National Student Survey Liaison Officer Guidance 2019
(Updated 3 January 2019)

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The role of the NSS Liaison Officer/s

- Ensure the correct students from the department are included in the National Student Survey (NSS) sample and advise the Student Engagement team if any additions or removals are required
- Encourage student participation in the NSS within departments or other academic units (e.g. divisions, schools, inter-departmental programmes etc.)
- Build staff awareness of NSS and where appropriate coordinate promotional activity
- Liaise with Student Engagement team in coordinating NSS promotional activity
- Monitor the departmental response rate updates from the Student Engagement team and consider potential ideas for boosting completion rates
- Share any examples of promotional good practice for further transmission across UCL
- Provide useful feedback at the end of the survey to the Student Engagement team.

Key updates from last year

- Our target response rate this year will be 70%
- Professor Anthony Smith has kindly agreed to fund the successful NSS incentive scheme this year. All departments achieving at least a 70% response rate will receive a reward for their students between £250 and £1,500, depending on the size of their NSS-eligible cohort. Further details can be found on p.7.

Data Privacy and Security

- Ipsos MORI have included a full privacy statement and FAQs relating to the storage, handling of, and type of data collected. After the survey has been conducted in May 2019 all students’ details will be removed from Ipsos MORI’s computer systems.

NSS 2019 questionnaire

The survey questions are unchanged for NSS 2019 from 2018.

There are 27 questions, relating to eight aspects of the student experience and overall satisfaction:

- Teaching on my course
- Learning opportunities
- Assessment and feedback
- Academic support
- Organisation and management
- Learning resources
- Learning community
- Student voice
- Students’ Union (‘The students’ union (association or guild) effectively represents students’ academic interests.’)¹
- Overall satisfaction

¹ This question was previously reported as part of Student Voice, but is now reported separately, similar to Overall Satisfaction.
You can find the full NSS 2019 questionnaire here.

UCL also asks students two optional questions, which appear after completing the core questionnaire:

- I have been able to learn about the research that staff in my department are working on.
- My learning has benefited from opportunities to participate actively in research inquiry.

Results for optional questions are not publicly available, and are for UCL's internal use only.

**NSS 2019 Key Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>w/c 12 November</td>
<td>Lists of students sent to all NSSLOs to check details of participating students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 November</td>
<td>Student Engagement team email all final year undergraduates with the opportunity to opt out of the survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 November</td>
<td>NSSLOs and contacts across UCL asked to confirm additions and removals for the NSS target list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 November</td>
<td>NSSLOs and contacts across UCL asked to confirm promotional material choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 December</td>
<td>Promotional materials are distributed (to be displayed no earlier than 2 January)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 January</td>
<td>NSSLOs to notify students of NSS launch in first week of spring term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 January</td>
<td>NSS opens nationwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 January</td>
<td>First invitation email sent to students (via Ipsos MORI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 January</td>
<td>First reminder email sent to students (via Ipsos MORI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 January</td>
<td>First response rate update sent (and weekly on Wednesdays thereafter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 January</td>
<td>Second reminder email sent to students (via Ipsos MORI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 January</td>
<td>SMS reminders sent to students (via Ipsos MORI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 January</td>
<td>Ipsos MORI begins telephoning non-responsive students (until end of survey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/c 11 February</td>
<td>Reading week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 February</td>
<td>Deadline for adding or removing students from the NSS population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 February</td>
<td>Suggested email from HoD (or equivalent) to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 April</td>
<td>NSS closes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late July</td>
<td>Public release of results: at university-wide level and for programmes that meet 50% (and 10+ students) threshold for publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-August</td>
<td>Internal release of Faculty, department and programme-level results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response rate updates

You will be emailed weekly on Wednesday afternoons from 16 January 2019 with your faculty, departmental and programme response rates. Ipsos MORI cannot tell us who has or has not taken the survey.

Student eligibility for the NSS

There are strict criteria governing inclusion or removal from the NSS sample. The list of students that the Office for Students (OfS) considers eligible for inclusion in the NSS will be sent to you for checking mid-November. Please return the spreadsheets with any additions or removals.

