

The National Student Survey 2019

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Enquiries to nss@officeforstudents.org.uk

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Cyngor Cyllido Addysg
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Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales

hefcw

Publication for:

- Higher education institutions in Scotland
- Higher education institutions and further education colleges in Northern Ireland
- Higher education institutions and further education colleges in England
- Other providers in England who participate

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales will write separately to institutions in Wales.

Summary

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) is managed by the Office for Students (OfS) 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, and Health Education England. The survey provides information for prospective students and for stakeholders to support a high-quality learning experience.
2. This publication sets out the arrangements for NSS 2019 and the action required from all participating universities, colleges and other higher education providers by **Wednesday 28 November 2018**. Providers are asked to:
 - provide up-to-date contact details
 - check the sample list of students to be included in the survey (the ‘target list’) and provide students’ contact details.
3. The 2019 survey¹ will use the same main questionnaire as in 2018. One minor change has been made to other parts of the survey: the degree apprenticeship questions introduced in England last year will also be available to providers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland this year.
4. The survey will be delivered on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies by:
 - Ipsos MORI, who will administer the survey
 - Texuna Technologies, who will deliver the data dissemination portal for providers.

Detailed guidance relating to NSS 2019 and the action requested from all participating providers is in the annexes. This is provided in Annex A for higher education institutions and alternative providers, Annex B for further education colleges in England, Annex C for further education colleges in Northern Ireland. Annex D contains additional information for colleges in both England and Northern Ireland.

¹ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/.

5. As in 2018, alternative providers in England are required as a condition of their specific course designation to participate in the NSS (see the Government's guidance published in July 2017²). This requirement covers all NSS eligible courses at a provider, and not just those designated for student support. This will be a condition of grant funding for all providers regulated by the OfS until 1 August 2019 when the transition period for the new regulatory framework in England ends (see para 10a for further detail).

Actions for providers

6. All participating providers are asked to review and (where necessary) update their relevant NSS institutional contact details by Wednesday 28 November 2018. The information should be supplied using the 'My Details' form on the NSS extranet³. Ipsos Mori will send login details for the NSS extranet to the nominated main and secondary NSS institutional contacts in the week commencing 15 October 2018.
7. All providers should populate their 2019 NSS sample templates with the requested contact details for students on their target list – this is a list of all students eligible for 2019 NSS based on the student data submitted in 2017-18. Details should be supplied by Wednesday 28 November 2018 via the 'Upload Sample Data' section of the NSS extranet.
8. Instructions on how to supply this information are included in the 'Preparing for the National Student Survey 2019' guidance which will be issued to providers' contacts by Ipsos MORI on 24 October 2018 and is also available on the NSS extranet. The guidance includes information regarding survey administration and key responsibilities and dates.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/specific-course-designation-alternative-higher-education-providers>.

³ <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet>.

Introduction

9. The NSS is a UK-wide survey undertaken by final year higher education students to give feedback on their course. The survey is managed by the Office for Students (OfS) on behalf of the four UK funding and regulatory bodies and Health Education England.
10. The survey is a key component of the quality assurance and wider regulatory landscape in UK higher education and participation in the survey is compulsory for providers as follows:
 - a. In England, transitional arrangements to the new regulatory framework are in operation until 1 August 2019. Registered providers will be expected to participate in the survey as initial and ongoing conditions of registration. Until that point all providers regulated by the OfS must participate as a condition of grant funding. Providers with designated courses regulated by DfE must participate as a condition of course designation.
 - b. In Northern Ireland, NSS participation is a condition of funding as set out in the financial memoranda between universities and the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland). Further education colleges in Northern Ireland take part in the NSS to meet requirements of the Revised Operating Model for Quality Assurance.
 - c. In Scotland, participation is a condition of the Scottish Funding Council's funding for higher education institutions.
 - d. In Wales, all regulated institutions are required to participate to meet the requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.
11. The 2019 survey⁴ will use the same main questionnaire as that in 2018 and will be delivered across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The timetable will run as follows:
 - a. Fieldwork will take place between January and April 2019 and will be run by Ipsos MORI.
 - b. Results will be published in July and August 2019:
 - i. Results will be supplied to individual providers through a dissemination portal provided by Texuna Technologies.
 - ii. Data will be published on the OfS website.
 - iii. NSS results at course level will be published on the Unistats website⁵. We are investigating whether it will be possible to publish NSS 2019 in advance of A-level results day to ensure applicants have the most up-to-date information at that time.

The OfS will provide a detailed timetable for publication of the data in April 2019.

12. Ipsos MORI administers the survey on behalf of the OfS and funding bodies. They are responsible for contacting students, promoting the survey and providing cleaned data to the

⁴ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/.

⁵ <https://unistats.ac.uk/>.

OfS and funding bodies. As part of its role, Ipsos MORI will liaise directly with providers regarding survey administration and will support the running of the survey by:

- offering guidance on the specifics of the survey programme, such as selecting optional questions
- supplying NSS branded marketing materials and advising providers on the production of their own materials
- facilitating provider incentive schemes to encourage students to take part in the survey.

