



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2018-19

SFC Statistical Publication

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2018-19

Issue date: 29 October 2019

Reference: SFC/ST/09/2019

Summary: To inform stakeholders of the publication of the college 2018-19 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey outcomes.

FAO: Principals and Chairs of Scotland's colleges, students, parents, guardians and the general public.

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Executive Summary

1. This report is an overview of student satisfaction in colleges in Scotland for 2018-19. It provides survey response rates and satisfaction rates for students on full-time further education (FE) and higher education (HE) courses. It also provides sector summary data on student satisfaction for part-time FE and HE students.
2. Survey response rates continue to be variable across colleges however; improvements this year in survey response rates mean that we can publish, for the first time, satisfaction data for full-time FE and HE students at a college level (Appendix A). We also publish part-time FE and HE data at sector level. However, we have no plans to publish distance/flexible satisfaction data due to the continuing very low response rates.
3. Overall 102,227 full-time and part-time college students were surveyed.
4. The number of students responding to the survey is:
 - 34,687 full-time students, a 49.4% response rate.
 - 9,434 part-time students, a 29.4% response rate.
5. Of those students studying an FE course, those studying on a part-time basis were more satisfied (94.9%) than full-time students (93.0%) as was the case for HE students (89.2% and 86.8% respectively).
6. When comparing full-time students, those studying at FE level were more satisfied (93.0%) than those studying at HE level (86.8%). Furthermore, part-time FE students were more satisfied (94.9%) than their part-time HE peers (89.2%).
7. To ensure greater consistency and procedural accuracy across colleges we will continue to work with the sector and Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs) to improve response rates for some colleges and to develop further the survey for future years.