Eligibility

All students studying on courses leading to undergraduate credits or qualifications (such as Bachelor’s Degrees, Foundation Degrees, Higher Education Certificates and Diplomas) will be surveyed in their expected final year of study. The expected end date is determined using a combination of HESA fields that include the date of commencement, expected length of study and year of programme.

Students on more flexible part-time programmes (whose final year cannot be easily predicted) will normally be surveyed during their fourth year of study.

Students who have withdrawn from study during their final year will be included in the survey as their feedback is equally valuable.

Unless otherwise removed, students who have repeated a year or have changed their course arrangements and were originally expected to graduate in 2019, will still be surveyed in the current year.

Students who were already included in the NSS 2018 will not be surveyed in 2019, even if they did not complete the survey. Incoming exchange students are not included in the survey. Students must spend more than a year at a participating UK provider to be eligible.

If a UCL student spends a year abroad (=outgoing exchange student) this will be accommodated in their expected study length and they will be eligible to take the NSS in their final year.

Additions

If there are any students not on the NSS student Excel lists (to be provided to NSSLOs in mid-November) who you think should be, please let the Student Engagement team know by Thursday, 22nd November, and they will be queried with OfS / Ipsos MORI.

Students can be added to the sample:

- If they have reduced the length of their programme (e.g. from an MSci to a BSc) and will be graduating in 2019.

We cannot add students who have been in the NSS sample in previous years, even if they did not take the survey. If you’re unsure about this, please contact the Student Engagement team who can check previous years’ lists.
Removals

The criteria for removal are as follows:

- Student is deceased.
- Student has serious health difficulties (including mental health difficulties) where seeking a response may be distressing for the student.
- Student has ‘opted out’ – i.e. asked that their contact details not be passed on (the Student Engagement team will provide students with an opportunity to opt out prior to the start of the survey and will inform you if any of your students have chosen to do so). Any student not wishing to participate can inform Ipsos MORI through the NSS website: [www.thestudentsurvey.com](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com).
- Student is repeating a year and will now graduate in 2020 (The student can take the survey in 2019, but if you would like them to take it in their actual final year, please ask for the student to be removed).
- Student has deferred their studies and now finishes next year.
- The student has been dormant for the whole year.

Please let the Student Engagement team know if you become aware of any student in the above categories after returning your student list.

Please note, students cannot be removed if they have withdrawn from UCL, have poor attendance or are otherwise unlikely to respond.

For FAQs on student additions and removals, please see Appendix A

Check-list of actions for the NSSLO to undertake for the NSS

- Ensure the correct students from the department are included in the NSS sample and advise the Student Engagement team if any additions or removals are required.

- Monitor the weekly response rate update and liaise with the Student Engagement team to take action to improve it as necessary. You will receive response rate updates if at least 10 students have responded. A response rate of at least 50% and at least 10 total responses are required for results to be published.

Arrange local promotion of the survey:

- Distribute NSS flyers to the students, perhaps via their pigeonholes or handed to them in lectures, seminars or tutorials. Lists of eligible students will be provided by the surveys team.

- Display of NSS posters on noticeboards, student common rooms, corridors (if possible), libraries, staff rooms – anywhere students are likely to congregate or visit.

- Post a message on the departmental (or equivalent) website publicising the NSS with links to the website: [http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/)

- Encourage lecturers / tutors to ask students to participate in the NSS and explain that teaching staff play a vital role in communicating with their students about the survey.

- Add the NSS and the previous year’s reports as items for the Departmental Teaching Committee (DTC) or equivalent, and the Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC). The reports are available on UCL’s NSS landing page.
• Encourage your department’s Student Academic Representatives and any relevant student societies to promote the survey (the reward scheme should be useful for this).

• Consider the use of social media, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook etc. This was highly effective in some departments in 2018, particularly when used in collaboration with student representatives.

• Ask Heads of Departments, programme directors etc. to send an email message to students (suggested text below).

• Help ensure student awareness about changes that have been made in response to student feedback. You can find examples at a UCL-wide level here, but students may be particularly impressed by changes at departmental level.

• It may be worth mentioning to students that Ipsos MORI’s reminder communications only go to students who have not yet completed the survey. The sooner they complete their questionnaire, the fewer reminders they will receive.

