



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

SFC GUIDANCE

REFERENCE: SFC/GD/24/2022

ISSUE DATE: 28/10/2022

THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2023



THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2023

ISSUE DATE: 28 October 2022

REFERENCE: SFC/GD/24/2022

SUMMARY: This publication sets out arrangements for the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023 and the actions required from participating institutions.

FAO: Principals of Scotland's universities, and the general public.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

CONTACT: Derek Horsburgh
JOB TITLE: Senior Policy/Analysis Officer
DIRECTORATE: Access, Learning and Outcomes
TEL: 0131 313 6649
EMAIL: dhorsburgh@sfc.ac.uk

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 5 |
| NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2023 | 5 |
| Key points | 6 |
| Core survey questions and response scales | 6 |
| Healthcare, allied health and clinical practice placements questions | 6 |
| Survey promotion | 7 |
| Survey costs | 7 |
| Survey timetable | 8 |
| Actions for institutions for NSS 2023 | 8 |
| Further support | 9 |
| ADMINISTRATION OF NSS 2023 | 10 |
| Inappropriate influence on the NSS survey..... | 10 |
| SURVEY RESULTS DISSEMINATION | 11 |
| ANNEX A: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR NSS 2023 AND 2022 | 12 |
| NSS 2023 Core questionnaire | 12 |
| Teaching on my course | 12 |
| Learning opportunities..... | 12 |
| Marking and assessment..... | 13 |
| Academic support | 13 |
| Organisation and management..... | 13 |
| Learning resources..... | 14 |
| Student voice | 14 |
| Mental wellbeing services..... | 14 |
| Freedom of expression (English providers only) | 15 |
| Final question (Scottish, Northern Ireland and Welsh institutions only)..... | 15 |
| Open text question | 15 |
| NSS 2022 Core questionnaire | 15 |
| The teaching on my course | 15 |
| Learning opportunities..... | 15 |
| Assessment and feedback..... | 16 |
| Academic support | 16 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Organisation and management..... | 16 |
| Learning resources..... | 16 |
| Learning community | 16 |
| Student voice | 16 |
| ANNEX B: GUIDANCE ON THE NSS 2023 FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE UK..... | 18 |
| Scope and coverage of the survey | 19 |
| Reasons for excluding individuals from the survey | 21 |
| Process for supplying student contact data | 22 |
| Administration of the survey | 23 |
| Promoting the NSS..... | 24 |
| Questionnaire distribution..... | 25 |
| Publication of 2023 NSS results | 26 |

INTRODUCTION

1. This publication sets out arrangements for the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023 and the actions required from participating institutions.
2. Table 1 below summarises actions and key milestones for higher education institutions. More information is in paragraphs 17 to 21 and the annexes.

Table 1: Institution actions and key milestones

| Date | Actions |
|------------------|--|
| 28 October 2022 | Ipsos to issue NSS 2023 set-up guide and good practice guide to institutions |
| 28 November 2022 | Review and update NSS contact details |
| 28 November 2022 | Complete 'my survey options' form |
| 28 November 2022 | Submit NSS 2023 sample templates with contact details of eligible students |

3. This publication also provides an overview of the administration of the survey, provider support contact details, survey timetable and dissemination of results.

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2023

4. The 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.
5. The survey is a key component of the quality assurance and wider regulatory landscape in UK higher education. Participation is compulsory for higher education institutions as follows:
 - In England, all providers registered with and regulated by the Office for Students (OfS) will be expected to participate in the NSS as an ongoing condition of registration.
 - 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) (DELNI). Further education colleges in Northern Ireland take part in the NSS to meet the requirements of the Revised Operating Model for Quality Assurance.
 - In Scotland, participation is a condition of the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) funding for higher education institutions.
 - In Wales, all regulated providers and funded institutions are expected to participate in the NSS to ensure that the views of the diverse student body are represented, in line with their statutory responsibility to help safeguard against discrimination and promote

equality, and the outcomes inform the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales's (HEFCW) regulatory responsibilities.

