National Student Survey Liaison Officer Guidance 2018

(Updated 16 November 2017)

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## The role of the NSS Liaison Officer/s

* Encourage student participation in the NSS within departments or other academic units (e.g. divisions, schools, inter-departmental programmes etc.)
* 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
* Ensure staff awareness of the survey and where appropriate coordinate promotional activity
* Liaise with Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs) Student Engagement team in coordinating NSS promotional activity
* Receive the weekly response rate update from the Student Engagement team and follow the suggested activity
* Share any examples of promotional good practice for further transmission across UCL, and
* Provide useful feedback at the end of the survey to the team.

## Key updates from last year

* Our target response rate this year will be 65%.
* Professor Anthony Smith has kindly agreed to fund the successful NSS incentive scheme (suspended in NSS 2017) this year. All departments achieving at least a 65% response rate will receive a reward for their students between £250 and £1,500, depending on department size. Further details are below.

## NSS 2018 Key Dates

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Activity** |
| 17 November | Student Engagement team email all final year undergraduates with the opportunity to opt out of the survey |
| 22 November | Lists of students sent to all NSSLOs to check details of participating students |
| 4 December | NSSLOs and contacts across UCL asked to confirm promotional material choices  |
| 18 December | Promotional materials are distributed (to be displayed no sooner than 3 January) |
| Mid-December | NSSLOs to notify students of NSS launch in first week of spring term |
| 08 January  | NSS open – promotional material launched on campus |
| 11 January | First invitation email sent to students |
| 19 January | First response rate update sent (and weekly thereafter) |
| 19 January | Second reminder email sent to students (via Ipsos MORI) |
| 1 March | Ipsos MORI begins telephoning non-responsive students (until end of survey) |
| w/c 12 February | Reading week |
| 12 February | Suggested email from HoD (or equivalent) to students |
| 16 February | Deadline for adding or removing students from the NSS population |
| 30 April | NSS closes |
| 1 August | Results release begins (embargoed until 12 August) |

## Student eligibility for the NSS

There are strict criteria governing inclusion or removal from the NSS sample. The list of students HEFCE considers eligible for inclusion in the NSS will be sent to you for checking in late-November.

### 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 Friday 16 February and they will be queried with HEFCE/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 the coming year. 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

HEFCE amended the rules last year to allow us to remove students who have interrupted or are repeating a year. The criteria for removal are now 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 (they were given this opportunity in early December). 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 2018/19 etc.
* Student is on interruption and will not graduate this academic year.

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

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

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

* Receive the weekly response rate update and liaise with the Student Engagement team to take action to improve it as necessary. A response rate of at least 50% and 10 responses is required for results to be published;
* Arrange for:
	+ Distribution of NSS flyers to the students - via their pigeon holes or handed to them in lectures, seminars or tutorials. Target list of students is provided by the surveys team.
	+ Display of NSS posters on noticeboards, student common rooms, corridors (if possible), staff rooms as appropriate – anywhere students congregate and visit.
	+ An item to be posted on the departmental (or equivalent) website publicising the NSS with links to the website: http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/
* Encourage lecturers/tutors to ask students to participate in the NSS and explain that they have a key important 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 and further information are available on our Student Surveys NSS webpage;
* Encourage the student representatives and 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 2016, particularly when student groups took this on;
* Ask Heads of Departments, programme directors etc. to send an email message to students (suggested text below);
* Help ensure student awareness about changes the department has made in response to student feedback in the past;
* Ensure that staff are aware that students should be free to give honest feedback and not encouraged to give answers outside their own perceptions of their UCL experience (i.e. no link should be made between the NSS and league tables, or the value of their degrees). However departments are encouraged to speak to students about how to interpret the questions and understand the response scales;
* Encourage students to complete the NSS online, as it is more convenient for them to fill it in at their leisure, rather than be contacted by Ipsos MORI by phone. The sooner they complete, the fewer reminders they will receive!

## 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 and/or as part of Personal Tutoring meetings.
* Organise an NSS lunch in an undergraduate common room. Some departments use pizza or cake as an incentive.
* Use a “totaliser” system whereby donations will be provided to the student society for end of term activities, scaled according to the NSS response rate.
* 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

### 1) NSS posters and flyers

Flyers, A4 and A3 posters, and pens will be sent you during the week of 18 December (you will be contacted separately about ordering promotional materials).

### 2) Electronic publicity material

The following will be sent to all:

* 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 Tutor and key lecturers to 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

We will provide email templates, suggested text for tweets and social media posts, and key messages for communications to use at your discretion.

## NSS 2018 – response rate reward scheme

Professor Anthony Smith has kindly agreed to fund the successful NSS incentive scheme (suspended in NSS 2017) this year. All departments achieving at least a 65% response rate will receive a reward for their students between £250 and £1,500, depending on department size:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **No of students** | **Prize** |
| 0 – 49 | £250 |
| 50 – 99 | £400 |
| 100 – 149  | £650 |
| 150 – 199 | £1,000 |
| 200+ | £1,500 |

The money could be spent on a 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). Please note that students are not able to donate this money to charity. Prizes will be awarded quickly in order to ensure that the students taking part in this year’s survey benefit.

## NSS and the Teaching Excellence Framework

The National Student Survey (NSS) has been a powerful driver of change since its launch in 2010. Every cohort of students benefits from improvements brought about by the voice of previous students.

We have made great strides in participation rates in the NSS since 2010, achieving 79% in 2016, putting us in the top quartile in the country, and very near the top in comparison to other institutions of our size and complexity. This is thanks to the hard work of departments, in particular you in your roles as NSS Liaison Officers.

 As you know, the Students’ Union called for a boycott of the NSS in 2017 due to its proposed use in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics. As a result, we did not achieve the 50% required minimum response rate for publication of NSS data. After a national debate, **the Department for Education has confirmed that it will not link TEF ratings to tuition fees**. We will therefore be encouraging students to participate fully this year and we will do all we can to support you engage your students in this vital process. It is important that they are given the opportunity to shape the future of education at UCL without worrying that their responses will be used to penalise future students. Please reassure them, if they have concerns, that this is no longer the case.

## Contact us

If you wish to clarify anything in this guidance document or would like to speak to us about any aspect of NSS, surveys or student engagement at UCL, please contact the Student Engagement team:

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