

The National Student Survey 2025



Department for the
Economy

Medr

Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

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Introduction

1. This publication sets out the arrangements for the National Student Survey (NSS) 2025 and the actions required from participating:
 - universities
 - further education colleges and sixth form colleges that run higher education courses
 - other higher education providers that return student data to HESA.
2. Table 1 summarises actions and key milestones for participating providers. More information is in paragraphs 23 to 26 and the annexes.

Table 1: Provider actions and key milestones

Date	Actions and key milestones
23 October 2024	Ipsos to issue NSS 2025 set-up guide and good practice guide to providers
29 November 2024	Review and update NSS contact details
29 November 2024	Complete 'my survey options' form
29 November 2024	Submit NSS 2025 sample templates with contact details of eligible students
8 January 2025	The NSS will launch
9 January – 30 April 2025	The survey fieldwork period
9 July 2025	Provisional date for publishing the NSS 2025 results on the OfS website and for dissemination of detailed results to individual providers through the NSS data dissemination portal

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 2025

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 quality assurance requirements.
 - 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 their diverse student populations are represented, in line with their duties to advance equality of opportunities, eliminate unlawful discrimination, foster good relations and promote equality. NSS outcomes will provide information to Medr, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research¹, the regulator of tertiary education in Wales.
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 – see paragraphs 28-36 for more details.
 - CACI Limited, which will deliver the data dissemination portal for providers – see paragraphs 37-40 for more details.

Key points

NSS 2025 questionnaire

8. For 2025, the NSS questionnaire will be the same as the NSS 2024 and will be delivered across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The freedom of expression question will be asked to students in England only and the overall satisfaction question will be asked to students in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland only.

¹ Medr, Wales's Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, is the arm's-length body responsible for funding and regulating tertiary education and research from 1 August 2024. This includes further education, higher education, apprenticeships, school sixth forms, adult community learning, and government-funded research and innovation.

9. Following phase two of the NSS review in 2022, the UK funding and regulatory bodies agreed to shorten the main survey period to run from mid-February to the end of April for all providers.² This is to accommodate a later sign-off date for the student return. The shorter survey period is anticipated to start in the 2026-27 academic year. To understand the impact of a shorter fieldwork period on response rates, the UK funding and regulatory bodies have agreed to run a pilot in NSS 2025 alongside the standard fieldwork schedule.
10. The pilot will allow us to test an approach to mitigate the risk of any drop in NSS response rates, including for smaller providers and small course cohorts. While providers will still be offered a choice of five start weeks, a randomly selected subset of students will be assigned to a separate pilot group. This group will be excluded from the standard fieldwork schedule and contacted according to a modified timeline. The pilot has been designed to have no impact on 2025 survey response rates. More details on the pilot will be provided in the NSS set-up guide.
11. The full list of NSS 2025 questions can be found in Annex A.
12. The optional bank questions and their response scales will remain the same in 2025, using the Likert response scale.

Sexual misconduct survey pilot – England only

13. We are continuing our work to better understand the prevalence of sexual misconduct in higher education in England. We are trialling a short, online-only sexual misconduct survey with students studying with providers in England. To reduce the burden on providers and students, the process will be administered on our behalf by Ipsos using the same platform used for the NSS. Students will be invited to take the sexual misconduct survey after they have completed the NSS 2025 survey. The sexual misconduct questionnaire will be a shortened version of the pilot survey we tested in 2023.³
14. The aims of the pilot are:
 - To test a method for delivering a sexual misconduct survey to students nationally and understand how this might affect the response rate
 - To gain an estimate of the prevalence of student experiences of sexual misconduct at a national level
 - To explore how experiences might vary for students with different characteristics.
15. The survey will ask students about their experiences of sexual harassment, experiences of sexual assault/violence, and their understanding and experiences of reporting sexual misconduct to their provider.
16. Some of the language used in the survey is explicit and some people may find it uncomfortable. However, it is important that we ask questions in this way so that students are clear what we mean – this will ensure accuracy in our measure of prevalence.

² For more information, see [Consultation on changes to the National Student Survey: Analysis of responses and decisions - Office for Students](#).

³ For more information, see [Survey of sexual misconduct - Office for Students](#).

17. We appreciate that some of the items in the questionnaire could cause some students to recall difficult or traumatic experiences which they might find distressing. In recognition of this, content warnings will be included at the beginning and throughout the questionnaire to ensure that participants understand what they will be asked and can make an informed choice about taking part and continuing to answer questions.
18. The questionnaire will include links in several places to national-level resources that offer support for victims or survivors of sexual misconduct. We are also exploring mechanisms for providers to add a link to their own support services or resources to embed into the questionnaire.
19. The sexual misconduct survey questionnaire has been thoroughly tested with students and the final version will be shared with providers on the OfS website in due course. Details about setting up the survey will be shared with providers through Ipsos in early November. For further information about the sexual misconduct survey, please send enquiries to smsurvey@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Survey promotion

20. To reduce the work required of providers, we are continuing with the principle that providers in England are not required to promote the 2025 survey to their students. However, we recognise that some providers in England will wish to do so. 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 2025 good practice guide).⁴
21. 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 set-up guide for providers which is available on the Ipsos NSS extranet.⁵

Survey costs

22. The costs of the NSS 2025 for universities and colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will be covered by the relevant governments through the OfS, Medr 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.