Raise awareness around appropriate / inappropriate influence:

• Ensure that staff understand that promotion of the NSS is solely focussed on encouraging completions of the survey, in order to maximise the response rate and the amount of valuable feedback UCL receives.

• Students must not be coerced or influenced to answer questions in a certain way, nor should staff advise students on how to interpret the survey questions and response scales. It is important that no link be made between the NSS and league tables, or the perceived value of their degrees.

Full guidance on steering clear of potential inappropriate influence can be found within Ipsos MORI’s Good Practice Guide.

Other suggestions and good practice from NSSLOs in previous years*

• Hold individual or group meetings with students and the Head of Department or other senior departmental figures (such as the Departmental Tutor or equivalent), where numbers allow. Some departments combine these meetings to also provide information on exam and revision techniques, careers advice, or as part of Personal Tutoring meetings.

• Organise an NSS lunch in an undergraduate common room or other social space. Some departments have used pizzas or cakes as an incentive for students.

• Provide a weekly response rate update to NSS-eligible students in the department, scaled against the threshold for receiving the incentive money. The update email could ask students who have completed the survey to encourage their friends to submit their own questionnaires, as well as soliciting student ideas for how to spend the incentive money.

• Book a cluster room for NSS completion and enter the event into students’ timetables. Alternatively, if final year students already have sessions in cluster rooms scheduled consider setting aside some time at the end for NSS completion.

* Please let the Student Engagement team know of any of your own activities that may be good practice other departments can use and we will add them to the list.
Publicity tools

All electronic publicity material will be hosted on the Teaching and Learning Portal in early December for you to download.

1) NSS posters and flyers

Flyers, A4 and A3 posters will be sent you during the week of 18 December (you will be contacted separately with a form to order promotional materials).

2) Electronic publicity material

The following will be sent to NSS Liaison Officers:

- Web graphics – for use on departmental webpages.
- Wallpaper – for use on PCs (note ISD are doing this in the cluster rooms and library) and can be used for plasma screens too.
- Email-footer – Please add this to your email signature and ask other staff, especially the Head, Dept. Tutors and key lecturers should make use of it too.

Different sizes of the materials are available; please contact the Student Engagement team if you require them.

3) Emails and social media

Email templates, suggested text for tweets and social media posts, and key messages for communications to use at your discretion are provided in the appendices of this document.

There will also be YouTube videos that may be suitable for display on the digital screens around campus.

4) Presentation

A PowerPoint presentation will be sent to you for use in lectures and / or NSS events. You can find some key points for lecture call-outs in Appendix B of this document.

NSS 2019 – response rate reward scheme

Professor Anthony Smith has kindly agreed to fund the successful NSS incentive scheme this year. All departments achieving at least a 70% response rate will receive a reward for their students between £250 and £1,500, depending on the size of their NSS-eligible cohort:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of students</th>
<th>Prize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 49</td>
<td>£250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 99</td>
<td>£400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 – 149</td>
<td>£650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 – 199</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200+</td>
<td>£1,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The money could be spent on an end-of-term party or other social occasion for the students, a donation to the student society, or other ideas (departments are encouraged to meet with the students to decide what to spend the money on). Incentive funds will be awarded quickly in order to ensure that the students taking part in this year’s survey benefit.
Please note that students are not able to donate this money to charity, due to UCL’s own charity status.

NSS and the Teaching Excellence Framework
The TEF is not currently linked to tuition fees, and the role of the NSS metrics in TEF has been reduced. The NSS questions which feed into the TEF framework are:

- Teaching on my course (questions 1-4)
- Assessment & Feedback (NSS questions 5-9)
- Academic Support (NSS questions 10-12)
- Learning resources (NSS questions 18-20)
- Student Voice (NSS questions 24-25)

If you require further details about how the NSS contributes to TEF, please contact: student.engagement@ucl.ac.uk

Contact us

If you have questions on anything in this document, or would like to discuss the NSS, surveys or wider student engagement initiatives at UCL, please contact the Student Engagement team:

Sally (Head of Student Engagement) r.heatley@ucl.ac.uk ext. 56509
Bettina (Surveys Manager) r.allen@ucl.ac.uk ext. 56506
Tom (Student Engagement Manager) t.mcmahon@ucl.ac.uk ext. 56765

Appendix A

FAQs

- If a student has changed course, which course will they be surveyed under?
  - Students will be surveyed under the course submitted for the HESA return. The data submission to Ipsos MORI has to match the HESA return list. Any course changes after 15 October 2018 will therefore not be reflected in the NSS.

