

Office for  
Students



# The National Student Survey 2023



Scottish Funding Council

Promoting further and higher education

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg  
Uwch Cymru  
Higher Education Funding  
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hefcw

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>National Student Survey 2023</b>	<b>3</b>
Key points	3
Survey timetable	5
Actions for providers for NSS 2023	5
Further support	7
<b>Administration of NSS 2023</b>	<b>8</b>
Inappropriate influence on the NSS survey	8
<b>Survey results dissemination</b>	<b>9</b>

# Introduction

1. This publication sets out arrangements for the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023 and the actions required from participating:
  - universities
  - further education colleges and sixth form colleges
  - other higher education providers that return student data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency.<sup>1</sup>
2. Table 1 summarises actions and key milestones for higher education providers. More information is in paragraphs 17 to 21 and the annexes.

**Table 1: Provider actions and key milestones**

Date	Actions
28 October 2022	Ipsos to issue NSS 2023 set-up guide and good practice guide to providers
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.

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<sup>1</sup> Jisc and HESA have announced a merger, taking effect from the beginning of October 2022. Post-merger and for the foreseeable future, HESA's brand will continue and its website will remain as a data-hosting platform. For more information see [Jisc and HESA confirm merger | HESA](#).

# 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 providers as follows:
  - a. In England, all providers registered with and regulated by the OfS will be expected to participate in the NSS as an ongoing condition of registration.
  - b. 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.
  - c. In Scotland, participation is a condition of the Scottish Funding Council's funding for higher education providers.
  - d. In Wales, all regulated providers and funded providers 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 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 providers.

## 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 question will be asked to students in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland only.

### **Healthcare, allied health and clinical practice placements questions**

13. We 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 students studying a course that is associated with a health or social care regulatory body.<sup>3</sup> 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 providers. 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](mailto:NSS@officeforstudents.org.uk).

### **Survey promotion**

14. To reduce the work expected of providers, it has been agreed to continue with the principle that providers in England are not required to promote the 2023 survey to their students. Providers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are still required to promote the survey. We expect any providers 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).<sup>4</sup>
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 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

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/consultation-on-changes-to-the-national-student-survey-analysis-of-responses-and-decisions/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/consultation-on-changes-to-the-national-student-survey-analysis-of-responses-and-decisions/).

<sup>3</sup> For providers 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) providers, the students eligible to answer these placement questions will now be identified using information submitted by providers 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/](http://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](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/64770309-674f-43db-972a-33364399aca4/completing-the-heses21-workbook-2021.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

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 providers.

## Survey costs

16. 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, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland). All providers in Scotland are required to contribute to the costs of their students' participation and will be contacted by the Scottish Funding Council with further details on this. The Scottish Funding Council will also contribute to the costs of the survey.

## Survey timetable

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

- a. The NSS will launch on **11 January 2023**.
- b. Fieldwork will take place between **11 January and 30 April 2023** and will be run by Ipsos.
- c. OfS and UK funding bodies will issue a publication in **spring 2023** detailing the plans for NSS 2023 results publication.
- d. Results will be published on the OfS website in **summer 2023**.
- e. Detailed results will be supplied to individual providers through the NSS results portal provided by Texuna Technologies.
- f. NSS results at course level will be published on the Discover Uni<sup>5</sup> website.

## Actions for providers for NSS 2023

18. All participating providers 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.<sup>6</sup> 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 providers should also submit their completed 'My survey options' form by **28 November 2022** through the NSS extranet. This form asks for providers' preferences for their survey start week and optional questions, and details of any prize draws.
20. All providers 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

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<sup>5</sup> See <https://discoveruni.gov.uk>.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

‘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.
22. Detailed guidance relating to NSS 2023 and the actions requested from all participating providers is in the annexes:
  - higher education providers in all nations and further education colleges in Wales returning student data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency<sup>7</sup> – see **Annex B**
  - further education colleges in England – see **Annex C**
  - further education colleges in Northern Ireland – see **Annex D**.

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<sup>7</sup> Jisc and HESA have announced a merger, taking effect from the beginning of October 2022. Post-merger and for the foreseeable future, HESA’s brand will continue and its website will remain as a data-hosting platform. For more information see [Jisc and HESA confirm merger | HESA](#).

## Further support

23. 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 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"><li>• preparing for and marketing the survey</li><li>• student target lists</li><li>• optional questions</li><li>• incentive schemes.</li></ul>
Texuna Technologies	nss@texunatech.com	Providers' 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"><li>• NSS policy and development</li><li>• use of results</li><li>• allegations of inappropriate influence.</li></ul>



## Administration of NSS 2023

24. Ipsos 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 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.
25. Providers 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 providers.
26. Ipsos will issue a comprehensive guidance document, 'Setting up and preparing for the National Student Survey 2023', for all participating providers on 28 October 2022. The guidance should be read in conjunction with this publication.
27. For providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and any providers in England that want to promote the survey, Ipsos will:
  - a. Supply NSS-branded marketing materials and advise providers on the production of their own materials.
  - b. Facilitate incentive schemes to encourage students to take part in the survey.
28. The OfS and 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 providers 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 guide<sup>8</sup> 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.
30. The procedures for investigating allegations of inappropriate influence on survey results<sup>9</sup> 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 providers to ensure that all staff who are responsible for the

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<sup>8</sup> Available at <https://portal.ipsos.com/sites/NSS>.

<sup>9</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/inappropriate-influence/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/inappropriate-influence/).

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 available<sup>10</sup> 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 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 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 publication threshold.
33. Texuna Technologies also provides a dedicated NSS service desk to support providers in accessing their data and responding to queries.
34. Texuna Technologies will contact providers' NSS contacts in spring 2023 to:
  - confirm user and login details
  - confirm the details of publication of NSS 2023 results on the portal.

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<sup>10</sup> Available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/nss-influence/>.



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