National Student Survey 2024 - Liaison Officer Guidance

(Updated 12th January 2024)

Contents

The role of the NSS Liaison Officer/s

There is at least one NSS Liaison Officer (NSSLO) in each UCL department that has undergraduate students. The duties of the departmental NSSLO include:

- Ensure the correct students from the department are included in the National Student Survey (NSS) sample and advise the Student Engagement & Experience 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 & Experience team in coordinating NSS promotional activity;

- Monitor the departmental response rate updates from the Student Engagement & Experience team and consider potential measures for boosting local 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 & Experience team.

Key updates from last year

Following an Office for Students (OFS) review the NSS had some significant changes introduced in 2023. These changes have remained in place for NSS 2024. Importantly, the response rate scales for most of the questions have been revised, with students no longer responding to statements on a five-point '*Definitely agree > Definitely disagree*' scale.

Major changes to the survey included the removal of the summary question, 'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course,' the removal of the Learning Community section and the addition of questions on mental wellbeing services and freedom of expression.

The UCL-wide response rate target in the 2024 National Student Survey will be 70%.

The Office of the Vice-Provost (Education & Student Experience) will fund the NSS incentive scheme again this year. All departments achieving at least a 70% response rate will receive a reward to spend in consultation with final-year undergrads between £250 and £1,500, depending on the size of their NSS-eligible cohort. Further details can be found on p.7.

Digital A3 and A4 posters are available and will be distributed to departments by the Student Engagement & Experience team in January

Data Privacy and Security

Ipsos MORI have a full privacy statement with FAQs relating to the storage, handling of, and type of data collected. After the survey has finished in May 2024, all students' details will be removed from Ipsos MORI's computer systems.

NSS 2024 questionnaire

There are 27 core questions, relating to nine aspects of the student 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

You can find UCL's full NSS 2024 questionnaire here.

In addition to the core NSS questionnaire, UCL also asks students two UCL specific questions, which appear after completing the core questionnaire:

- *I would recommend UCL to others thinking of studying here*

- *I feel prepared for my next steps after UCL (i.e. I have a job, further study place or other activity confirmed)*

This year, UCL will also be including two extra, optional question banks from the Office for Students (OFS) in the survey:

- Students' Union (Association or Guild)

- Social Opportunities

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

NSS 2024 Key Dates

Date	Activity
22nd January	NSS 2024 opens for UCL
25th January	First invitation email sent to students (via Ipsos MORI)
29th January	Suggested email from Head of Department (or equivalent) to students
1st February	First response rate update sent (and weekly on Tuesdays thereafter)
1st February	SMS reminders sent to students (via Ipsos MORI)
8th February	Ipsos MORI begins telephoning non-responsive students (until end of survey)
8th February	Second reminder email sent to students (via Ipsos MORI)
w/c 12th February	*Reading week*
19th February	Suggested "welcome back" email from Head of Department (or equivalent) to students
15th March	SMS reminders sent to students (via Ipsos MORI)
17th March- 17th April	Email reminders sent to students (via Ipsos MORI) (weekly)
24th April	Final NSS 2024 reminder email (via Ipsos MORI)
30 April	NSS 2024 closes
Late July	Public release of results: at university-wide level and for programmes that meet 50% (and 10+ students) threshold for publication.
Early August	Internal release of faculty, department and programme-level results.
Mid / late August	Internal release of anonymised open text comments.

Response rate updates

You will be emailed weekly on Tuesdays from 17 January 2024 and the NSS [Response Rates Dashboard](#) will be updated with your faculty, departmental and programme response rates. **Please note that 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 was sent to Liaison Officers for checking on Monday 11th December, with a deadline for returns of Thursday 21st December 2023

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 2024**, **will still be surveyed** in the current year.

Students who were **already included in the NSS 2023 population will not be surveyed in 2024**, 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 who you think should be, you must let the Student Engagement & Experience team (student.engagement@ucl.ac.uk) know **by Thursday 21st December** 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 2024.

- 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 & Experience team (student.engagement@ucl.ac.uk) who can check previous years' lists.

Removals

The criteria for removal from the NSS 2024 population 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 Partnership team will notify all students that their details will be passed on for the purposes of NSS only, and will inform you if any of your students choose to opt-out). Students not wishing to participate can inform Ipsos MORI through the NSS website: www.thestudentsurvey.com.

