

Avoiding Inappropriate Influence

Inappropriate Influence

During the course of the academic year, you may wish to talk to students about the National Student Survey (NSS). When doing so, it is important that you do not inappropriately influence the responses students may give. Please read the table below carefully and speak to your NSS contact if you have any questions.

Do

- ☑ Encourage all eligible students to participate.
- ☑ Allow students to give their feedback regardless of their opinion.
- ☑ Ensure students have total privacy when completing the survey.
- ☑ 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 their feedback has led to in previous years, and how it will help prospective students.
- ☑ 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.
- ☑ 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.

Don't

- ☒ Embed the NSS with other surveys being undertaken at the provider.
- ☒ Require or pressure students to attend NSS completion sessions.
- ☒ Indicate that the survey is compulsory.
- ☒ Explicitly or implicitly advise students on how to interpret the survey: Providers should not explain the meanings of questions or the NSS response scale. This includes defining 'neither agree nor disagree' as a negative response and comparing the response scale to another scale with a different purpose.
- ☒ Advise or request students to respond in a certain way: For example, 'I recommend that you select agree or mostly agree' or 'You shouldn't use 'neither agree or disagree'', or providing standard or example responses.
- ☒ Take students through the survey: Providers should not stand or sit beside students when they are completing the survey or take them through their responses question-by-question.
- ☒ 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 Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF).

If you require help or need clarification of any of these items, please speak to the main NSS contact at your provider or contact the NSS teams at the OfS at nss@officeforstudents.org.uk or Ipsos MORI at nss@ipsos.com.