6. 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.
7. The survey will be delivered on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies by:
 - Ipsos, which will administer the survey.
 - Texuna Technologies, which will deliver the data dissemination portal for institutions.

KEY POINTS

CORE SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE SCALES

8. Resulting from the work of the NSS phase two review, the core survey questions and response scales will change for NSS 2023.
9. The UK funding and regulatory bodies have agreed that for NSS 2023 a new four-point item-specific response scale will be used throughout the core questionnaire to replace the Likert response scale.
10. The full list of NSS 2023 core questions and response scales can be found in Annex A and in the NSS consultation response document.¹ For reference, Annex A also includes the NSS 2022 core questionnaire.
11. The optional bank questions and their response scales will remain the same in 2023. These will be explored as part of further work in 2023-24.
12. The survey will be delivered across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland; however, the freedom of expression question will be asked to students in England only and the final summative questions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland only.

HEALTHCARE, ALLIED HEALTH AND CLINICAL PRACTICE PLACEMENTS QUESTIONS

13. We (UK funders and regulators) have reviewed the current methodology used for identifying students who are eligible for the healthcare, allied health and clinical practice placements questions (previously known as NHS practice placement questions). The change in methodology has resulted in the expansion of the coverage of these questions to include all

¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/consultation-on-changes-to-the-national-student-survey-analysis-of-responses-and-decisions/.

students studying a course that is associated with a health or social care regulatory body.² This includes students studying pre-registration nursing, midwifery, allied health profession, social work and clinical practice subjects. Before confirming this change in methodology, we ran a soft consultation with selected institutions. No concerns were raised during this consultation; however, if you have any issues or further feedback on this new methodology, please contact NSS@officeforstudents.org.uk.

SURVEY PROMOTION

14. Institutions in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are required to promote the survey. Institutions in England are not required to promote the 2023 survey to their students, but we expect any institutions promoting the survey 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 2023 good practice guide).³
15. 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 institutions 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 text message 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 set-up guide for institutions.

SURVEY COSTS

16. All institutions in Scotland are required to contribute to the costs of their students' participation in NSS 2023 and will be contacted by SFC with further details on this. SFC will also contribute to the costs of the survey. The costs of the NSS 2023 for universities and colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will be covered by the relevant governments through the OfS, HEFCW and DELNI.

² For institutions submitting to HESA, the students eligible to answer these placement questions will now be defined as those with any health or social care regulatory body data returned to HESA. See the REGBODY field here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c21051/a/regbody>.

For Individualised Learner Record (ILR) institutions, the students eligible to answer these placement questions will now be identified using information submitted by institutions as part of the HES21 return in Tables 6a, 6b and 6c (REF 1) and the Courses table (REF 2).

Ref 1 See Annex L: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/heses21/.

Ref 2: See page 30: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/64770309-674f-43db-972a-33364399aca4/completing-the-heses21-workbook-2021.pdf.

³ Available at <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

SURVEY TIMETABLE

17. The timetable for NSS 2023 will run as follows:

- The NSS will launch on **11 January 2023**.
- Fieldwork will take place between **11 January and 30 April 2023** and will be run by Ipsos.
- SFC and the other UK funding and regulatory bodies will issue a publication in **spring 2023** detailing the plans for NSS 2023 results publication.
- Results will be published on the OfS website in **summer 2023**.
- Detailed results will be supplied to individual institutions on the day of publication through the NSS results portal provided by Texuna Technologies.
- NSS results at course level will be published on the [Discover Uni](#)⁴ website.

ACTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS FOR NSS 2023

18. All participating institutions are asked to review, and where necessary update, their relevant NSS provider contact details by **28 November 2022**. The information should be supplied using the 'My details' form on the [NSS extranet](#).⁵ Ipsos issued new login details for the NSS extranet to the nominated main and secondary NSS provider contacts in the week commencing 17 October 2022.
19. All participating institutions should also submit their completed 'My survey options' form by **28 November 2022** through the NSS extranet. This form asks for institutions' preferences for their survey start week and optional questions, and details of any prize draws.
20. All institutions should populate their NSS 2023 sample templates with the requested contact details for all students on their target list; this is a list of all students eligible for NSS 2023, based on the 2021-22 student data. Details should be supplied by **28 November 2022** via the 'Upload sample data' section of the NSS extranet. Any proposed additions to or removals from the target list should follow the process set out by Ipsos, starting in mid-December.
21. Instructions on how to supply this information are included in the NSS 2023 set-up guide, which will be issued to provider contacts by Ipsos on **28 October 2022** and is also available on the NSS extranet. The guidance includes information regarding survey administration, key responsibilities and dates.

⁴ See <https://discoveruni.gov.uk>.

⁵ See <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

22. Detailed guidance relating to NSS 2023 and the actions requested from institutions can be found in Annex B.

FURTHER SUPPORT

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

Table 2: NSS contacts

| Organisation | Email address | First point of contact for queries relating to |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Ipsos | 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 | Institutions' detailed results on the NSS data dissemination portal. |
| 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 influence⁶. |
| Scottish Funding Council | dhorsburgh@sfc.ac.uk | Areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSS policy and development. • Use of results. |

⁶ Note that while OfS follows up allegations of inappropriate influence across the UK, they do so in consultation with SFC and the other UK funders and regulators.

ADMINISTRATION OF NSS 2023

24. Ipsos administers the survey on behalf of the 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 will liaise directly with institutions 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 institution-specific questions.
25. Institutions will be invited to select one of five weeks when Ipsos can launch the survey to their students. There will be no communication from Ipsos with students outside the times agreed with individual institutions.
26. Ipsos will issue a comprehensive guidance document, 'Setting up and preparing for the National Student Survey 2023', for all participating institutions on **28 October 2022**. The guidance should be read in conjunction with this publication.
27. For institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and any institutions in England that want to promote the survey, Ipsos will:
 - Supply NSS-branded marketing materials and advise institutions on the production of their own materials.
 - Facilitate incentive schemes to encourage students to take part in the survey.
28. The UK funding regulatory bodies have agreed to keep the same NSS promotional campaign from 2022 for NSS 2023. Ipsos will add some new social media materials to the marketing package, and institutions will be able to access the full suite from the [NSS extranet](#). Further information about marketing materials and promoting the survey will be provided in the NSS 2023 good practice guide⁷ from Ipsos on **28 October 2022**.

INAPPROPRIATE INFLUENCE ON THE NSS SURVEY

29. 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. Any concerns relating to Scottish institutions are considered in consultation with SFC officers.

⁷ Available at <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

30. 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, which explains what constitutes inappropriate influence and how to avoid it when encouraging student participation. We would urge institutions to ensure that all staff who are responsible for the running of the survey are familiar with Ipsos's good practice guide, and seek advice where needed from Ipsos or the OfS on their approach to avoiding inappropriate influence.
31. A student guide on inappropriate influence is available⁹ 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. Institutions 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 2023 set-up guide issued by Ipsos.

SURVEY RESULTS DISSEMINATION

32. For NSS 2023, Texuna Technologies will provide the new core survey results on the dissemination portal on behalf of the OfS and UK funding and regulatory bodies. The results portal allows institutions 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 publication threshold.
33. Texuna Technologies also provides a dedicated NSS service desk to support institutions in accessing their data and responding to queries.
34. Texuna Technologies will contact institutions' NSS contacts in spring 2023 to:
 - Confirm user and login details.
 - Confirm the details of publication of NSS 2023 results on the portal.

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

⁹ Available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/nss-influence/>.

ANNEX A: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR NSS 2023 AND 2022

NSS 2023 CORE QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: the response scale is indicated beneath each question.