Student Satisfaction and Engagement 2018-19

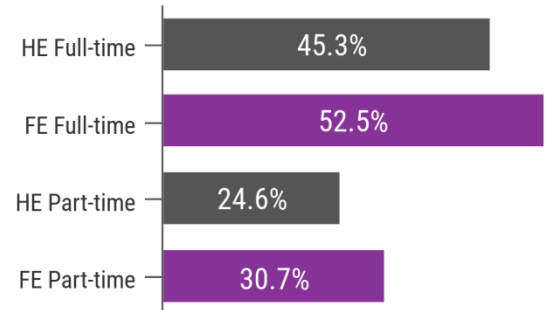


102,227
students surveyed

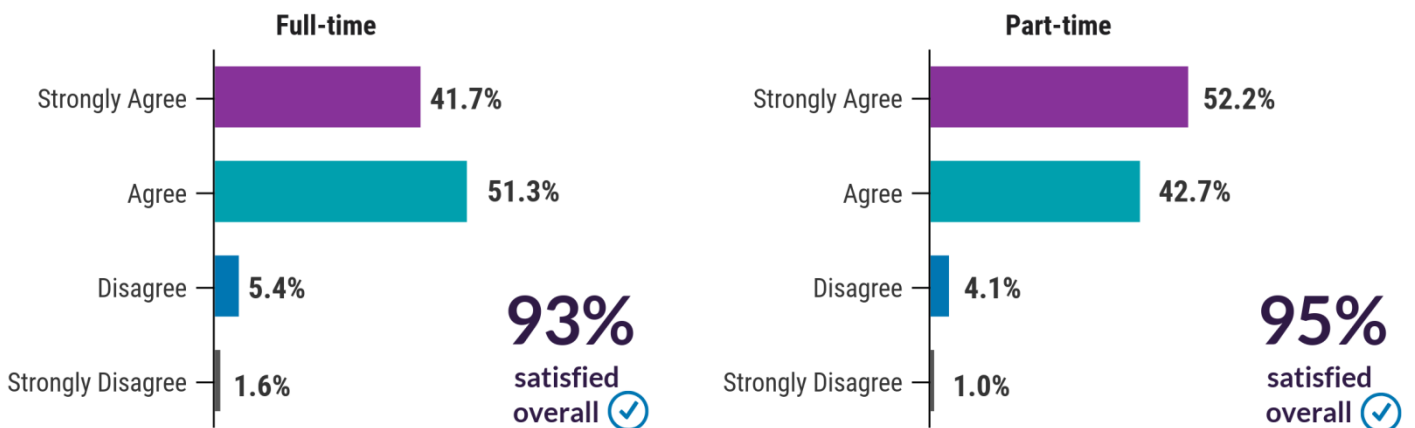


44,121
students responded

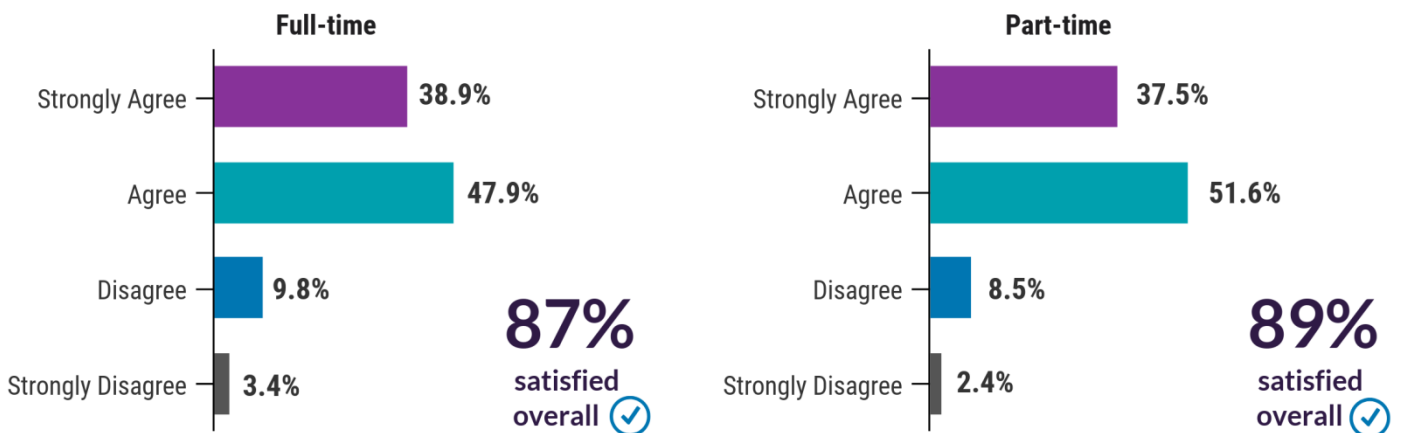
Response rate by student type



Overall satisfaction - FE College students



Overall satisfaction - HE College students



✓ Percentage of respondents satisfied with overall college experience (either strongly agree or agree).

Introduction

8. SFC has been working with the college sector to conduct a 'Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey' (SSES) since 2015-16. This publication is based on the college SSES returns and covers the academic year 2017-18 and 2018-19.
9. In 2014 with the support of the college sector and other key agencies, work commenced to develop a national Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey that would collect and report on summary satisfaction and engagement data from colleges.
10. This included the setting up of a Working Group; a sector consultation; the development, informal testing and cognitive testing of an initial set of survey statements; and the surveying of full-time college students by 16 volunteer colleges. The first [Student Satisfaction and Engagement publication from 2015-16](#) provides a timeline and detail of the development stages.
11. Following feedback received from the pilot survey and after further sector consultation a final set of ten statements was developed: nine statements relate to satisfaction and one statement to engagement with the Students' Association.
12. A target response rate of 50% was set for the SSES which is in line with the target response rate for the [National Student Survey](#)¹ (NSS).
13. The NSS does not include the surveying of students in Scotland's colleges apart from HE level students at The University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) partner colleges and Scotland's Rural College, therefore these students are not reported in the SSES.
14. Further information on the survey method, coverage and timing is available in separate guidance - [College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Guidance 2018-19](#).

Purpose

15. The SSES provides a means to evaluate and enhance college provision in Scotland through a national approach to monitoring student satisfaction and engagement. Over time, this will provide a consistent basis for college regions to evidence impact and improvement within their outcome agreements. It is envisaged that it will help to strengthen the role of Students' Associations in

¹ The National Student Survey (NSS) gathers students' opinions on the quality of their courses. The NSS has been capturing mainly final-year undergraduate students' feedback on their course experience since 2005. The purpose of this is to contribute to public accountability, help inform the choices of prospective students and provide data that assists institutions in enhancing the student experience.

representation and advocacy and will contribute to public accountability.

