanks for your help.

[NSS Champion]

3. Briefing for Course Reps

The National Student Survey 2020

The National Student Survey (NSS) 2020 will launch at [provider] on the [survey start week].
The NSS is a survey of mostly final year undergraduates in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. UK universities, FE colleges with directly funded HE students (i.e. students in their final year of a course leading to undergraduate qualifications or credits) in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and other providers with specific course designation in England will also participate. The annual survey gathers the opinions of students about their experiences on their course. It asks 27 core questions on a range of issues including the quality of teaching, learning opportunities, assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources, learning community and student voice.

The NSS provides a powerful resource for informing providers on how to enhance the student learning experience. For course reps, the NSS provides valuable information on those that have studied on your course.

In order for the results to be made public, each provider and subject needs at least 10 students and 50% of eligible students to respond. The higher the response rate, the better!

Student and course reps can make a real difference to response rates by raising awareness of the survey and the impact it can have, and by targeting their promotion of the survey in areas most likely to attract students, e.g. campus shops or on social media sites. In order to ensure that [provider] achieves the required response rates for publication of the data, we are writing to ask for your support to help us to promote the survey to your peers.

Tips for promoting the survey include:
- *Contacting those on your course informing them of what the NSS is, and why it is important to complete;*
- *Creating an exciting promotional campaign which will grab people's attention;*

- *Working with other student reps and asking for past NSS results which you can use when speaking to current students about what others have said;*

- *"You said, we did" campaigns are a great way of making people realise that their feedback makes a difference. It reflects how students' opinions have been taken into account in previous years and highlights the changes that have resulted;*

- *Use the official NSS marketing materials, provided by Ipsos MORI;*

- *Read the Ipsos MORI marketing guidelines and tips in the Good Practice Guide.*

During [survey start week], all eligible students will be sent an invitation email to complete the NSS. Those who have not completed the survey may later be contacted by telephone. Early online completion is desirable so please make your fellow students aware of the NSS and encourage them to participate in the survey online at www.thestudentsurvey.com (via computer or mobile device) before 30 April 2020. Students may also opt out of the survey at any point during the fieldwork.

[If participating in the National Student Survey Pilot 2020: Furthermore, this year [provider] has chosen to participate in the new pilot activity expanding the NSS to students previously excluded. This will, for the first time, extend the survey to cover students in their final year on 1-year FTE courses. These students may be targeted in the same promotional campaigns as students who are normally eligible. However, the data from these students will not be published on the OfS and Discover Uni websites. If targeting these students directly in communications, we advise you remove references to this, to avoid confusion. In addition, students that fall into this category may read elsewhere that they are not eligible – you may wish to use this opportunity to explain the pilot to them.]

If you have any questions, please contact [NSS Coordinator] or Ipsos MORI at nss@ipsos.com. If your students have any questions, please direct them to www.thestudentsurvey.com or they can contact the student helpline at Ipsos MORI directly at thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com.

Many thanks for your help.
[NSS Champion]