**NSS 2023 Guidance for staff**

## **Contents**

[Contents 1](#_Toc1966121521)

[Summary – essential information 1](#_Toc1321974333)

[What is the National Student Survey (NSS)? 1](#_Toc95700424)

[Questionnaire 2](#_Toc1344725819)

[Publication of results 3](#_Toc729748762)

[Thresholds 3](#_Toc1159416035)

[When does NSS 2023 take place? 3](#_Toc1065498518)

[How does it work? 3](#_Toc838709673)

[Students’ access to NSS 3](#_Toc1674535775)

[Monitoring response rates 4](#_Toc66500966)

[Promotion strategy 4](#_Toc1041332971)

[Inappropriate influence 6](#_Toc1021658580)

[What is inappropriate influence? 7](#_Toc592264552)

[What could the consequences of inappropriate influence be for my provider? 7](#_Toc867752753)

[Avoiding Inappropriate Influence – Dos and Don’ts 8](#_Toc559365679)

[How can you support NSS 2023 and increase response rates? 10](#_Toc877893852)

[(Course Directors) Sending out emails to course teams to raise awareness and promote in teaching sessions 10](#_Toc776877841)

[(Course Directors) Sending out emails inviting students to complete the NSS 2023 10](#_Toc271679858)

[Promote in teaching sessions 11](#_Toc2017559569)

[Running Dedicated Sessions 11](#_Toc2088605502)

[Adding NSS 2023 promotional materials on course Canvas pages (only for final year students) 11](#_Toc485681071)

[Supporting materials 11](#_Toc1976930558)

## **Summary – essential information**

#### **Survey duration**

**NSS 2023 national campaign:** 11th January – 30 April 2023

**NSS 2023 St George’s internal promotion**: 6th February – 17th March 2023 (see page 5 [here](#_Promotion_strategy))

#### **How should you promote the survey**

**NOTE: Read guidance on inappropriate influence on page 7** [**here**](#_Inappropriate_influence)

* Send out emails from course director to course teams by **3rd February** to raise awareness among teaching and admin staff (suggested wording [here)](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EcaH1c6gtoVJvzjAT1aGVVIBNwFmrRnHeBu76lmUctKpFQ?e=9BVWQa)
* Send out emails from course director to students on **6th February.** It is also encouraged that you add your own course-level changes into the list of items that have been changed in response to student feedback(suggested wording [here)](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EZdvhpjajwFMrTSbDjnifqUBXiqJzytKP7YYZae32cQI-A?e=Nk6cpd)
* Send out emails from course director to final-year students inviting them to complete NSS 2023 on **20th February** (suggested wording [here](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EcCjqOcTk6VAtqyE_yOQwjoBU-KWoQHE5Et_irD_yAp7xA?e=cyfthx)) and **6th March** (suggested wording [here](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EQg1ckyHZyVNppy_NLBYtEcBnuAoV_JLd-SwimdyVX5qqw?e=nLvoAl))
* Promote in teaching sessions (NSS 2023 promotional slides [here](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:p:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EbloshQS3LdCqEwzx07MEQIByH2Zq5dJfPIV-G8gGRVklg?e=LQoObb))
* Run dedicated sessions for voluntary participation in NSS 2023
* Add NSS 2023 promotional slides on course Canvas pages (for final year students ONLY)

## **What is the National Student Survey (NSS)?**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

The National Student Survey (NSS) is a high-profile annual census of nearly half a million students across the UK. Conducted each year since 2005, the NSS has become renowned for producing robust and reliable data. The survey asks undergraduates to provide feedback on their course.

The NSS is managed by the Office for Students (OfS) and undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies - the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland), the Scottish Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

The NSS gathers students’ opinions on the quality of their courses which helps to:

* + - inform prospective students’ choices
    - supply data that supports providers in improving the student experience
    - support public accountability.

Every university in the UK takes part in the NSS, as do many colleges and alternative providers. NSS response

rates have been consistently high at St George’s.

### **Questionnaire**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

1. There are **27 core questions**, relating to the following aspects of the student learning experience:
   * + Teaching on my Course
     + Learning Opportunities
     + Marking and assessment
     + Academic Support
     + Organisation and Management
     + Learning Resources
     + Student Voice
     + Mental wellbeing services
     + Freedom of **expression**

Students are also given the opportunity **to give positive and negative comments** on their student learning experience as a whole.

1. Institutions can choose up to 6 **optional banks of questions**. St George’s chose the following 3 banks for NSS 2023

B6. Social Opportunities

1. I have had plenty of opportunities to interact socially with other students.
2. I am satisfied with the range of clubs and societies on offer.
3. I am satisfied with the range of entertainment and social events on offer.

