National Student Survey
Student Experience
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The National Student Survey 2005-16

• Started with mainly HEIs in England and Wales
• Scottish institutions did not join all together at once
• Later inclusion of students in NHS funded subjects and Initial Teacher Training students
• Extension to HE in Further Education
• One Alternative Provider was part of the NSS from the early years, joined by a few more in the last couple of years…
The NSS questions remained largely unchanged, providing a stable base to measure improvements and trends.

Major changes to the survey included:

- The introduction of a bank of optional questions – although not meant for publication
- The introduction of a question about satisfaction with the SU
- Other changes are invisible/methodological
Strong features of the NSS

• UK-wide
• Covers all types of students and institutions
• A census, more than two and a half million students surveyed
• Enjoyed very high response rates
• Good feedback from students
The NSS results

• Consistently good overall results and steady improvements
• Difficult to improve the results beyond a certain point
• Improvements go beyond improving survey results
• NSS results can drive improvements but can also be the consequence of other improvements and good practice that are not directly measured by the NSS
Trends (2005-2016)

(% agree)

- The teaching on my course
- Assessment and feedback
- Academic support
- Organisation and management
- Learning resources
Teaching on my course (2016)

Staff are good at explaining things: 90%
Staff have made the subject interesting: 83%
Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching: 88%
The course is intellectually stimulating: 86%
Assessment and feedback

The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance
Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair
Feedback on my work has been prompt
I have received detailed comments on my work
Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand

Q5: 77
Q6: 77
Q7: 71
Q8: 72
Q9: 68

% agree
Academic support

- I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies (80% agree)
- I have been able to contact staff when I needed to (87% agree)
- Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices (79% agree)
The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned

Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively

The course is well organised and is running smoothly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>77</td>
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Learning resources

The library resources and services are good enough for my needs

I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to

I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities or room when I needed to

Q16 % agree 87
Q17 % agree 89
Q18 % agree 83
Personal development

The course has helped me present myself with confidence

My communication skills have improved

As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems

Source: Ipsos MORI
Overall satisfaction

Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course

Q22 85

I am satisfied with the SU (Association or Guild) at my institution

Q24 69

Source: Ipsos MORI
Overall satisfaction

• Difficult to go beyond 85% at a national level

• A question that was not designed for publication as such

• A valid question, checks the validity of the other sets of questions

• Strong correlation between overall satisfaction and teaching quality
Drivers of overall satisfaction

Factor analysis – Relative strength of scales

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

- The teaching on my course (24.7%)
- Personal development (19.2%)
- Organisation and management (16.6%)
- Assessment and feedback (16.3%)
- Academic support (15.6%)
- Learning resources (7.5%)

Base: 2618
R-sq=0.65
Satisfaction with the SU

• A relatively new question

• Clearly, lowest scores but shows improvements

• But, the SU question is not really part of the core NSS, not relevant to all students… deserves a survey of its own
Trends (2005-2016)
Has the student experience really improved?

• Yes, all things measured by the NSS have improved
• But how much weight does one put on the NSS?
• Although powerful, the NSS has a tight scope; it has a small number of questions covering specific aspects of the student academic experience
• A fuller picture needs to consider other aspects of the student experience which cannot all be captured by a survey
What’s down to actual improvement?

• The NSS is taken seriously
• Results are acted upon
• Trends are a demonstration of measurable improvements
• Institutions act on areas of actual concern, e.g. assessment and feedback results have improved dramatically
• Sometimes it’s down to communication – closing the feedback loop
Final year undergrads’ feedback shape the future?

• Past experience, feedback helps shape the future…

• The improvements seen in the NSS results show that current students have benefited from previous students’ feedback

• Future students will benefit from current students’ feedback

• However, one should not be obsessed by small movements in league table positions…
Thank you

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