

National Student Survey Inappropriate Influence

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During the course of the academic year, you may wish to speak to students about the National Student Survey (NSS) and its scope. When doing so, it is important not to inappropriately influence the responses that students may provide. All providers must adhere to the guidance on inappropriate influence, whether or not they choose to promote the survey. Please read the table below carefully and consult your NSS contact if you have any questions. **Note that this is not an exhaustive list.** For more information, please refer to the [NSS 2026 Good Practice Guide](#). The list below may be used in conjunction with the full guidance, and there is also a [guide for students on inappropriate influence](#) available.

Do

- Encourage all eligible students to participate.
- Allow students to give their feedback regardless of their opinion of the provider or course.
- 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 that 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 have been cognitively tested and 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.
- Share the [student guide](#) with your eligible population to notify them how they can report any experience of inappropriate influence.

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 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 'xxx' response scale' 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 at nss@ipsos.com