⁴ Available at [NSS extranet](#).

⁵ See [NSS extranet](#).

Survey timetable

23. The timetable for NSS 2025 will run as follows:

- a. The NSS will launch on **8 January 2025**.
- b. The survey fieldwork will take place between **9 January** and **30 April 2025** and will be run by Ipsos.
- c. A provisional date for publication of the NSS results on the OfS website is **9 July 2025** at **0930**. Detailed results will be disseminated to individual providers through the new NSS data dissemination portal provided by CACI Limited on the same date and time. The NSS 2025 results publication is subject to decisions and final agreement from the UK funding and regulatory bodies following the quality review of the data.
- d. NSS results at course level will be published on the Discover Uni website.⁶

Actions for providers for NSS 2025

24. All participating providers are asked to carry out the following actions:

- a. Review, and where necessary update, their relevant NSS provider contact details. The information should be supplied using the 'My details' form on the Ipsos NSS extranet.⁷ Ipsos issued login details for the NSS extranet to the nominated main and secondary NSS provider contacts in the week commencing 30 September 2024.
- b. Submit their completed 'My survey options' form through the Ipsos NSS extranet. This form asks for providers' preferences for their survey start week and optional questions, and details of any prize draws.
- c. Populate their NSS 2025 sample templates with the requested contact details for all students on their target list; this is a list of all students eligible for NSS 2025, based on the 2023-24 student data. Details should be supplied via the 'Upload sample data' section of the Ipsos NSS extranet. Any proposed additions to or removals from the target list should follow the process set out by Ipsos.

25. All participating providers are asked to complete the above actions by **29 November 2024**.

Instructions on how to supply this information are included in the NSS 2025 set-up guide, which will be issued to provider contacts by Ipsos on 23 October 2024. The guidance is also available on the Ipsos NSS extranet⁸ and includes information regarding survey administration, key responsibilities and dates.

26. Detailed guidance relating to NSS 2025 and the actions requested from all participating providers are in the annexes:

⁶ See <https://discoveruni.gov.uk>.

⁷ See NSS extranet.

⁸ See NSS extranet.

- Higher education providers in all nations and further education colleges in Wales returning student data to HESA – see Annex B
- Further education colleges in England – see Annex C
- Further education colleges in Northern Ireland – see Annex D.

Further support

27. 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 get in touch 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"> • setting up and promoting the survey • student target lists • optional questions • incentive schemes.
Texuna Technologies	nss@texunatech.com	Providers' detailed results on the NSS data dissemination portal until 3 January 2025, after which CACI Limited will be taking over queries. The contact information for CACI Limited will be shared with providers in due course.
Office for Students	nss@officeforstudents.org.uk nssallegations@officeforstudents.org.uk	Areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSS policy and development • onward use of results • allegations of inappropriate influence.

Administration of NSS 2025

28. 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. This will include survey options such as start week, optional bank questions and provider-specific questions.
29. 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.
30. For NSS 2025, the UK funding and regulatory bodies have instructed Ipsos to pilot the impact of a shorter fieldwork period on response rates. While providers will still be offered a choice of five start weeks, a randomly selected subset of students will be assigned to a separate pilot group. This group will be excluded from the standard fieldwork schedule and contacted according to a modified timeline.
31. Ipsos will issue a comprehensive guidance document, 'Setting up and preparing for the National Student Survey 2025', for all participating providers on 23 October 2024. The guidance should be read in conjunction with this publication.
32. 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.
33. Ipsos will produce materials for the NSS 2025 promotional campaign and providers will be able to access the full suite of marketing materials from the Ipsos NSS extranet. Further information about marketing materials and promoting the survey will be provided in the NSS 2025 good practice guide⁹ from Ipsos on 23 October 2024.

Inappropriate influence on the NSS survey

34. 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. The OfS will work with the relevant UK funding and regulatory bodies to resolve any concerns that relate to a provider in their nation.

⁹ Available at [NSS extranet](#).

35. The procedures for investigating allegations of inappropriate influence on survey results¹⁰ 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 urge providers 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.
36. A student guide on inappropriate influence is available¹¹ 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 2025 set-up guide issued by Ipsos.

Dissemination of NSS 2025 results

37. Earlier in 2024, the OfS and the UK funding and regulatory bodies ran a procurement exercise for services to develop a new NSS data dissemination portal to disseminate NSS 2025, 2026 and 2027 results to providers. The contract has been awarded to CACI Limited, a data and technology company.
38. CACI Limited will develop a new NSS data dissemination portal through user journey research and testing to allow providers to access additional, unpublished elements of their data, including students' open text comments, data from the optional bank of questions and provider-specific questions, and data below the publication threshold.
39. The new NSS data dissemination portal will launch in December 2024. However, Texuna Technologies will continue to provide a dedicated NSS service desk to support providers in accessing their data and responding to queries while the new portal is being developed. Guidance for providers about downloading historical data from the current NSS data dissemination portal will follow in due course.
40. For NSS 2025, CACI Limited will provide the survey results on the newly developed data dissemination portal on behalf of the OfS and UK funding and regulatory bodies. In preparation for dissemination of NSS 2025 results, CACI Limited will contact providers in spring 2025 to:
- confirm user and login details
 - confirm the details of publication of NSS 2025 results on the portal.

¹⁰ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/inappropriate-influence/.

¹¹ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/nss-influence/.



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