B9 Welfare Resources and Facilities

1. There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.
2. When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.

B15 Employability and Skills

1. My Higher Education experience has helped me plan for my future career.
2. My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career.
3. The skills I have developed during my time in Higher Education will be useful for my future career.

Institutions can also add tailored **institutional questions**. St George’s added the following two questions for NSS 2023

* 1. What is the single most important thing that would have improved your university experience? (open comment)
  2. I would value more opportunities to make connections with students from other courses. (scaled)

**Full questionnaire can be found** [here](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EWEFlc_DlxdPjylgm-W8lO4BZhhFEs8asCPGFngEwg8qKA?e=6LLIWi)

### **Publication of results**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

The NSS results are made available to prospective students through the Discover Uni website which is designed to help them make the important decision of where and what they want to study in higher education. The results of the NSS are also used by universities/colleges themselves to identify what is going well, but also where improvements can be made, to enhance the overall learning experience for current and future students.

### **Thresholds**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

To be able to publish the results, each provider needs to achieve **a minimum of 10 respondents** **and 50% response rate** from the students eligible at overall provider level and by each Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) Level 3 subject. A minimum of 10 respondents is required for providers to receive detailed data for internal use only. Providers are able to access their results via a dedicated NSS data dissemination portal.

## **When does NSS 2023 take place?**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

The NSS **national campaign** opens on **11 January and closes on 30 April**. During this period, St George’s will run a shorter **internal campaign between 6 February and 17 March** to actively promote NSS 2023.

## **How does it work?**

### **Students’ access to NSS**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

The NSS can be completed online or by telephone.

All students with a valid email address will be sent an email invitation to take part in the survey by Ipsos MORI. These emails will be sent on the Thursday of your provider’s chosen start week. They will contain personalised survey links - when clicked, students must enter their date of birth which will take them directly into the survey.

All students with a valid mobile number will be sent an SMS reminder by Ipsos MORI, containing a personalised link that they can use to go directly into the survey. If students do not opt out of SMS, they may receive an additional reminder in the later stages of the fieldwork if they have not responded. The online survey is mobile-friendly, so if accessed via a smartphone or tablet device, students will automatically be taken to the mobile version of the survey.

Students can also go online to complete the survey directly at [www.thestudentsurvey.com](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com) at any time while the survey is live, regardless of nominated start weeks or whether they have received an email invitation. When accessing the survey in this way, students are required to enter the following personal data in order for Ipsos MORI to verify that they are eligible to take part:

* + - Registering provider
    - Known ID (student number)
    - First and third letter of their forename
    - First four letters of their surname
    - Day and month of birth

Once a validated response has been received from a student, they will receive an automated confirmation email and should not be contacted by Ipsos MORI again. If students complete the survey and are still being contacted by us, or if they have not received a confirmation email, it may be that they either did not fully complete or submit the survey, or they did not enter enough information to allow us to match them up to an eligible student on our database.

The questions are all displayed in the format below with each one on a separate screen – this format applies to the core questions as well as the bank of questions and any additional optional questions.

From the third week of each provider’s fieldwork schedule, Ipsos MORI will begin follow up calls to non-responding students where valid UK telephone numbers are available. Ipsos MORI will attempt calls at different times and days of the week to optimise the opportunities for response. Student numbers are called a maximum of 8 times. Please note that students cannot call Ipsos MORI directly to complete the survey but may arrange an appointment if they wish by contacting [thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com](mailto:thestudentsurvey@ipsos.com). Calls are made on the following days/times: Monday to Friday - 9 am to 9 pm; Saturday and Sunday – 10 am to 7 pm.

### **Monitoring response rates**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

The OfS is designated as a producer of Official Statistics, and therefore complies with the UK Statistics Authority’s Code of Practice for Statistics. As a consequence, the release of any data produced through the NSS prior to official publication is subject to various restrictions. This applies to the release of interim data, namely response rates, whilst the survey fieldwork is ongoing.

The sharing of response rates is subject to **restrictions**.

Sharing provider response rates with the following groups is permitted, provided that they are solely for the purpose of encouraging participation in the survey:

* + - Academic colleagues (at faculty meetings or for the purposes of running inter-departmental competitions);
    - Target student cohorts (through the VLE, lecture shout outs, displays on campus screens (at the provider only), student mobile apps, and closed social media groups);
    - Relevant committees, Students’ Unions, academic boards or other relevant bodies.

