

2025-26 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data checking tool

**2027 National Student Survey (NSS) target
list technical document**

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Summary

1. This document describes outputs generated by the 2025-26 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data checking tool and the method used to generate the target list of students to be included in the 2027 National Student Survey (NSS). **Providers should check the target list for its accuracy and will need to use this to provide contact details to Ipsos for students in the NSS target list** (nss_exclusion = 0). This provisional target list will be reconciled with final ILR data and any discrepancies raised with relevant providers as part of the NSS additions and removals process. Throughout the document, fields taken or derived from the ILR are shown using the names given in Tables 2 and 3 respectively.
2. The 2027 NSS target list output should be used by further education providers to review their 2027 NSS target list and to verify and correct their 2025-26 individualised student data before signing off the final data with the Department for Education (formerly the Education and Skills Funding Agency, ESFA).
3. The 2027 NSS target list output is formed of two files. These are:
 - a. Workbook 'NSS25_DCT_XXXXXXX.xlsx' (where XXXXXXXX is the UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN) for the provider).
 - b. Individualised file 'NSS25_DCT_XXXXXXX_IND.csv'.

Details of how to use individualised files are given on the Office for Students (OfS) website.¹

4. These files can be accessed from the '2025-26 Data checking tool' area of the OfS portal. Access details will be sent to the appropriate contacts at providers when the data checking tool is available.
5. This document is aimed at readers with in-depth knowledge of the data. Readers are advised to have a copy of the following to hand when using this document:
 - a. 'Specification of the individualised learner record for 2023-24'.²
 - b. 'Specification of the individualised learner record for 2024-25'.³
 - c. 'Specification of the individualised learner record for 2025-26'.⁴
6. We will record any changes or corrections to the algorithms in this document on our website.⁵
7. Data relating to NSS target lists will be accessed by OfS staff.

¹ See [Working with individualised files - Office for Students](#).

² See 2023-24 information in the archive at guidance.submit-learner-data.service.gov.uk/archive

³ See tab 2024-25, [Individualised Learner Record \(ILR\) technical documents, guidance and requirements](#).

⁴ See tab 2025-26, [Individualised Learner Record \(ILR\) technical documents, guidance and requirements](#)

⁵ See [Data checking tool - Office for Students](#).

Changes from the 2026 NSS target list output of the 2024-25 ILR data checking tool

8. This section describes changes to the algorithms since the equivalent were published for the 2024-25 ILR data checking tool ([Data checking tool documentation archive - Office for Students](#), under '2024-25').

2027 NSS target list workbook

9. The Excel workbook (NSS25_DCT_XXXXXXX.xlsx) contains the following worksheets:

Table 1: Worksheets in the 2027 NSS target list workbook

Worksheet	Title
Coversheet	Summary of students in the NSS target list for current and previous year
NSS	Students to be included on the 2027 NSS target list. This forms the provisional target list and contact details template for the provider submission to Ipsos
Exclusion	Summary of the exclusion reasons for those students not included in the 2027 NSS target list

2027 NSS target list individualised file

10. When working through this document it is necessary to use the individualised file 'NSS25_DCT_XXXXXXX_IND.csv'. The individualised file contains values of all the fields used to generate the workbook 'NSS25_DCT_XXXXXXX.xlsx'. These show the assignment of records to categories by our algorithms and, where applicable, provide the data that has been used to determine their exclusion from the relevant population. Please note the ILR is restricted to learning aims described as recognised higher education before generating the target list. Recognised higher education, for OfS funding purposes, is defined in Annex B of the 'Higher Education Students Early Statistics survey 2025-26 (HESES25)' publication.⁶
11. The individualised file contains one record per learning outcome per learner in the latest academic year each with a unique combination of UKPRN, LEARNREFNUMBER and AIMSEQNUMBER.

⁶ See [Higher Education Students Early Statistics survey 2025-26 - Office for Students](#).

ILR fields used to create the NSS target list

12. The ILR fields used to create the NSS target list are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: List of ILR fields used to create the NSS target list

Name	Description
AIMSEQNUMBER [†]	Learning aim sequence number
CONTPREFCODE	Contact preference code
CONTPREFTYPE	Contact preference type
DATEOFBIRTH	Learner date of birth
LEARNACTENDDATE	Learning actual end date
LEARNAIMREF [†]	Learning aim reference
LEARNPLANENDDATE	Learning planned end date
LEARNREFNUMBER	Learner reference number
LEARNSTARTDATE	Learning start date
MODESTUD	Mode applicable to Higher Education Students Early Statistics survey (HESES)
PROGTYPE	Programme type
PROVSPECDELMON [†]	Provider-specified learning aim data
PROVSPECDELMONOCUR [†]	The occurrence of the provider-specified learning aim data
PROVSPECLEARNMON [†]	Provider-specified learner data
PROVSPECLEARNMONOCUR [†]	The occurrence of the provider-specified learner data
SEX [†]	Sex of the learner
STULOAD	Learner full-time equivalence (FTE)
UKPRN	UK provider reference number
ULN [†]	Unique learner number
YEARSTU	Year of programme of study

* The individualised file 'NSS25_DCT_XXXXXXX_IND.csv', downloadable from the OfS portal ([Submitting data through the OfS portal - Office for Students](#)).

