

NSS Review 2020 – provider and students’ union feedback survey

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Introduction

This survey is designed to capture views about the National Student Survey (NSS) and to understand the impact that any changes to the survey may have on the higher education sector. Responses will feed into recommendations for the NSS review. More information about the review can be found at: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/review-of-the-national-student-survey/

We will not collect personal data as part of this survey. As such, we ask that you do not include any personal information in your responses. We do ask for some information on your job role, students’ union or provider, but this is not attributable to you individually.

This survey is for:

- Students’ union officers and staff members
- Academics
- Professional services staff who run the NSS
- Senior provider managers who handle the NSS.

This survey will close on 13 November 2020.

1. About you

1. Please tell us about your current (main) role:

- I work at a provider that takes part in the NSS
- I am a student union representative or student union staff member¹
- Other (please specify) **HEDG**

2. Which of the following is your primary role?

- I am an academic or lecturer or tutor
- I am a student advisor (e.g. careers advisor, academic support)
- I am an academic administrator (e.g. survey manager, student experience lead)
- I am a senior manager
- Other (please specify):

3. Please select your provider from the list

4. The responses I am providing to this survey reflect:

- My personal views as an HE professional
- The views of my provider

5. In your current role, do you take part in any of the following NSS-related activities? (Please tick all that apply):

- Student record management and/or data provision to IPSOS-Mori
- Provider-wide promotion of the NSS (e.g. via social media)
- Promotion of the NSS through teaching (e.g. as a lecturer)
- Data analysis of the NSS results, or dissemination of results throughout your provider
- Improving analysis of the NSS results, or dissemination of results throughout your provider
- Improving the student experience
- Marketing of your courses or provider using NSS data
- Planning and policy making
- My role does not include any NSS-related activities but the NSS affects my role.
- Other (please specify): **HEDG members' roles in their institutions involve many of the other activities above.**

¹ Student union representatives and student union staff members are here directed to questions 21-29. Those who select that they work at a provider fill in questions 6-20.

2. Provider questions

Uses of the NSS data

6. Is the NSS used for any of the following purposes at your provider? If so, how helpful is the NSS in its current form for achieving those purposes?

Purposes:

- Understanding the student perspective- **helpful**
- Identification of areas for improvement- **helpful**
- Attracting prospective students to your provider / marketing- **helpful**
- Comparing results against other providers- **helpful**
- Strategic planning and/or policy making- **helpful**
- Performance management- **helpful**

If the NSS is used for other purposes at your institution not captured here, please briefly describe these below.

Response scale:

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Neither helpful nor unhelpful
- Unhelpful
- Very unhelpful
- Don't know/not used for this purpose

We would like to ask about the work you do to deliver the NSS.

7. How much work do the following activities require?

Activities:

- Identifying students to take part (working on a target list)-
- Promoting the survey to students to encourage their participation
- Administration and running of the survey when live (including interacting with the OfS and Ipsos)
- Analysing NSS data and disseminating it within your provider **A lot**
- Improving the student experience using feedback from the NSS results- **A lot**

Response scale:

- A small amount of work
- A moderate amount of work
- A lot of work
- Prefer not to say / don't know

8. Are there any particular issues for your provider which increase workload when delivering the NSS? (Please tick all that apply)

- Many of our courses run with very small cohorts of students
- Our students are hard to reach during the survey window (e.g. in vocational settings / field work / abroad)
- Our students are reluctant to engage with surveys
- We need to coordinate the survey across multiple campuses / faculties / franchises
- The NSS conflicts with other activities at our provider
- My provider does not have enough resource for NSS activities
- Only a small proportion of our student body is eligible for the NSS
- Other (please specify)

9. If the NSS did not take place, how likely is it that your provider would do any of the following in its place?

Options:

- Replace it with a new provider-wide survey created by your university or college- **Very likely**
- Replace it with an externally available student survey in addition to any existing survey activity
- Run additional student forums or focus groups
- Nothing