TEACHING ON MY COURSE

1. How good are teaching staff at explaining things?

Very good; Good; Not very good; Not at all good; This does not apply to me

2. How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?

Very often; Fairly often; Not very often; Rarely; This does not apply to me

3. How often is the course intellectually stimulating?

Very often; Fairly often; Not very often; Rarely; This does not apply to me

4. How often does your course challenge you to achieve your best work?

Very often; Fairly often; Not very often; Rarely; This does not apply to me

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

5. To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?

To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Not at all; This does not apply to me

6. How well does your course introduce subjects and skills in a way that builds on what you have already learned?

Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well; This does not apply to me

7. To what extent have you had the chance to bring together information and ideas from different topics

To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Not at all; This does not apply to me

8. To what extent does your course have the right balance of directed and independent study?

To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Not at all; This does not apply to me

9. How well has your course developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?

Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well; This does not apply to me

MARKING AND ASSESSMENT

10. How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work'?

Very clear; Clear; Not very clear; Not at all clear; This does not apply to me

11. How fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?

Very fair; Fair; Not very fair; Not at all fair; This does not apply to me

12. How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?

Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well; This does not apply to me

13. How often have you received assessment feedback on time?

Very often; Fairly often; Not very often; Rarely; This does not apply to me

14. How often does feedback help you to improve your work?

Very often; Fairly often; Not very often; Rarely; This does not apply to me

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

15. How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?

Very easy; Easy; Not very easy; Not at all easy; This does not apply to me

16. How well have teaching staff supported your learning?

Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well; This does not apply to me

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

17. How well organised is your course?

Very well organised; Well organised; Not very well organised; Not at all well organised; This does not apply to me

18. How well were any changes to teaching on your course communicated?

Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well; This does not apply to me

LEARNING RESOURCES

19. How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?

Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well; This does not apply to me

20. How well have the library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?

Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well; This does not apply to me

21. How easy is it to access subject specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software) when you need them?

Very easy; Easy; Not very easy; Not at all easy; This does not apply to me

STUDENT VOICE

22. To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your course?

To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Not at all; This does not apply to me

23. To what extent are students' opinions about the course valued by staff?

To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Not at all; This does not apply to me

24. How clear is it that students' feedback on the course is acted on?

Very clear; Clear; Not very clear; Not at all clear; This does not apply to me

25. How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests?

Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well; This does not apply to me

MENTAL WELLBEING SERVICES

26. How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services?

Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well; This does not apply to me

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION (ENGLISH PROVIDERS ONLY)

27. During your studies, how free did you feel to express your ideas, opinions, and beliefs?

Very free; Free; Not very free; Not at all free; This does not apply to me

FINAL QUESTION (SCOTTISH, NORTHERN IRELAND AND WELSH INSTITUTIONS ONLY)

28. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.

Definitely agree; Mostly agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Mostly disagree; Definitely disagree; Not applicable

OPEN TEXT QUESTION

29. Looking back on the experience, are there any particularly positive or negative aspects you would like to highlight?

NSS 2022 CORE QUESTIONNAIRE

Response scale for all questions

Definitely agree; Mostly agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Mostly disagree; Definitely disagree; Not applicable

THE TEACHING ON MY COURSE

1. Staff are good at explaining things.
2. Staff have made the subject interesting.
3. The course is intellectually stimulating.
4. My course has challenged me to achieve my best work.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

5. My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth.
6. My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics.
7. My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

8. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.
9. Marking and assessment has been fair.
10. Feedback on my work has been timely.
11. I have received helpful comments on my work.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

12. I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.
13. I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course.
14. Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course.

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

15. The course is well organised and is running smoothly.
16. The timetable works efficiently for me.
17. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively.

LEARNING RESOURCES

18. The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well.
19. The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well.
20. I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to.