[†] These fields are not used to generate the target list but are included in the individualised file to allow easy identification of students.

Description of derived fields

13. The derived fields used to create the NSS target list are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: List of derived fields used to create the NSS target list

Field name	Description	Paragraph
nss_year_adjustment	Year adjustment for a student who has been dormant or has repeated year(s) of study	15
nss_expected_end_date	Expected end date	16
age_on_31_july	Learner age on 31 July 2026	17
is_eligible_for_nss_healthcare	Eligibility for NSS healthcare placement questions	18
learner_fte_2023_24	2023-24 learner FTE	19
learner_fte_2024_25	2024-25 learner FTE	20
nss_total_fte	Total FTE for course	21
CONT_PREF_RUI1 CONT_PREF_RUI2	“Restricted use indicator” contact preference codes	22
nss_exclusion_reason_2 – nss_exclusion_reason_256	Reason(s) for a student’s exclusion	23-30
awarding_body_powers [†]	Type of awarding powers	NA
is_funding_recognised_he [†]	Recognition of learning aim for OfS funding purposes ^{††}	NA
detailed_level [†]	Broad category of the learning aim	NA
nss_exclusion	Reason(s) for exclusion from the 2027 NSS target list	31
PROVSPECLEARNMON_A PROVSPECLEARNMON_B	Provider-specified learner data	33
PROVSPECDELMON_A PROVSPECDELMON_B PROVSPECDELMON_C PROVSPECDELMON_D	Provider-specified learning aim data	34

* The individualised file ‘NSS25_DCT_XXXXXXXXX_IND.csv’, downloadable from the OfS portal ([Submitting data through the OfS portal - Office for Students](#)).

[†] For a full definition of this field please refer to ‘2025-26 ILR data checking tool: Classifying learning aims technical document’. Information on any changes to the definition of the field will be published by 1 October 2026.

^{††} See paragraphs 1-3 of Annex B of 'Higher Education Students Early Statistics survey 2025-26 (HESES25)'.⁷

Linking between years

14. We link between years to determine the FTE for the student on a single programme of study in the previous two years. A programme of study is linked over years by UKPRN, LEARNREFNUMBER, and LEARNAIMREF; only student FTE is taken from previous years' ILR data. If we cannot link using a unique combination of these fields then no link is made. All approved amendments will be included in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 data to which the uploaded data is linked.

nss_year_adjustment

15. This field evaluates a year adjustment which determines whether the student has been dormant or repeated a year(s) of study.

Value	Description	Definition
((31 July 2025 – LEARNSTARTDATE) [†] – YEARSTU) or 0, whichever is greater	Year adjustment	YEARSTU ≠ 99, BLANK
0	Otherwise	Otherwise

[†] Rounded up to the nearest year.

nss_expected_end_date

16. This field evaluates an expected end date for the student, adjusting for years where they were dormant or have repeated a year(s) of study. This is calculated as `nss_expected_end_date = LEARNPLANENDDATE + nss_year_adjustment years`.

age_on_31_july

17. This field evaluates the age of the student on 31 July 2026, to ensure that all students in the 2027 NSS population are at least 16 years of age in their final year of study.

⁷ See [Higher Education Students Early Statistics survey 2025-26 - Office for Students](#).

is_eligible_for_nss_healthcare

18. This field indicates whether the student is studying on a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course, or a social work course approved by Social Work England.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Eligible for NSS healthcare placement questions	Student is either studying on a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course, as recorded in Table 6a (Health full-time) or Table 6c (Health part-time) of the HESES25 return, or is studying on a social work course approved by Social Work England.
0	Otherwise	Otherwise

learner_fte_2023_24

19. This field contains the learner FTE (STULOAD) for 2023-24. This is obtained using the linking method described in paragraph 14.

learner_fte_2024_25

20. This field contains the learner FTE (STULOAD) for 2024-25. This is obtained using the linking method described in paragraph 14.

nss_total_fte

21. We use three years of data to estimate the total FTE for four years of the programme of study. This is calculated as $nss_total_fte = learner_fte_2023_24 + learner_fte_2024_25 + STULOAD + STULOAD$. For the fourth year we assume that it is the same as the FTE returned on the 2025-26 ILR. If STULOAD is missing, then NSSTOTFTE will be set to 0.