The following activities are examples of those that are not permitted, as they are unlikely to improve response rates at the provider:

* + - Sharing response rates with anyone outside the provider (this includes any media organisations, and any other group that is not involved in delivering the NSS at the provider in question)
    - Sharing interim response rates for any purpose other than improving response rates to the survey, including unrelated promotional purposes.

### **Promotion strategy**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

#### **NSS 2023 Ipsos Mori promotion timeline**

Email 1 – Initial Invitation 6 February 2023

Email 2 – First reminder 13 February 2023

SMS 1 16 February 2023

Telephone 21 February 2023

Email 3 – Second reminder 27 February 2023

Email and telephone follow ups 1 March – 30 April

**Follow-up and booster phase (if 50% response rate is not achieved)**

Booster 1 – Email 4 6 March 2023

Booster 2 – Email 5 31 March 2023

SMS 2 6 April 2023

Follow-up 1 – Email 6 12 April 2023

Booster 3 – Email 7 18 April 2023

Final email reminder 24 April 2023

#### **St George’s NSS 2023 promotion timeline**

The promotion campaign at St George’s will used multiple channels to raise awareness and increase response rate.

* Announcements in student and staff newsletters
* Invitation emails from the Associate Dean for Student Experience and course leads
* A4 and A3 posters (provided by Ipsos Mori)
* Digital screens
* Promotion during teaching sessions
* Stalls in Hunter and Jenner run by The Student Experience Team

In addition, a **prize draw consisting of 5 prizes of £200 each has been chosen as the incentive for NSS 2023.**

You can find a copy of the Promotional Campaign [here](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:x:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EXcGYpxMXyVCpWP3d3ZYZowBQpk7x6bi4c9XA28etArhWA?e=9iiia3)

## **Inappropriate influence**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

Providers should communicate with students and ensure they give their honest feedback on their learning experience. Communications and/or providers’ marketing materials must not attempt to sway the opinion of students in any way.

There is a further developed guide on inappropriate influence for students which sets out what the NSS is and how it is promoted by providers. The guide details what may constitute inappropriate influence when promoting the NSS and the types of promotion providers are, or are not, allowed to undertake. It provides details on the help and support available to students - if they feel they are being or have been influenced in how to respond to the survey, along with the process in place to investigate allegations of inappropriate influence and what happens in case of a breach of guidance. Providers are asked to inform students about this guide as part of their NSS pre-launch survey plans and a NSS pre-notification email template is provided in the set up guide.

### **What is inappropriate influence?**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

The OfS (in partnership with the UK funding and regulatory bodies) define inappropriate influence as **any activity or behaviour that may encourage students to reflect anything other than their true opinion of their experiences during their course in their NSS responses.**

**Inappropriate influence can emerge in several ways**, for example:

1. Explicit or implicit instruction on the type of responses students should make, including the provision of standard or example responses.
2. Explaining how the survey is presented to students and drawing attention, explicitly or implicitly, to the consequences of negative responses, with regard to:
   1. conflation with other surveys undertaken by providers whether internal or external
   2. league tables, the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) or Quality Assessment processes
   3. employers’ perceptions of positive and negative outcomes.
3. Instruction on how the response scale is understood by third parties.
4. Encouraging students to avoid a particular point on the response scale.
5. Failure to ensure that methods to encourage participation in the survey, such as campaigns, the use of promotional materials (either explicitly or implicitly) or incentivisation methods (such as prize draws), do not bias responses.
6. Holding compulsory sessions at which the NSS must be completed.

When promoting the survey, providers should take into consideration whether the campaign could inappropriately influence the type of responses participants may give. In addition, the OfS (in partnership with the UK funding and regulatory bodies) expects providers to have processes to ensure that all staff (both academic and professional services) have engaged with the guidance and measures in place to prevent inappropriate influence throughout their NSS activities.

### **What could the consequences of inappropriate influence be for my provider?**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

Where a concern or allegation is raised, it will be investigated by the OfS through the Allegations Procedure. If an investigation were to find that promotional activities and/or marketing materials had resulted in inappropriate influence, whether intentional or unintentional, the integrity of the NSS data could be called into question.

The OfS (in partnership with the UK funding and regulatory bodies) could take action to suppress the affected NSS data for the provider meaning that no NSS results would be published for the affected courses in that specific year, nor would it be available to use in marketing activities, learning enhancement work or inclusion on Discover Uni, the OfS’s website etc.

