



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoinachaidh na h-Alba

National Student Survey 2022

SFC Guidance

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Summary: Guidance on arrangements for The National Student Survey (NSS) 2022 and the action required from all participating universities and other higher education providers in Scotland. Also included is an update on the NSS pilot survey.

FAO: Principals of Scotland's universities

Further information: **Contact:** Derek Horsburgh
Job title: Senior Policy/Analysis Officer
Department: Access, Learning and Outcomes
Tel: 0131 313 6649
Email: dhorsburgh@sfc.ac.uk



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Scottish Funding Council
Apex 2
97 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD
T 0131 313 6500
F 0131 313 6501
www.sfc.ac.uk

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National Student Survey 2022

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) is a UK-wide survey undertaken by final year higher education students to give feedback on their courses. The survey is managed by the Office for Students (OfS) on behalf of the four UK funding and regulatory bodies.
2. The survey is a key component of the quality assurance and wider regulatory landscape in UK higher education. Participation is a condition of grant for SFC funded higher education institutions.
3. The survey also provides information for prospective students to help them find the right course and provides data that supports universities and colleges to improve the student experience.
4. The survey will be delivered on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies by:
 - Ipsos MORI, which will administer the survey.
 - Texuna Technologies, which will deliver the data dissemination portal for providers.

Key points

5. For 2022, the core survey questions will not change and the survey will be delivered across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.¹ Questions about students' experience of higher education during the coronavirus pandemic will not be asked in this survey.
6. The UK funding and regulatory bodies have agreed for NSS 2022 not to ask additional questions to students studying for graduate apprenticeships about their training programmes. These questions will be considered under phase two of the wider review of the NSS, to ensure they are relevant and fit for purpose. Students who are on graduate apprenticeships will continue to remain eligible for the NSS and will be invited to participate in the survey.
7. Students of NHS-funded courses in all countries in the UK are required to answer an additional set of NHS-specific questions about their placements. The current methodology for identifying students for the NHS practice placement questions in the NSS is that, if a student is funded by the NHS, they are flagged to be asked the questions. As a result of changes in the funding for NHS students across the UK nations, the number of flagged students has reduced

¹ A copy of the 2022 survey questionnaire is available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/0c1595b3-1c8c-4a70-8e79-926af6b9a1a4/nss-2022-questionnaire.pdf>.

and will continue to do so. We are aware of the need to update the methodology to identify which students are eligible for these questions, and this work will be carried out under phase two of the wider review of the NSS.²

8. Institutions in Scotland are required to promote the survey, and we would ask them to review any internal campaigns to ensure that they meet the guidance on marketing and promoting of the NSS and avoiding inappropriate influence (see the 2022 good practice guide).³
9. During survey fieldwork, responses will be monitored, and targeted follow-up is carried out to ensure that publication thresholds are met. In early March, in addition to the targeted follow-up, all providers that are at risk of not meeting the publication threshold will be put into the booster phase to send additional email reminders and an additional SMS to their non-responding students. The booster phase will start automatically if a provider's response rate is below 43 per cent by mid-March, and will continue for some until mid-April. The fieldwork timetable is set out in the Ipsos MORI setup guide for providers.
10. All institutions in Scotland are required to contribute to the costs of their students' participation and will be contacted by SFC with further details on this. SFC will also contribute to the costs of the survey.

Survey timetable

11. The timetable for NSS 2022 will run as follows:
 - a. The NSS will launch on **6 January 2022**.
 - b. Fieldwork will take place between **6 January and 30 April 2022** and will be run by Ipsos MORI.
 - c. Results will be published on the OfS website in **June or July 2022**. Only data that conforms to NSS publication thresholds (at least 10 student responses and a 50 per cent overall response rate) will be made public. If no data is made available for a particular course on which students were surveyed, this means that the data did not meet this publication threshold. A lack of publishable data does not reflect on the quality of a course or a provider.
 - d. Detailed results will be supplied to individual providers on the day of publication through a dissemination portal provided by Texuna Technologies.

² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/review-of-the-national-student-survey/ for more information.

³ Available at www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet.

- e. NSS results at course level will be published on the [Discover Uni](#) website.⁴

Actions for providers for NSS 2022

12. All participating providers are asked to review, and where necessary update, their relevant NSS provider contact details by **26 November 2021**. The information should be supplied using the 'My details' form on the [NSS extranet](#).⁵ Ipsos Mori issued login details for the NSS extranet to the nominated main and secondary NSS provider contacts in the week commencing 18 October 2021.
13. All participating providers should also submit their completed 'My survey options' form by **26 November 2021** through the NSS extranet. This form asks for providers' preferences for their survey start week and optional questions, and details of any prize draws.
14. All providers should populate their NSS 2022 sample templates with the requested contact details for all students on their target list; this is a list of all students eligible for NSS 2022, based on the student data submitted in 2020-21. Details should be supplied by **26 November 2021** via the 'Upload sample data' section of the NSS extranet.
15. Instructions on how to supply this information are included in the NSS 2022 setup guide, which will be issued to provider contacts by Ipsos MORI on **25 October 2021** and is also available on the NSS extranet. The guidance includes information regarding survey administration, key responsibilities and dates.
16. Detailed guidance relating to NSS 2022 and the actions requested from all participating institutions can be found in the **Annex**.