CONTREF_RUI1, CONTREF_RUI2

22. These fields contain the values of CONTREFCODE where CONTREFTYPE = RUI. If two values were returned for an individual, CONTREF_RUI2 contains the second.

nss_exclusion_reason_2

23. This field indicates whether the student was inactive during the academic year.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Student inactive	STULOAD = 0, BLANK
0	Otherwise	Otherwise

nss_exclusion_reason_4

24. This field indicates whether the student is expected to complete during the survey year.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Student left before survey year or expected end date not in survey year	LEARNACTENDDATE ≤ 31 January 2027 or nss_expeceted_end_date ≤ 31 January 2027 or nss_expected_end_date ≥ 1 February 2028
0	Otherwise	Otherwise

nss_exclusion_reason_8

25. This field indicates whether the student is on a short course.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Student on short course	LEARNSTARTDATE ≥ 1 August 2026 or (LEARNPLANENDDATE – LEARNSTARTDATE) ≤ 365 or (MODESTUD = 3, 99 and NSSTOTFTE ≤ 100) or OFSQAIM = FDBC, HNC
0	Otherwise	Otherwise

nss_exclusion_reason_16

26. This field indicates whether the student was under 16 years of age on 31 July 2026.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Student under 16 years of age on 31 July 2026	age_on_july_31 < 16
0	Otherwise	Otherwise

nss_exclusion_reason_32

27. This field indicates whether the student is on a programme of study that does not lead to an NSS eligible undergraduate qualification.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Programmes of study that do not lead to an NSS eligible undergraduate qualification	is_funding_recognised_he = 0 or (detailed_level = CERTED, DET, DTLLS and awarding_body_powers = FOUDEG, HN, MISSING, OTHER) or detailed_level = CET, CTLLS, FE, HIGHCERT, HIGHER, MASTER, NA, OTHHE_CC, OTHHE_Q, OTHHE_U, OTHL4_CC, OTHL4_Q, OTHL4_U, OTHL5_CC, OTHL5_Q, OTHL5_U, OTHL6_CC, OTHL6_Q, OTHL6_U, OTHL7_CC, OTHL7_Q, OTHL7_U, OTHL8_CC, OTHL8_Q, OTHL8_U, PGCE, PGCERT, PGDIP, PHD, PTLLS
0	Otherwise	Otherwise

nss_exclusion_reason_64

28. This field indicates whether the student was targeted for surveying in the previous NSS year.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Student was targeted for surveying in the 2026 NSS	UKPRN and LEARNREFNUMBER of student appear in the previous year's NSS list
0	Otherwise	Otherwise

nss_exclusion_reason_128

29. Student has another record eligible for inclusion in the NSS. Where there is more than one record for a given LEARNREFNUMBER where NSSEXCL2 = 0 and NSSEXCL4 = 0 and NSSEXCL8 = 0 and NSSEXCL16 = 0 and NSSEXCL32 = 0 and NSSEXCL64 = 0 then only one is included in the NSS target population. This selected record will have NSSEXCL128 = 0 and all others NSSEXCL128 = 1. We select records based on whether they are healthcare students (NSSHEALTHCARE = 1), then by highest qualification, earliest start date, highest total FTE and finally lowest LEARNREFNUMBER.

nss_exclusion_reason_256

30. This field indicates that the student is not to be contacted because they have died or are seriously ill.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Student is not to be contacted – student has died or is seriously ill	CONTPREF_RUI1 = 3, 4, 5 or CONTPREF_RUI2 = 3, 4, 5
0	Otherwise	Otherwise

nss_exclusion

31. This field indicates whether the student is included in the 2027 NSS population. For students excluded from the population nss_exclusion contains the sum of all applicable values from the table below. Students included in the target list have nss_exclusion = 0.

Value	Description	Definition
2	Student inactive	nss_exclusion_reason_2 = 1
4	Expected end date is not in survey year	nss_exclusion_reason_4 = 1
8	Student on a short course	nss_exclusion_reason_8 = 1
16	Student under 16 years of age on 31 July 2026	nss_exclusion_reason_16 = 1
32	Student on a programme that does not lead to an eligible undergraduate qualification	nss_exclusion_reason_32 = 1
64	Student appeared on the target list for the 2026 NSS	nss_exclusion_reason_64 = 1
128	Student has another record eligible for inclusion in the NSS	nss_exclusion_reason_128 = 1
256	Student is not to be contacted because they have died or are seriously ill	nss_exclusion_reason_256 = 1

32. NSSEXCL is calculated as $(2 \times \text{nss_exclusion_reason_2}) + (4 \times \text{nss_exclusion_reason_4}) + (8 \times \text{nss_exclusion_reason_8}) + (16 \times \text{nss_exclusion_reason_16}) + (32 \times \text{nss_exclusion_reason_32}) + (64 \times \text{nss_exclusion_reason_64}) + (128 \times \text{nss_exclusion_reason_128}) + (256 \times \text{nss_exclusion_reason_256})$. The reason(s) which contribute to the exclusion of a student from the NSS population can therefore be calculated. For example, if nss_exclusion_reason_ = 40, by subtracting figures from the above table and starting at the bottom, we see that the student is on a programme that does not lead to an eligible undergraduate qualification (nss_exclusion_reason_32 = 1) and is on a short course (nss_exclusion_reason_8 = 1).

PROVSPECLEARNMON_A, PROVSPECLEARNMON_B

33. These fields contain the value of PROVSPECLEARNMON where PROVSPECLEARNMONOCCUR = A or B respectively.

PROVSPECDELMON_A, PROVSPECDELMON_B, PROVSPECDELMON_C, PROVSPECDELMON_D

34. These fields contain the value of PROVSPECDELMON where PROVSPECDELMONOCCUR = A, B, C or D respectively.



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