More information on the Allegations Procedure for raising concerns, and how the OfS deal with allegations of inappropriate influence, can be found in their guidance ‘National Student Survey: Procedures for investigating allegations of inappropriate influence on survey results’; this guidance can be read in full at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/promotion-of-the-nss/>

If you have any questions or concerns regarding inappropriate influence, please speak to the survey manager at the provider or to the person who deals with the provider’s data submissions, who should be able to provide further guidance regarding ‘inappropriate influence’ in student surveys. Alternatively, please do not hesitate to contact the OfS Allegations team at [NSSAllegations@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:NSSAllegations@officeforstudents.org.uk) or Ipsos MORI at 020 8861 8110 or [nss@ipsos.com](mailto:nss@ipsos.com) who can pass this on to the OfS for investigation.

### **Avoiding Inappropriate Influence – Dos and Don’ts**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

#### **Do:**

* **Run a neutral campaign that focuses solely on boosting responses in the NSS.**It is important that the NSS is treated as an independent social research survey. As a result, marketing campaigns should focus on the survey rather than the provider and should not encourage students to respond in a particular way.
* **Provide examples of where NSS feedback has resulted in particular improvements in previous years.**Demonstrating how feedback from the NSS has led to tangible changes at the provider can be a powerful way to promote the survey. For example: “Your feedback counts – in a previous NSS, students expressed that library opening hours were an issue. Since then, we introduced a 24-hour central library.” However, care must be taken not to combine this with other internal campaigns – please see **‘do not’** below.
* **Encourage eligible students to participate.**All eligible students should be targeted in promotional campaigns.
* **Allow students to give their feedback regardless of their opinion.**If promoting the NSS, providers should encourage all students to participate regardless of their opinion of the provider or course.
* **Be wary of tone and use of language when discussing the NSS and asking students to complete it.**If you opt to promote the NSS, be sure to keep promotion of the NSS as neutral as possible. Staff can explain the importance of the NSS, improvements that their feedback has led to in previous years, and how it will help prospective students. Do not link the NSS to league tables, a provider’s performance in the TEF or to the perceived value of students’ degrees.
* **Target promotion in departments or courses with low response rates.**During the NSS fieldwork, Ipsos MORI will share response rate information with providers, which can be used to identify targets for promotional campaigns.
* **Inform students that they are free to interpret the survey questions how they wish.**Questions for the NSS are self-explanatory. Students should be encouraged to answer the survey questions however they interpret them.
* **Hold voluntary NSS completion sessions.**Organising completion sessions is an effective way to encourage students to complete the survey. However, these sessions must be voluntary.
* **Ensure students have total privacy when completing the survey.**Students must not feel pressured to respond in any particular way. Therefore, staff should respect students’ privacy when they are taking the survey. At voluntary completion sessions, staff must not look at students’ screens or at the responses they are giving and must abide by the relevant provider’s Covid-19 safety measures.
* **Use incentives or a prize draw to promote the survey.**Incentives and prize draws are both proven to be effective in improving response rates. This can form a part of the promotional campaign. Students should be made aware that there is no link between how they respond and their chances of winning a prize. Completion of the survey cannot be a condition to entering the online prize draw as all eligible students have an equal chance of winning. Please see the [MRS guidelines on incentives and prize draws](https://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/Regulations%20for%20Incentives%20and%20Prize%20Draws%20July%202015.pdf) for more information.
* **Ensure that all staff are aware of the guidelines.**To facilitate understanding of the guidelines and to prevent inappropriate influence in the promotion of the NSS, there is a print-out help card which can be circulated to academic staff, staff in professional services such as administrative or student support staff, or any other members of staff in a student-facing role.

#### **Do not:**

* **Embed NSS marketing activity in broader provider promotional activities, for example ‘Pride’ and ‘I Love’ campaigns.**A clear division between marketing campaigns must be made to ensure all promotion of the NSS is neutral. This includes ‘you said, we did’ campaigns, where it must be clear that particular changes came about from the NSS rather than from internal campaigns.
* **Combine the NSS with other surveys being undertaken at the provider.**If providers opt of promote the NSS, it must be promoted independently, and students must not be led to confuse the NSS with other surveys, whether internal or external, undertaken at the provider.
* **Explicitly or implicitly advise students on how to interpret the survey.**It is very important that students are not influenced on how they interpret the survey questions or response scale. These are self-explanatory and students should be left to interpret them in a way they see fit. Therefore, providers are not permitted to explain the meanings of questions or responses. This includes defining ‘neither agree nor disagree’ as a negative response or comparing the response scale to another scale with a different purpose (e.g. assignment marking schemes).
* **Advise or request students to respond in a certain way.**Providers are not permitted to recommend that students respond in a certain way, e.g. ‘I recommend that you select agree or mostly agree’ or provide standard or example responses.
* **Make entering a prize draw conditional on completing the NSS.**Prize draws are a good way to encourage student interest in the NSS. However, taking the NSS cannot be made an explicit condition to enter the prize draw, as this has the potential to influence responses to the survey.
* **Link the NSS to league tables, job prospects and the perceived value of students’ degrees.**Providers are not permitted to tell students that negative responses could make their degrees look bad to future employers. There should be no link made between completion of the survey and employers’ perceptions of positive and negative outcomes. This includes links between the NSS and university league tables or the TEF.
* **Say that the survey is compulsory.**Participation in the NSS, while beneficial to providers, is completely voluntary for students.
* **Make it a requirement or pressure students to attend dedicated NSS sessions.** Arranging these sessions is allowed however providers should not enforce them or make students feel there may be consequences if they do not attend.
* **Take students through the survey on an individual basis.**Providers should not stand or sit beside students when they are completing the survey or take them through their responses question-by-question. Students should be given due privacy so they can respond with honesty. Staff and students must always abide by the relevant provider’s Covid-19 safety measures.
* **Complete the survey on behalf of the student.**The survey should not be accessed or completed on behalf of the student. The NSS is a confidential student feedback survey and should only be completed by the eligible student.