- If a student is repeating their penultimate year, will they be included in the survey?
  - The student is included in the survey sample as their expected completion date is 2019. They will not be surveyed in their final year. Under new OfS regulations, the student can be removed from the survey and asked to complete in 2020 instead. Please notify the student engagement team, if you would prefer the student to be surveyed in their final year.

- What happens to study abroad students? Is their expected end date adjusted?
  - UCL students who have previously studied abroad are eligible for inclusion in the survey population, however incoming exchange / Erasmus students are not. This is because you need to have completed at least a year of full-time education at a UK provider.

- Is it possible to defer students’ NSS eligibility due to a leave of absence, sabbatical or extended programme length? How can we ensure they are surveyed in the correct year?
  - Providers are able to request the removal of students that they believe should not be on the target list for 2019. Removals may be requested if the course length has increased or if the student has suspended or repeated studies.

- Are students with an undefined course length eligible to be included?
Yes, students on flexible part-time programmes will usually be surveyed in their fourth year, as it is not possible to determine the final year.

- **Can students be included where they have been in the survey population previously?**
  - No, where a student has been included in the survey population for the previous year they are excluded from the survey.

- **Are providers able to add students to the NSS target list?**
  - Providers can request the addition of students where their course lengths have decreased after the submission of the HESA data return. For example, where they have moved from a 4 year course to a 3 year course and now finish between 1 February 2019 and 31 January 2020 inclusive. Providers can also add students where an unforeseen error in the data has excluded them from the NSS population. However, these are approved on a case-by-case basis as the students must still meet the wider eligibility criteria for the survey.

If you have specific questions about a student’s eligibility not answered by the above FAQs, please contact student.engagement@ucl.ac.uk and we will be happy to help.

**Appendix B**

**Suggested email text**

Dear [student]

I am writing to ask you to participate in the National Student Survey this year, which is open now to all undergraduate students in their final year across all programmes and all UK universities.

This is your opportunity to give honest feedback about your course and your time here at UCL. The survey covers many facets of your academic experience and typically takes around 10 minutes to complete. Go to www.thestudentsurvey.com to take part.

As a thank you for taking part, UCL will award the department [£xxx] for you to spend however you choose (within certain limits) if more than 70% of the students take the survey. Students in previous years have spent the money on [examples]...

The NSS is a powerful tool for improvements in higher education, as feedback from the survey is used to help UCL make changes to the education and experience of our students. You can see changes that UCL has made in response to student feedback here.

In this department, [insert details of local improvements here]

Best wishes, etc.

**Appendix C - Key messages for lecturers**

- The survey opens on 7 January 2019 to all final year undergraduates in the UK. Ipsos MORI will contact them by email on 10 January, but students can complete the survey before then if they prefer

- This is your opportunity to give honest feedback
• The survey covers teaching, academic support, assessment and feedback, course organisation and management, learning resources such as the library and IT, and gives students the opportunity to leave comment feedback

• The survey is conducted externally and responses are completely anonymous

• We read all their comments and feedback, and use these to shape future policy

• It usually takes around 10 minutes to complete, and can be completed at www.thestudentsurvey.com

• Once 70% of the students in this department have taken the survey we will be awarded £xx* to spend on whichever student activities you choose

• Things that have changed in this department as a result of previous years’ feedback are: [list any good, concrete examples of improvements at departmental level, or UCL-wide examples such as those displayed here]

* See response rate reward scheme p.7

Suggested social media messages

Tweet
Calling all final year undergrads: take 10 minutes to tell us about your experience of your course! Take the survey now at www.thestudentsurvey.com [accompany with NSS image]

Facebook post
Calling all UCL final year undergraduates: take 10 minutes to tell us about your experiences of UCL and your course now at www.thestudentsurvey.com. Your views help shape the future of education at UCL.

Or retweet an NSS post from @UCL_teaching