Response scale:

- Not at all likely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely
- Don't know

10. In which other undergraduate surveys does your provider currently participate? (Please tick all that apply)

- UK Engagement Survey (UKES)
- Student Barometer / International Student Barometer
- Student Academic Experience Survey (SAES)
- Times Final Year Student Survey / What Uni / Which?
- We run our own whole provider student survey
- None
- Other (please specify)- **HEDG member institutions participate in all of the above, to varying degrees.**

11. In your view, do the benefits of the NSS to your provider outweigh the work associated with running the survey?

- Yes, the benefits heavily outweigh the workload
- Yes, the benefits slightly outweigh the workload
- Neutral, the benefits and workload are balanced
- No, the workload slightly outweighs the benefits
- No, the workload heavily outweighs the benefits
- Don't know/ not applicable

12. If the NSS was optional, how likely is it that your provider would participate?

- My provider is very likely to participate
- My provider is likely to participate
- My provider is not likely to participate
- My provider is very unlikely to participate
- Don't know

We would like to ask about your views on the NSS sample and the availability of published data

13. Would the workload for your provider be reduced if the NSS only sampled?:

Options:

- 5% of the number of students it currently does each year? Yes, a slight reduction in workload
- 25% of the number of students it currently does each year? Yes, a slight reduction in workload
- 50% of the number of students it currently does each year? Yes, a slight reduction in workload
- 75% of the number of students it currently does each year? The workload would remain unchanged

Response scale:

- Yes, a significant reduction in workload
- Yes, a slight reduction in workload
- The workload would remain unchanged
- The workload would be slightly increased
- The workload would be significantly increased
- Don't know

14. To what extent is NSS data useful for improving the student experience when provided at:

Options:

- Whole provider level Slightly useful
- Department level Very useful
- Subject level Very useful
- Course level* subject to meeting data publication thresholds Very useful
- By student group (e.g. POLAR, Demographics, etc) Very useful

Response scale:

- Not useful
- Slightly useful
- Very useful
- Don't know

15. If NSS data were no longer available at course level, would this:

Options:

- Negatively impact your ability to use NSS data to improve the student experience? Strongly agree
- Reduce the usefulness of NSS data for prospective students? Agree
- Reduce the usefulness of the NSS for public accountability? Agree

Response scale:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/Not applicable

16. If providers were limited to only accessing their own data (and not data from other providers), would this impact on the usefulness of NSS data?

- Yes, this would have a positive impact
- Yes, this would have a negative impact
- There would be no impact
- Not sure/ don't know
- Other (please specify)

17. If provider access to data were limited only to whole-provider level (i.e. not at course or subject level), would this impact on the usefulness of NSS data?

- Yes, this would have a positive impact
- Yes, this would have a negative impact
- This would not have an impact
- Not sure/ don't know
- Other (please specify)

18. Do you have any comments about a potential reduction in the availability of published NSS data?

A significant benefit of the NSS is the ability to benefit with other providers which would be lost with these proposals. NSS is very useful for enhancement purposes and also permits the ability to triangulate internal survey results with the external NSS.

If this data were not available it would have a significant negative impact and undermine the NSS's validity and credibility in the sector.

As a body which represents leaders of educational enhancement across the sector, we rely on the availability of this and other data to help formulate efficient and effective responses to key issues.

We are interested in your views on the potential consequences of running the NSS for the higher education sector

19. To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Statements:

- Student responses to the NSS are influenced by the most recent grades they have received **Disagree**
- Overall, the NSS has contributed to improving the student experience **Strongly agree**
- The NSS creates pressure on providers to inflate the grades of students **Strongly disagree**
- The NSS is a useful means for ensuring provider accountability **Agree**
- The NSS helps applicants make better informed choices **Agree**
- Academic standards are negatively influenced by the NSS **Strongly disagree**

Response scale:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / not applicable

General comments

20. If you have any further comments on the NSS or this review, please offer these below.

The NSS is one of a suite of tools that providers use to support/measure the student experience.