## **How can you support NSS 2023 and increase response rates?**

### **(Course Directors) Sending out emails to course teams to raise awareness and promote in teaching sessions**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

Course Directors are encouraged to contact their course teams early, both teachers and admin staff, to:

* disseminate supporting materials such as the guide about Inappropriate influence and promotional materials
* discuss the promotion of NSS 2023 in teaching sessions using the promotional materials provided

*Please include a copy of this Guidance to Staff document in emails to your course team.*

**See suggested wording for email** [**here**](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EcaH1c6gtoVJvzjAT1aGVVIBNwFmrRnHeBu76lmUctKpFQ?e=9BVWQa)

### **(Course Directors and Course Leads) Sending out emails inviting students to complete the NSS 2023**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

Previous years have shown that students are more likely to fill in the survey when a member of their course team, such as the course director, invites them to fill in the survey.

**See email 1 to be sent on 6 Feb 2023 by Course Directors suggested wording** [**here**](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EZdvhpjajwFMrTSbDjnifqUBXiqJzytKP7YYZae32cQI-A?e=Nk6cpd)

**See email 2 to be sent on 20 Feb 2023 by Course Leads suggested wording** [**here**](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EcCjqOcTk6VAtqyE_yOQwjoBU-KWoQHE5Et_irD_yAp7xA?e=cyfthx)

**See email 3 to be sent 6 March 2023 by Course Leads suggested wording** [**here**](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EQg1ckyHZyVNppy_NLBYtEcBnuAoV_JLd-SwimdyVX5qqw?e=nLvoAl)

### **Promote in teaching sessions**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

Teaching staff are encouraged to dedicate 5 minutes of their teachings sessions between 28 February and 25 March with final year students to promote the NSS 2023.

Promotional slides to use in teaching sessions can be found [here](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:p:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EbloshQS3LdCqEwzx07MEQIByH2Zq5dJfPIV-G8gGRVklg?e=LQoObb)

### **Running Dedicated Sessions**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

Staff can run dedicated sessions where time is set aside to allow eligible students to complete the survey. These sessions should be completely optional for students to attend and they should be encouraged to give their honest opinion.

Please note that staff should not be ‘standing over students’ while they are completing the survey. Staff should make it clear that they are there to provide support on technical issues and not to monitor responses.

Dedicated sessions can be held at any time during the survey fieldwork. Students can log onto [www.thestudentsurvey.com](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com) and select the option to **‘Enter the Survey’**. To utilise the personalised email links sent to student email accounts, you could also arrange sessions to coincide with their delivery.

Please note these sessions should **not** be compulsory for students to attend.

### **Adding NSS 2023 promotional materials on course Canvas pages (only for final year students)**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

Course teams can raise awareness about the NSS 2023 by posting promotional material on Canvas pages, as long as these pages address final year students only.

## **Supporting materials**

[[up to contents](#_Contents)]

Course teams are encouraged to work together in promoting the NSS. The Student Experience team has prepared a pack of materials available in a shared folder [here](https://sgul365.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/StudentExperienceTeam/EvHqFyET6vBMgdZZHir_0ewB8wzS4JEV9cQ0cgcVrTmgWA?e=aYK1ik); the pack contains slides, graphics, suggested wording to assist course teams as well as a dedicated [webpage](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/for-staff/teaching-and-student-experience/surveys). The Student Experience team is always happy to offer further support and advice – just email the Student Experience Officer, Laura Dickens, [ldickens@sgul.ac.uk](mailto:ldickens@sgul.ac.uk).