LEARNING COMMUNITY

21. I feel part of a community of staff and students.
22. I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course.

STUDENT VOICE

23. I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course.

24. Staff value students' views and opinions about the course.
25. It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on.
26. The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests.
27. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.
28. Looking back on the experience, are there any particularly positive or negative aspects you would like to highlight? [open text]

ANNEX B: GUIDANCE ON THE NSS 2023 FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE UK

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) will be carried out in 2023 across higher education institutions in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland by the Office for Students (OfS), working on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies. Ipsos will manage the survey process and Texuna Technologies will provide the data dissemination portal services. The 2023 NSS will follow a similar timetable to the 2022 survey.
2. This annex provides guidance specifically for UK higher education institutions.
3. The responsibilities of institutions in the successful management of the NSS are as follows:
 - Timely submission of the HESA Student record and HESA Student Alternative record. The final submission date is in early November 2022 for the student record and for the student alternative.
 - Ensuring good data quality by checking the NSS report (the target list) generated by HESA. Requests for any necessary changes that cannot be resolved by correcting the student data may be directed to Ipsos, for approval by the OfS or the relevant funding body, within the period from mid-December 2022 to 1 March 2023.
 - Timely issuing of NSS pre-notification email to eligible students. Further details can be found in the NSS 2023 set-up guidance, sent to provider contacts by Ipsos. The guidance document is also available on the NSS extranet.¹⁰
 - Timely submission of student contact details (email addresses and telephone numbers) when requested by Ipsos (by 28 November 2022).
 - Engagement with all guidance and requests issued by the OfS, UK funding and regulatory bodies, HESA, Ipsos and Texuna Technologies, and attending training and events run by them as necessary.
 - Submitting survey preferences to Ipsos. This includes the timing of the survey and the choice of optional bank questions. Optional bank choices should be made in conjunction with the relevant students' union.
 - Institutions in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are required to promote the survey. Providers in England are not required to promote the survey to students but can do so if they wish; this follows the same process as in NSS 2022. Institutions

¹⁰ <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

that promote the survey to their students must ensure that all activities meet the guidelines on marketing and promoting the survey and on avoiding inappropriate influence, as provided by Ipsos in the good practice guide.

4. For NSS 2023, in addition to targeted follow-up, all institutions that are at risk of not meeting the publication threshold will be automatically put into the booster phase to send additional reminders to their non-responding students. This is additional promotional activity to encourage students to complete the survey. Institutions are not required to take any action in relation to the booster phase.
5. Institutions may access their detailed responses and results of the survey via the NSS data dissemination portal provided by Texuna Technologies, from the OfS website and from the Discover Uni website (for students).
6. Institutions can access their target lists for the 2023 NSS via the HESA data collection system. They should provide the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos by **28 November 2022**. Further details can be found in the NSS 2023 set-up guide for institutions, sent to contacts by Ipsos. The guidance document is also available on the NSS extranet.¹¹
7. Additions to or removals from the target list are admitted only under specific circumstances, details of which are provided in this guidance. Any such requests for additions or removals must be submitted to Ipsos and agreed by the relevant funding/regulatory body prior to their inclusion in, or removal from, the final target list. If approved, the relevant funding/regulatory body will inform the provider and make the amendment to the target list.
8. Eligible students may opt out of the survey at any stage during the fieldwork process.
9. Institutions may choose up to six banks of optional questions and may include up to two additional questions specific to the provider. Institutions are asked to agree with students' unions their choice of optional banks of questions for inclusion. Institutions should submit their choice of optional banks and additional questions to Ipsos.

SCOPE AND COVERAGE OF THE SURVEY

10. The following institutions are covered by the NSS 2023:
 - In Scotland, participation is a condition of the Scottish Funding Council's funding for higher education institutions.