16. The publication provides summary information on the satisfaction and engagement of college students in Scotland, thereby supporting the Scottish Funding Council's work with colleges on outcome agreements to measure and improve performance.
 - The overall satisfaction figure is the key outcome agreement measure for student satisfaction and is based on the combined figure for 'strongly agree' and 'agree' for the statement '*overall, I am satisfied with my college experience*'.
 - For the engagement statement '*the college students' association influences change for the better*' students have the option of providing a 'don't know' response. However our calculations to derive the levels of satisfaction exclude those 'don't know' responses.

SSES – overview

17. The survey response rates continue to be variable across colleges, however improvements this year in survey response rates and the management of the survey mean that we can publish, for the first time, satisfaction data for full-time FE and HE students at a college level. We also publish part-time FE and HE data at sector level. However, we have no plans to publish distance/flexible satisfaction data due to the continuing very low response rates.
18. Although response rates have generally improved there are still a few colleges who have response rates that are lower than they should be. Five of the 26 colleges have response rates below 40% for full-time FE students. Three of those five colleges have satisfaction rates below the sector average but two have low response rates and high satisfaction rates. Whilst we have taken the decision to publish the results, for these five colleges improvement is required for future years. Care should be taken when comparing satisfaction rates for those five colleges.
19. SFC and Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs) will continue to work with the college sector, to ensure greater consistency and to improve response rates and procedural accuracy across colleges, and where possible use the information to improve the educational experience for future years.
20. The chosen survey period is later in the academic year and therefore, students will be providing an informed response after much of their learning has been completed. However, it is important to note that the majority of students who withdraw from their studies will have done so by this point and therefore less likely to take part in the survey. This will vary by college dependent on the timing and management of student withdrawals.

SSES Analysis of Full-time Further Education students

21. Overall, 86% of all full-time FE student enrolments starting in the academic year 2018-19 were surveyed during this period from 26 colleges.
22. Sector response rates for full-time FE students overall improved from 48.9% in 2017-18 to 52.5% in 2018-19, and although the overall response rate is improved the response rates remain variable at a college level ranging from 22% to 84%. For those colleges with low response rates we received confirmation that the survey was appropriately managed and that all student groups had a chance to respond.
23. Nevertheless, 21,189 students have provided the sector with feedback on their satisfaction with their full-time FE course. Table 1 below provides the responses to the following statement: *Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.*

Table 1: Full-time FE student satisfaction with their overall college experience

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Number Satisfied | Proportion Satisfied |
|----------------|--------|----------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 8,826 | 10,873 | 1,145 | 345 | 19,699 | 93.0% |
| 41.7% | 51.3% | 5.4% | 1.6% | | |

24. Combining 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses shows that 93.0% of those who responded to the survey were satisfied with the overall college experience. Although it is worth noting that the most common response was to 'agree' that they were satisfied rather than 'strongly agree'.
25. For 2017-18 we were unable to publish the results for all colleges partly as a result of low response rates and partly because not all colleges had surveyed all subject areas. This makes comparison with the latest year difficult but we have provided satisfaction rates for 2017-18 and 2018-19 for the 15 colleges for whom we published results in 2017-18. As shown in Table 2 below the satisfaction rate for the selected colleges is around the same level for both years.

Table 2: Full-time FE student satisfaction comparison for those colleges with a 50% or more response rate in 2017-18

| FE full-time satisfaction comparison | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 2017-18 | 93.1% |
| 2018-19 | 92.5% |

26. The survey includes 10 statements for each student group. Table 3 below shows the results to each statement for full-time FE students.