Providers will be invited to select one of five starting weeks for their survey. There will be no communication with students outside of the timing agreed with individual providers.

13. Ipsos MORI will issue a comprehensive guidance document 'Preparing for the National Student Survey 2019' for all participating providers on 24 October 2018. The guidance should be read in conjunction with this publication.
14. For 2019, Texuna Technologies will provide the results dissemination portal on behalf of the OfS and funding bodies. The results portal will allow providers to access particular elements of their data including students' open text comments and data below certain publication thresholds.
15. Texuna Technologies also provide a dedicated NSS service desk to support providers in accessing their data and responding to queries.
16. Texuna Technologies will contact providers' NSS contacts in spring 2019 to:
 - confirm user and login details
 - confirm the details of publication of NSS 2019 results on the portal.

Costs

17. In England and Northern Ireland only for NSS 2019, the survey costs for universities and colleges will be covered by the relevant governments through the OfS and the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland). All providers in Scotland and Wales, as well as alternative providers in England, pay directly for the administration of the survey. All providers who pay directly will shortly be contacted with further details on this. The Scottish Funding Council, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Health Education England also contribute to the costs of the survey.

Optional banks

18. As has been the practice in previous years, providers will be able to choose up to six banks of optional questions. The choice of optional bank questions should be agreed with their student representative body (students' union, association or guild). Further information about this will be provided in the guidance from Ipsos MORI on 24 October 2018.

Intentions after Graduation Survey (IAGS)

19. The Intentions after Graduation Survey (IAGS) collects information from students completing the NSS about their plans following study. It will continue to run as a follow-on survey to the NSS. The IAGS provides valuable information about student progression, including postgraduate study (more information about trends is available on our website⁶). The costs of the IAGS will be covered by the OfS and funding bodies. On completing the NSS, students completing first degree programmes will be invited to take part in a separate 'click-through' survey asking them about their intentions after graduation. This will be offered to online respondents only.

Degree apprenticeship questions

20. Students who are on degree apprenticeships leading to a higher education award will automatically be included in the NSS if they meet the standard eligibility criteria, but it is also a condition of funding by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for apprentices in England to be surveyed at multiple points through the FE Choices survey⁷.

21. In 2018 a set of degree apprenticeship questions were piloted in England to inform future approaches to surveying degree apprentices. These additional questions for final year degree apprentices were designed to incorporate those elements of the ESFA survey which are not currently addressed in the existing NSS. As numbers of apprentices were small we will also run the pilot in 2019. For 2019 these questions will be asked of all degree apprenticeship students at eligible providers in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland this year. These pilot questions will be offered to online respondents only and positioned after the main survey and optional banks, but before IAGS. The pilot data will be treated as research data to inform future approaches and will not be published at institutional level.

Inappropriate influence on the survey

22. The OfS is responsible for managing the process for concerns that students have been inappropriately influenced in their completion of the NSS. To maintain integrity of the NSS data, we need to ensure that students who complete the survey have not been influenced by their provider, or any other parties, to respond in a way that does not reflect their true opinion.

23. We undertake an annual review of the process we adopt to respond to allegations and will publish an updated process in December 2018 before fieldwork takes place. This allegations procedure is intended to be read in conjunction with the Good Practice Guide, issued by Ipsos MORI, which explains inappropriate influence and how to avoid this when encouraging student participation. We would urge providers to ensure all staff who are responsible for the running of the survey are familiar with Ipsos MORI's guidance and seek advice where needed from Ipsos MORI or OfS on their approach to avoiding inappropriate influence.

⁶ www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/intentions-after-graduation-survey/.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fe-choices-learner-satisfaction-survey-2017-to-2018>.

Research into providers' practices

24. The OfS, together with the funding bodies, has commissioned Shift Learning to undertake research looking at providers' practices associated with the NSS. The work has two main objectives, to gain further understanding of:

- how the NSS is marketed and promoted by higher education providers including providers' understanding of inappropriate influence on the survey
- to what extent the survey has an impact on providers' practices, including unintended consequences.

Shift Learning will ensure that all providers involved in the study are unidentifiable to the OfS or funding bodies. The outputs of this will enable the OfS to review communications and guidance for the diverse base of providers and give further insight into the impact of the NSS across the sector.

Further support

25. The active support of participating providers is crucial to ensuring the survey data is high quality, particularly in delivering high response rates. We encourage all providers and students' unions (associations and guilds) to draw on the resources available and to contact the OfS, Ipsos MORI or Texuna Technologies if they require additional support.

Organisation	Email address	First point of contact for queries relating to:
Ipsos MORI	nss@ipsos.com	The running of the survey, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing for and marketing the survey • student target lists • optional questions • incentive schemes
Texuna Technologies	nss@texunatech.com	Providers' detailed results on the NSS results dissemination portal
Office for Students	nss@officeforstudents.org.uk	Areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSS policy and development • allegations of inappropriate influence • use of results



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www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/