¹¹ See <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

- In England, all providers registered and regulated by the OfS will be expected to participate in the NSS as an ongoing condition of registration.
 - 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 the requirements of the Revised Operating Model for Quality Assurance.
 - In Wales, all regulated institutions are required to participate, to meet the requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.
11. All full-time and part-time undergraduate students registered at participating institutions are eligible to undertake the NSS during their final year of study (or, for flexible programmes where the final year cannot be predicted, after they are expected to have undertaken more than one full-time equivalent and not before their third year of study), with the following exceptions:
 - Students on programmes that do not lead to undergraduate qualifications or credits.
 - Students on a course lasting one year or one full-time equivalent, or less.
 - Any students who were surveyed in the 2022 NSS (whether or not they responded) and who remain at the same provider.
 - Any students who we expect, by the end of the academic year 2022-23, to have completed one full-time equivalent year or less since they were last surveyed.
 12. Students are included in the 2023 survey population if they are expected to complete their course between 1 February 2023 and 31 January 2024 inclusive.
 13. It is possible to add students to or remove them from the NSS target list in exceptional circumstances, for example if the length of a student’s course has decreased after a provider has submitted its HESA Student or Student Alternative return. The full criteria are in the NSS 2023 set-up guidance provided by Ipsos.
 14. Institutions will be able to make requests to add students or remove them from the NSS population once the target list has been finalised by the OfS. The additions and removals process will start mid-December 2022 and run until 1 March 2023. Ipsos will contact all institutions when the system is open and ready for requests, by 19 December at the latest.
 15. Requests should be submitted as soon as possible to ensure they can be processed prior to, or early in, the survey period. All requests must be made through the NSS extranet

and should be made in a single file, including the required level of detail.¹² The OfS or relevant funding body will review all requests for additions and removals and may request further details from institutions where necessary. Submitting requests as early as possible and responding to queries in a timely manner will help expedite the process. It may be necessary for the OfS to prioritise approvals by survey start week, but we will endeavour to action all requests prior to the survey start date.

16. Except for students on enhanced first degrees, postgraduates are not included in the NSS.

REASONS FOR EXCLUDING INDIVIDUALS FROM THE SURVEY

17. We enable institutions to exclude specific groups of students from being contacted by Ipsos. These groups are:
 - Students who are deceased.
 - Students with serious health difficulties (including mental health difficulties), such that seeking a response may be distressing for them.
 - Students who, having been informed that their contact details will be passed on to the survey agency (Ipsos) for the purposes of the NSS, state that they do not wish to be contacted (students will also be able to opt out during the survey process).
18. Students in groups b and c will still be able to complete the survey if they wish, through the survey website.¹³
19. These are the only grounds on which students may be excluded from the target population. Institutions should code these students on their sample submission as category 'C', and institutions should not provide contact details for these students. More information on the process is in the NSS 2023 set-up guidance provided by Ipsos.
20. If the provider feels that the target population does not accurately reflect the students currently in the final year of eligible courses, then it should engage with the additions and removals process as outlined in paragraphs 13 to 15. Reasons for differences will usually be changes in the student's circumstances, such as taking a year out or retaking a year.

¹² See <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

¹³ See <https://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>.

21. In exceptional circumstances, the reason for a change in the target population may be an error in the student data returned to the HESA Student or Student Alternative records. In this case:
 - English providers may wish to review the data for these students and consider if they would like to submit a data error summary to OfS for consideration.¹⁴ If on reviewing this summary we believe the errors are widespread and material, we may require the provider to submit a revised return Student or Student Alternative record to HESA.
 - For institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the details of any potential data errors will be shared with the respective funding bodies for their consideration on any further action.
22. It should be noted that HESA will apply a charge to meet the costs of processing such a change.
23. To enable us to monitor exclusions and verify their consistent application, institutions should retain evidence to support them. Where a student asks that their details are not passed on, we will expect institutions to retain evidence of this request. If the number of such requests at any provider is so high as to affect our ability to conduct the survey successfully, we will discuss this with the provider.
24. Although some students may withdraw in their final year, they will have had significant interaction with the provider, so their opinions are valuable and should be included.

PROCESS FOR SUPPLYING STUDENT CONTACT DATA

25. Following submission of the Student or Student Alternative records to HESA, a target list of students to be included in the NSS will automatically be generated. The provider should then supply contact details (email addresses and phone numbers), according to the standard template that will be supplied by Ipsos, for all eligible students on the list.
26. Students should be informed by the provider that their contact details may be passed on. Institutions can do this by sending a NSS pre-notification email to all students eligible to take part an NSS informing them that they will be contacted by Ipsos. Guidance and an email template are provided in the NSS 2023 set-up guidance issued to institutions by

¹⁴ See <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/amendments-to-data/data-amendments-process/>

Ipsos. There is also text added to the HESA student data collection¹⁵ notice to explain this.