Table 3: Summary of student satisfaction results for full-time further education students at colleges

| FE Full-time | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Question Response | Total Strongly agree and agree | Proportion Satisfied |
|---|----------------|--------|----------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| SSES summary question results | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 |
| 1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience. | 8,826 | 10,873 | 1,145 | 345 | 21,189 | 19,699 | 93.0% |
| 2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me. | 7,039 | 11,083 | 2,604 | 441 | 21,167 | 18,122 | 85.6% |
| 3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. | 10,232 | 9,868 | 659 | 294 | 21,053 | 20,100 | 95.5% |
| 4. I am able to influence learning on my course. | 6,763 | 12,118 | 1,868 | 366 | 21,115 | 18,881 | 89.4% |
| 5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning. | 7,818 | 10,806 | 2,010 | 403 | 21,037 | 18,624 | 88.5% |
| 6. The way I'm taught helps me learn. | 7,528 | 11,179 | 1,959 | 463 | 21,129 | 18,707 | 88.5% |
| 7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace. | 9,598 | 9,678 | 1,358 | 404 | 21,038 | 19,276 | 91.6% |
| 8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously. | 5,657 | 11,112 | 3,316 | 955 | 21,040 | 16,769 | 79.7% |
| 9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff. | 8,275 | 9,527 | 2,364 | 962 | 21,128 | 17,802 | 84.3% |
| 10. The college Students' Association influences change for the better. | 3,578 | 9,629 | 910 | 943 | 15,060 | 13,207 | 87.7% |

27. Table 3 shows that fewer students are satisfied when asked if they feel their 'suggestions are taken seriously'. The statement 'staff encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning' had the highest level of satisfaction at 95.5%. This statement also had the highest proportion of students, almost 50%, answering that they 'strongly agree' with it.
28. The statement 'the college student's association influences change for the better' had a lower level of response but not all students would have the same level of engagement in this area.

SSES Analysis of Full-time Higher Education students

29. Overall, 90% of all full-time HE student enrolments starting in the 2018-19 academic year were surveyed during the survey period. The Highlands and Islands partner colleges report their HE students within the NSS University statistics as do SRUC. As a result only 16 colleges are included within the SSES.
30. Sector response rates for full-time HE students overall improved from 42.3% in 2017-18 to 45.3% in 2018-19, and although the overall response rate is improved the response rates remain variable at a college level ranging from 21% to 60%.

31. Table 4 shows the overall satisfaction for 13,498 full-time HE students at Scotland’s colleges responding to the statement ‘overall, I am satisfied with my college experience’.

Table 4: Full-time HE student satisfaction with their overall college experience

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Number Satisfied | Proportion Satisfied |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 5,248 | 6,462 | 1,328 | 460 | 11,710 | 86.8% |
| 38.9% | 47.9% | 9.8% | 3.4% | | |

32. Combining ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ responses shows that 86.8% of those who responded to the survey were satisfied with the overall college experience. Again it is worth noting that the most common response was to ‘agree’ that they were satisfied rather than ‘strongly agree’.
33. Although we have published the results for all colleges five of the 16 colleges with full-time HE students had response rates below 40%. Two of these had satisfaction rates well above the sector average. The same two colleges also had low response rates for full-time FE students and above average satisfaction rates. We expect to see an improvement in response rates for future years but care should be taken when comparing the results for these five colleges. Response rates and satisfaction rates for full-time students at individual colleges are shown in Appendix A.
34. To allow some comparison to last year’s publication of the full-time HE satisfaction rate we have taken the six colleges that we reported as having a response rate of over 50% in 2017-18 and provided their comparable satisfaction rate for 2018-19. As shown in Table 5 below the satisfaction rate for the selected colleges is around the same level for both years.

Table 5: Full-time HE student satisfaction comparison for those colleges with a 50% or more response rate in 2017-18

| HE full-time satisfaction comparison | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 2017-18 | 83.2% |
| 2018-19 | 82.8% |