- Student is repeating a year and will now graduate in 2025 (the student could take the survey in 2024, but if you'd 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 & Experience team (student.engagement@ucl.ac.uk) know if you become aware of any student in the above categories after returning your student list.

There is some scope for removing or adding students after the 21st December deadline, in the case of unforeseen circumstances.

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

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

Monitor the weekly response rate update and liaise with the Student Engagement & Experience team to take action to improve it as necessary. You will receive response rate updates if there are at least 10 students in the group (e.g. programme). A response rate of at least 50% and at least 10 total responses are required for results to be published.

Local promotion of the survey:

- Display NSS 2024 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/

- 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 2022, 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 also be worth mentioning to students that Ipsos MORI's reminder communications only go to students who have not yet completed the survey. Consequently, the sooner they complete their questionnaire, the fewer reminders they will receive.

Build understanding of appropriate / inappropriate influence:

NSSLOs should ensure that staff understand that promotion of the NSS is solely focussed on encouraging completions of the survey, 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 / or response scales. It is important that no link be made between the NSS and league tables, or the perceived value of their degrees.

Comprehensive guidance on steering clear of potential inappropriate influence can be found in Ipsos MORI's Good Practice Guide. Ipsos have also created a dedicated Help Card on Avoiding Inappropriate Influence.

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.

- 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 responses, as well as soliciting student ideas for how to spend the incentive money.

* Please let the Student Engagement & Experience team know of any of your own activities that may be good practice other departments can use and we will circulate them as examples of good practice.

Publicity tools

The following electronic publicity material will be hosted on the Teaching and Learning Portal in December for you to download:

1)   NSS posters and flyers

Digital A4 posters will be sent to your department in January 2024. The posters will be sent to your NSSLO, and you can print as many as you need.

2) Electronic publicity material

The following will be available on the [Teaching & Learning Portal](#):

- 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 to make use of it too. You can hyperlink the signature directly to the NSS.

The images can be re-designed into different sizes; please [contact the Student Engagement & Experience team](#) if you require this.

3) Email and social media assets

You can find Email templates, suggested text for tweets and social media posts, and key messages for communications to use at your discretion in the appendices of this guidance document. There will also be an image for an Instagram story.

There will also be images that will 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 2024 – response rate reward scheme

The Vice-Provost (Education & Student Experience) 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:

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 donation to the student society, an end of term party or other social occasion for the students, 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.

The funds must be spent by the end of UCL's financial year.

Please note that students are not able to donate this money to charity, due to UCL's own charity status.

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 & Experience team:

Sophia MacBlain (NSS Campaign Lead) s.macblain@ucl.ac.uk

Adil Chowdhury (Student Surveys Manager) adil.chowdhury@ucl.ac.uk

Appendix A

- **If a student has changed course, which course will they be surveyed under?**

  o 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 September 2024 will therefore not be reflected in the NSS.

- **If a student is repeating their penultimate year, will they be included in the survey?**

  o The student would be included in the survey sample as their expected completion date is 2023 and as such they would not be surveyed in their final year. Under OfS regulations, the student can be removed from the survey and asked to complete in 2024 instead. Please notify the Student Engagement & Experience 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?**

  o 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?**

  o You can request the removal of students that should not be on the target list for 2024. 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?**

  o 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?**

  o 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?**

  o You can request the addition of students if 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 2024 and 31 January 2025. 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 NSS.

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 (NSS) this year, which is open now to all undergraduate students in their final year across all programmes.

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, we have [insert details of local improvements here]

Best wishes, etc.

Appendix C - Key messages for lecturers

- The NSS opens on 22ⁿᵈ January 2024 to all final year undergraduates in the UK. Ipsos MORI will contact them by email on 26ᵗʰ January 2024.

- This is an opportunity for students to give their 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 written feedback.

- The survey is conducted externally and responses are completely anonymous.

- We read all the anonymised open text comments 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 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 message

Calling all UCL final year undergraduates: take 10 minutes to tell us about your experience of your degree programme and UCL! Take the survey now at www.thestudentsurvey.com [accompany with NSS image] Your views help shape the future of education at UCL.

Or retweet an NSS post from @UCL_teaching