27. Institutions can define their own structure for receiving their NSS data, through one of two optional fields on the sample file to indicate the internal 'department code' for each student. These codes, where provided, will be used solely for providing feedback to the provider.
28. Institutions should submit the requested contact details for students on these lists to Ipsos by **28 November 2022**. Ipsos will provide guidance to its contacts on how to supply these lists as part of the NSS guidance document. The NSS achieves a high response rate, and to ensure this continues it is important that institutions submit complete and accurate contact details to Ipsos by this date.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SURVEY

29. The 2023 survey will be conducted from 11 January until 30 April 2023 during the spring term so that the results can be published in summer 2023. To avoid concerns regarding impact on internal surveys, Ipsos will continue to:
 - Brand the NSS independently, which clearly distinguishes its purpose.
 - Manage the survey's distribution centrally, so that institutions are not involved in contacting students to complete the NSS.
30. Institutions will be invited to select one of five weeks when Ipsos can launch the survey to their students. This is to ensure that the survey can start at a time that fits with term timetables and does not clash with exams. Institutions may select a week between 9 January and 6 February 2023 for the survey to start. There will be no communication with students by Ipsos outside the times agreed with each provider. However, students will be able to access the survey through the survey website from **11 January 2023** onwards.¹⁶
31. It is essential that all institutions start their surveys during the five-week 'starting window' to ensure that results can be published in time for prospective students to make informed choices. We will, however, consider individual requests for a start date outside the five-week window where the activities of students make it impractical to conduct the survey during that time. Any provider that wishes to make a case for a different survey start date should contact Ipsos by **28 November 2022**.

¹⁵ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/about/regulation/data-protection/notices#student>.

¹⁶ See <https://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>.

32. Ipsos will conduct the survey at each provider using a set sequence of email and telephone surveying. This will take up to eight weeks at each provider, although some targeted follow-up may be needed during and beyond this time to increase response rates. Ipsos will deploy the survey modes tactically, to personalise the survey to students and institutions and help increase online responses and reduce survey costs.

PROMOTING THE NSS

33. Institutions in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are required to promote the survey, as agreed by the funding bodies in these nations. Providers in England are not required to promote the 2023 survey to their students, but they can do so if they wish to.
34. Institutions that promote the survey are expected to review any internal campaigns to ensure that they meet with the guidance on marketing and promoting of the NSS and avoiding inappropriate influence (please see the 2023 good practice guide).¹⁷
35. The good practice guidance for NSS 2023 will be available from the Ipsos [NSS extranet](#) and includes comprehensive guidance on the promotion of the survey. It is important that institutions adhere to the guidance on avoiding inappropriate influence and raise any queries with Ipsos. The UK funding and regulatory bodies treat seriously any breaches of this guidance and may investigate and act where there is evidence of a breach. We undertake an annual review to ensure that the process we adopt to respond to allegations is fit for purpose and make any improvements to the process and guidance for institutions and students before fieldwork takes place. This allegations procedure guidance is intended to be read in conjunction with the good practice guidance issued by Ipsos.¹⁸ We would urge institutions to ensure that all staff who are responsible for the running of the survey are familiar with Ipsos's guidance and seek advice where needed on their approach to avoiding inappropriate influence.
36. A student guide on inappropriate influence is available to help to 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.¹⁹ Institutions 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 2023 set-up guide issued by Ipsos.

¹⁷ Available at <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

¹⁸ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/inappropriate-influence/.

¹⁹ Available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/nss-influence/>.