35. Table 6 below shows the results to each satisfaction statement for full-time HE students.

Table 6: Summary of student satisfaction results for full-time HE students at colleges

| HE Full-time | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Question Response | Total Strongly agree and agree | Proportion Satisfied |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| SSES summary question results | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 | 18-19 |
| 1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience. | 5,248 | 6,462 | 1,328 | 460 | 13,498 | 11,710 | 86.8% |
| 2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me. | 4,023 | 6,232 | 2,559 | 658 | 13,472 | 10,255 | 76.1% |
| 3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. | 7,063 | 5,386 | 710 | 298 | 13,457 | 12,449 | 92.5% |
| 4. I am able to influence learning on my course. | 3,861 | 6,842 | 2,150 | 588 | 13,441 | 10,703 | 79.6% |
| 5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning. | 4,828 | 6,221 | 1,826 | 580 | 13,455 | 11,049 | 82.1% |
| 6. The way I'm taught helps me learn. | 4,169 | 6,602 | 2,074 | 594 | 13,439 | 10,771 | 80.1% |
| 7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace. | 5,884 | 5,710 | 1,363 | 501 | 13,458 | 11,594 | 86.1% |
| 8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously. | 3,306 | 6,154 | 2,888 | 1,106 | 13,454 | 9,460 | 70.3% |
| 9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff. | 5,710 | 5,274 | 1,683 | 764 | 13,431 | 10,984 | 81.8% |
| 10. The college Students' Association influences change for the better. | 1,654 | 4,623 | 707 | 371 | 7,355 | 6,277 | 85.3% |

36. The results for the full-time HE students across all statements were less positive than for the full-time FE students. HE students are encouraged to be more independent in their learning which may explain some of the differences across the two groups.

37. The level of student overall satisfaction with their college experience for full-time HE students is lower than the results for full-time FE students at almost all colleges (Appendix A). However, there is a need to better understand why the satisfaction levels are lower for the HE students.

SSES comparison of full-time and part-time satisfaction rates

38. Table 7 below allows for the comparison of satisfaction rates for both full-time and part-time FE and HE students at colleges.

Table 7: Student satisfaction comparisons for full-time and part-time FE and HE students

| SSES comparison of full-time and part-time satisfaction rates | FE Full-time | FE Part-time | HE Full-time | HE Part-time |
|---|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| SSES statements | Summary satisfaction rates | | | |
| 1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience. | 93.0% | 94.9% | 86.8% | 89.2% |
| 2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me. | 85.6% | 88.6% | 76.1% | 79.5% |
| 3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. | 95.5% | 96.4% | 92.5% | 95.3% |
| 4. I am able to influence learning on my course. | 89.4% | 91.7% | 79.6% | 82.3% |
| 5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning. | 88.5% | 90.8% | 82.1% | 84.1% |
| 6. The way I'm taught helps me learn. | 88.5% | 91.4% | 80.1% | 83.9% |
| 7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace. | 91.6% | 92.6% | 86.1% | 88.2% |
| 8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously. | 79.7% | 87.8% | 70.3% | 80.7% |
| 9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff. | 84.3% | 91.9% | 81.8% | 90.0% |
| 10. The college Students' Association influences change for the better. | 87.7% | 94.4% | 85.3% | 89.8% |

39. The satisfaction rate for part-time students is higher than for full-time students at both FE and HE level across all survey statements.

40. Similar to full-time FE and HE the highest level of satisfaction for part-time students is given for the statement '*staff encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning*'.

41. When looking at satisfaction rates across level and mode of study, students are least satisfied when asked if they feel their '*suggestions are taken seriously*' and if '*staff regularly discuss progress with me*'.
42. Response rates for part-time students, although improved, are lower than for full-time students at both FE and HE levels:
 - FE part-time 30.7% compared to 52.5% for FE full-time.
 - HE part-time 24.6% compared to 45.3% for HE full-time.

Appendix A: Full-time survey response and satisfaction rates by college

Full-time survey response and satisfaction rates with overall college experience 2018-19