There are certain aspects of the survey that provide a lot of work for providers, however, the benefits of running the survey do outweigh these. The survey has had a positive impact over the years of highlighting good practice and driving improvements in key areas of learning and teaching across the university. Given these benefits if the NSS was removed it is likely that this would be replaced by a provider wide survey either developed by the university or replaced with an externally available student survey.

A nationwide survey with publicly available data is beneficial for benchmarking and catalysed sharing of good practice.

A reduced sample would limit the robustness, validity and credibility of the survey, limit the ability to view the results at a granular level and limit the student voice. The course level data helps highlight those areas of good practice and allows providers to target areas that require improvements.

It is important that any revised survey retains the option to include free text comments as these are often very helpful for providing more insight into the quantitative responses.

Finally, it is important to note that the use of student perceptions satisfaction is an accepted proxy but has its limitations. Any revised survey would benefit from more scales that evaluate students' perceptions of their engagement.

3. Students' Union questions

This survey asks students' union sabbatical officers in England for their views on the National Student Survey (NSS). Your feedback will be used to feed into the review of the NSS. More information on the review can be found [here](#).

This survey will be used to assess any potential impact that changes to the NSS might have on students' unions. It will feed into recommendations for the NSS review.

The survey asks questions around:

- What you think the NSS should be used to do or not to do.
- What you use the NSS for as a students' union.

Your perceptions on:

- How frequently the NSS should/should not be published
- How many students should take part in the NSS
- The level of data required for you to represent students' views
- The potential burden on you as a students' union due to the NSS

21. On behalf of which Union are you responding to this survey?

22. Are you a:

- Student sabbatical officer
- Staff member
- Other (please specify)

23. Are you a Students' Union in:

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

24. Do you think NSS data should be used to:

Options:

- Inform applicants about student satisfaction at course level
- Inform applicants on student satisfaction at whole university level
- Improve the student academic experience on individual courses
- Improve the student academic experience across a university or college
- Government regulation of universities and colleges

Response scale:

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

25. Do you use the NSS to:

Activities:

- Lobby for improvements to university/college facilities (e.g. libraries, computer facilities, sports facilities)

- Lobby for changes to university/college policies
- Lobby for improvements to the student academic experience
- Hold the university/college to account
- Compare results with other universities or colleges
- Inform union campaigns and priorities
- Understand differences in students' experience of their course by student characteristics
- Understand differences in satisfaction across courses
- None of the above

Response scale:

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

26. Do you take part in any of the following activities? (select all that apply)

- Analysing NSS data
- Promotion of the NSS
- Communicating NSS results to students at your institution
- None of the above
- Other (please specify):

27. Do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

Statements:

- The NSS helps improve the student experience at my university/college
- If the NSS was published less frequently, we would be able to use it to improve the student experience as we do now
- If the NSS was only available internally to the university/college and not published, it would affect our ability to lobby our university/college.
- If the NSS was abolished, we would be able to enhance the student experience as we do now.
- If data about individual courses were no longer available, we would be able to enhance the student experience as we do now.
- If the NSS was abolished, graduate incomes data would be a good measure of quality for undergraduate degrees.
- The work generated by the NSS outweighs the positive things we get out of it.

Response scale:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

28. The NSS is currently open to most finalist undergraduate students in the UK. We would like to know about how changes to the number students who complete the NSS in England

might effect your understanding of the student experience. If the NSS surveyed the following amount of students, how useful would the information be for understanding the student experience?

Options:

- 5% of the number of students it currently does each year
- 25% of the number of students it currently does each year
- 50% of the number of students it currently does each year
- 75% of the number of students it currently does each year

Response scale:

- Not useful
- Slightly useful
- Very useful
- Don't know

29. Are there any other additional comments you would like to provide?