37. The UK funding regulatory bodies have agreed to keep the same NSS promotional campaign from 2022 for NSS 2023. Ipsos will produce promotional materials with some new social media materials for institutions and students' unions to distribute locally. Institutions will be able access the full suite of marketing materials from the [NSS extranet](#). If a provider or students' union wishes to use the NSS branding to develop its own marketing material, it may do so and should discuss this with Ipsos, which will advise on good practice and offer guidelines to ensure a reasonable degree of consistency across the sector. When it contacts institutions, Ipsos will discuss who in the provider is best placed to coordinate promotional activity. Further information about marketing materials and promoting the survey will be provided in the NSS 2023 good practice guide from Ipsos on 28 October 2022.²⁰
38. Ipsos will manage incentive schemes in which institutions may take part. These enable institutions to offer incentives to students to complete the NSS. For example, some institutions have offered printer credits for students who complete the survey online.
39. Students on flexible programmes will receive tailored communications that more accurately reflect their participation in higher education.

QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION

40. There are two main methods of data collection: online and telephone. Ipsos operates a live open-access website, where students can log in and complete the survey, in addition to the option to respond by following the link in a personalised email. The aim of the site is to verify the identity of students at the point of logging in; once students have completed the survey and their response is validated, they will be automatically removed from the target list and not contacted again. To enable this, and to enable efficient working of the survey more generally, institutions should adhere to the deadline for supplying student contact details.
41. Although there are two methods of data collection, we are committed to reducing the amount of telephone contact. However, telephoning remains an essential element of the survey and will continue, so all institutions are expected to provide each student's mobile phone number and any other alternative contact number that is held.
42. To monitor responses and to process data for analysis and reporting, we link all responses to students' numbers in the HESA Student or Student Alternative records or known student identifiers. Telephone interviewers will have automatic access to identifiers. Once students have completed the survey, they will be removed from the target list and not contacted again.

²⁰ Available at <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

43. Throughout the process, Ipsos will send reminders to students who have not responded.
44. Response rates, by provider and by subject area, will be monitored continuously during the process. During the telephone stage, response rates will be reviewed, and some areas may be identified for additional, targeted follow-up activity, to bring responses up to a sufficient level to report results. This additional activity will involve reminders by email and text message.
45. For NSS 2023, in addition to targeted follow-up, all institutions that are at risk of not meeting the publication threshold will be automatically put into the booster phase to send additional reminders to their non-responding students during survey fieldwork. This will be started automatically if a provider's response rate is below 43 per cent by mid-March and will continue for some institutions until mid-April. An additional text message reminder will be included in the schedule of contact to non-responding students during the booster phase.
46. At any stage during the survey process, students may opt out of the survey and will not be contacted again. To do this, students will need to verify their identity by providing some data, such as their date of birth.
47. Institution response rates will be shared by Ipsos during the fieldwork to help institutions monitor their survey progress. Institutions should not share this data more widely, and guidance on this is provided in the NSS 2023 good practice guide sent to provider contacts by Ipsos. National response rates data will not be made available to institutions.
48. The UK funding and regulatory bodies reserve the right to agree changes to the survey period with individual institutions that are at risk of not meeting provider-level or subject-level publication thresholds. The OfS, on behalf of SFC, will inform institutions of any approaches and actions that may be necessary. The completeness and accuracy of students' contact data, as supplied by institutions, will be a significant factor in achieving a publishable level of responses.

PUBLICATION OF 2023 NSS RESULTS

49. A major purpose of the NSS is to provide information to help potential students and their advisers make choices about higher education. It also has a key role in improving the student experience, by helping institutions to identify areas for action or development.
50. The current publication threshold for NSS results is a 50 per cent response rate, with at least 10 students responding. Results that meet the publication threshold and criteria

will be published on the Discover Uni website.²¹ Data will also be published on the OfS website.

51. Data will also be available to institutions on the NSS data dissemination portal delivered by Texuna Technologies. The results portal will allow institutions to access elements of their data, including optional bank questions, students' open text comments and data below certain publication thresholds.
52. SFC and UK funding and regulatory bodies may publish their own analysis of the data, including open text comments and optional banks. For data that is not available publicly through the OfS website, this will be at aggregate level and will not allow institutions, courses or individuals to be identified.

²¹ See <https://discoveruni.gov.uk/>.