| College | FE | | HE | |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | Response rate | Satisfaction rate | Response rate | Satisfaction rate |
| Argyll* | 58.1% | 93.0% | - | - |
| Ayrshire | 28.1% | 96.0% | 23.6% | 92.3% |
| Borders | 63.8% | 92.0% | 57.0% | 80.0% |
| City of Glasgow | 47.6% | 83.2% | 51.0% | 77.1% |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 48.2% | 96.9% | 42.8% | 94.1% |
| Dundee and Angus | 52.6% | 96.1% | 53.5% | 96.1% |
| Edinburgh | 67.5% | 92.9% | 39.7% | 82.3% |
| Fife | 59.0% | 94.5% | 42.8% | 91.4% |
| Forth Valley | 44.1% | 95.8% | 27.7% | 86.3% |
| Glasgow Clyde | 63.3% | 96.3% | 56.7% | 92.9% |
| Glasgow Kelvin | 39.4% | 90.5% | 21.3% | 88.8% |
| Inverness* | 62.5% | 92.5% | - | - |
| Lews Castle* | 83.9% | 97.9% | - | - |
| Moray* | 66.7% | 92.6% | - | - |
| New College Lanarkshire | 64.3% | 88.6% | 59.8% | 87.1% |
| Newbattle Abbey | 70.8% | 97.8% | 50.0% | 84.6% |
| North East Scotland | 57.8% | 93.6% | 50.9% | 92.1% |
| North Highland* | 43.0% | 95.1% | - | - |
| Orkney* | 58.5% | 100.0% | - | - |
| Perth* | 58.9% | 93.8% | - | - |
| Scotland's Rural College* | 22.7% | 91.5% | - | - |
| Shetland* | 21.6% | 84.2% | - | - |
| South Lanarkshire | 68.0% | 86.5% | 51.6% | 82.9% |
| West College Scotland | 35.1% | 95.1% | 35.3% | 92.5% |
| West Highland* | 70.9% | 96.4% | - | - |
| West Lothian | 64.0% | 95.6% | 49.2% | 93.7% |
| Scotland | 52.5% | 93.0% | 45.3% | 86.8% |

* UHI partner colleges and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) HE level student satisfaction is reported in the National Student Survey (NSS)

Appendix B: Publication Metadata

| Metadata Indicator | Description |
|---|---|
| Publication title | College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2018-19 |
| Description | College student satisfaction data for full-time and part-time courses during the academic year 2018-2019. |
| Theme | Education |
| Topic | College Student Satisfaction information |
| Format | PDF |
| Data source(s) | Scotland's colleges student satisfaction survey (for Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and the UHI partner colleges coverage is only for FE level students) |
| Date that data is acquired | 31 May 2019 |
| Release date | 29 October 2019 |
| Frequency | Annual |
| Timeframe of data and timeliness | Academic year (1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019), and limited trend data from academic year 2017-18. |
| Continuity of data | From 2015-16 aggregate student satisfaction data has been submitted in Excel tables. |
| Revisions statement | There are no revisions to this publication |
| Enhancements relevant to this publication | The publishing of satisfaction and response rates at a college level for full-time FE and HE students. |
| Concepts and definitions | Please see the College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Guidance . |
| Relevance and key uses of the statistics | The results from the college student satisfaction publication are used by the Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Government, Audit Scotland, Colleges Scotland, academics and member of the general public to monitor college student satisfaction and to support policy development. |
| Official Statistics designation | Official Statistics |
| UK Statistics Authority Assessment | N/A |
| Last published | 30 October 2018 |
| Next published | 25 October 2020 |
| Date of first publication | 27 October 2017 |

Appendix C: Glossary

College student satisfaction data - aggregate data from colleges based on the number of students responding to the survey.

FE level - courses at SCQF or 'broadly comparable' level 6 and below.

HE level - courses at SCQF or 'broadly comparable' level 7 and above.

Full-time

- Programme of at least 600 planned notional hours or for a 1 year HNC at least 480 hours.

Part-time

- Self-contained full-time programme, i.e. one not supplemented by other periods of study of 18 weeks duration or less.
- Programme for which students are released by their employer for periods of full-time attendance.
- Programme for which employer sponsored students are released by their employer for part of the week.
- Day programmes in which periods of evening or twilight study form an integral part of the programme.
- Programme held only in evening or twilight sessions or at weekends.

Student target group - students on courses of 160 hours or more in duration.

Survey timing - the period and the number of weeks the survey should be conducted. This is within an 8 week window between March and April and during this period, colleges will operate their survey for a period of 4 weeks (and this could straddle the Spring break).