Further support

17. The active support of participating providers is crucial to ensuring the survey data is of high quality. We encourage all providers and students' unions to draw on the resources available and to contact the OfS, Ipsos MORI or Texuna Technologies if they require additional support. Table 2 shows the contacts for different elements of the NSS.

⁴ See <https://discoveruni.gov.uk>.

⁵ See <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/nss/extranet>.

Table 2: NSS contacts

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 data dissemination portal.
SFC	dhorsburgh@sfc.ac.uk	Areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSS policy and development. • Use of results.
Office for Students	nss@officeforstudents.org.uk nssallegations@officeforstudents.org.uk	Areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSS policy and development. • Use of results. • Allegations of inappropriate influence.

NSS pilot survey

18. As part of the wider review of the NSS, the UK funding and regulatory bodies have agreed to review the existing NSS questionnaire to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.⁶
19. To this end, a series of workshops and roundtable events with students, providers and other sector stakeholders took place over summer 2021. Attendees offered views on the continued relevance of the existing NSS questions and suggestions for where new questions could usefully be developed. The output of these sessions contributed to the development on new sets of questions.
20. We now propose to undertake a UK-wide pilot of the revised questionnaire. The aims of the pilot are to test both new question wording and a new

⁶ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/review-of-the-nss/.

response scale. The pilot will be administered by Ipsos MORI and conducted with a sample of students drawn from those who have completed NSS 2022. After completing the NSS and any additional optional questions, eligible respondents will be asked whether they would be willing to take part in the pilot. Those who wish to do so will be taken to a new landing page, which will provide the necessary information about the research.

21. Data from this exercise will help us to draw conclusions about similarities and differences in patterns of response to the new questions and to evaluate the new response scale. We do not propose to return pilot data to providers, nor do we propose to publish provider level pilot data. To minimise burden for providers, we have designed the pilot so that they are not required to undertake any additional activities beyond those necessary for the main NSS.
22. Pending the outcomes of this exercise, a consultation on the next steps for the NSS will take place in summer 2022. Further details of the NSS pilot survey will be available in due course on the OfS website.⁷

Administration of NSS 2022

23. Ipsos MORI administers the survey on behalf of the OfS and the other UK funding and regulatory bodies. It is responsible for contacting students, promoting the survey and providing cleaned data to the funding bodies. As part of its role, Ipsos MORI will liaise directly with providers regarding survey administration and will offer advice and support to set up and prepare for the survey, such as on survey options including start week, optional bank questions and provider-specific questions.
24. Providers will be invited to select one of five weeks when Ipsos MORI can launch the survey to their students. There will be no communication from Ipsos MORI with students outside the times agreed with individual providers.
25. Ipsos MORI will issue a comprehensive guidance document, 'Preparing for the National Student Survey 2022', for all participating providers on 25 October 2021. The guidance should be read in conjunction with this publication.
26. Ipsos MORI will supply NSS-branded marketing materials and advise providers on the production of their own materials. They can also facilitate incentive schemes to encourage students to take part in the survey.
27. Further information about marketing and promoting the survey will be provided in the good practice guide issued by Ipsos MORI on 25 October 2021.

⁷ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/review-of-the-nss/.

Inappropriate influence on the NSS survey

28. The OfS is responsible for managing the process on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies to address any concerns that students have been inappropriately influenced in their completion of the NSS. To maintain the 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 party, to respond in a way that does not reflect their true opinion.
29. The procedures for investigating allegations of inappropriate influence on survey results⁸ are intended to be read in conjunction with the good practice guide issued by Ipsos MORI, which explains what constitutes inappropriate influence and how to avoid it when encouraging student participation. We would urge providers to ensure that all staff who are responsible for the running of the survey are familiar with Ipsos MORI's good practice guide, and seek advice where needed from Ipsos MORI or the OfS on their approach to avoiding inappropriate influence.
30. As part of the actions recommended for phase two of the NSS review, a student guide on inappropriate influence has been developed to help raise awareness among students of the value of their honest views, what to expect from NSS promotion, what is and is not allowed, and where they should go for help and support if they are concerned about being influenced. Providers are asked to inform students about this guide as part of their pre-launch survey plans. More details on this are provided in the NSS 2022 setup guide issued by Ipsos MORI.

Survey results dissemination

31. For NSS 2022, Texuna Technologies will provide the results dissemination portal on behalf of the OfS and funding bodies. The results portal allows providers to access additional, unpublished elements of their data, including open text comments, data from the additional bank of questions and provider-specific questions, and data below the 50 per cent publication threshold.
32. Texuna Technologies also provides a dedicated NSS service desk to support providers in accessing their data and responding to queries.
33. Texuna Technologies will contact providers' NSS contacts in spring 2022 to:
 - Confirm user and login details.
 - Confirm the details of publication of NSS 2022 results on the portal.

⁸ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/inappropriate-influence/.

34. Following the publication of the NSS 2021 data in July 2021, Texuna Technologies has issued a survey to all active users of the NSS results portal, to gather feedback to help improve the portal and the services offered. It will also be used by the OfS as part of phase two of the wider NSS review to understand how the dissemination site is being used. The survey can be accessed from the Texuna website,⁹ and will remain open until Friday 5 November 2021.



James Dunphy
Director of Access, Learning and Outcomes

⁹ See <https://texuna.com/nss-results-portal-feedback-on-nss>.