

Consultation on the approach to publication of results of the National Student Survey

About you

In what capacity are you responding to the survey?

To provide an official response on behalf of a higher education provider, organisation or representative group

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, is it a:

Higher education provider

Which of the following best describes you?

Employee of a higher education provider

In regard to which country are your responses?

England

Questions for proposal 1: Publishing NSS results broadly in line with our previous approach to publication

Q1. To what extent do you agree with our proposals to publish NSS results at a sector and provider level?

We agree with the continued publication of results at a sector and provider level and that it would give prospective students insight on where to study; give providers context on how their data compares to the sector; and that it would incentivise providers to make improvements.

Q2. Do you agree with our general approach to determining publication thresholds?

There would be concern if published NSS data were based on low numbers and we would encourage keeping to the published thresholds and not changing these following analysis of the data. For example, there is no rationale for going below 10 individual students and prevents identification of individual respondents.

Q3. Are there any other considerations that we should take into account when determining publication thresholds, either now or in the future?

Ensure that the personal data of respondents is protected whenever changes to publication thresholds are made.

Q4. Do you agree with our general approach to determining whether we aggregate across years?

We agree with the general approach for determining whether to aggregate data across years. The general approach will be helpful in allowing data to be published for units where it otherwise could not be with the option to avoid aggregation when inappropriate due to factors such as the availability and stability of data.

Q5. Are there any other considerations that we should take into account when determining whether to aggregate across years?

Careful consideration should be given to whether aggregation will create complications in publishing the data and whether it will invalidate comparisons between years, providers and subject areas.

Q6. Please provide an explanation for your answers. If you consider that we should take a different approach, please explain how and the reasons for your view.

No further explanation needed.

Questions for proposal 2: Positivity measure for each question

Q7. Do you agree with proposals to use a positivity measure to present the NSS results? By 'positivity measure' we mean the proportion of respondents who answered the question using the first or second response option – that is, the more positive options.

We agree with the use of a positivity measure to present the NSS results. Having a summary measure for each question will make it easier to compare results across questions and to compare results year on year.

For some of the question responses in annex B of the consultation document it could be perceived that there is not an obvious "anchor" – where an answer changes from positive to negative. For example, with the "extent" scale it could be interpreted that there is no clear change from "Positive" to "Negative" between "To some extent" and "To a small extent".

In contrast, the responses of "Very good" and "Good" are both clearly Good/Positive whereas "Not very good" and "Not at all good" are both clearly Not good/Negative, so a positivity measure seems more obvious for questions with these responses (and those where good is substituted for clear, easy, well etc..)

Q8. Please provide an explanation for your answer. If you consider that we should take a different approach, please explain how and the reasons for your view.

No further explanation needed.

Questions for proposal 3: Publication of theme measures

Q9. Do you agree with our proposal to delay publication to autumn of question grouping until we can undertake statistical testing of their integrity?

We agree with the publication of results for thematic groups as this streamlines the data and makes it easier to evaluate while at the same time maintaining detail through the individual questions. While it is important to ensure the integrity of the data through statistical testing this should be done so that all results are published together, rather than in two stages as proposed. As the survey has closed the analysis could in theory be undertaken now. This would avoid duplication of work by providers and avoid causing confusion for prospective students.

Q10. What will the impact of a delayed publication of question grouping have on users?

Delayed publication will require users to revisit and re-evaluate the data and few users may be willing to do this. It is also likely that many prospective students will be unaware of this delayed publication. For institutions the delayed publication will create duplication of work where analysis of the data and production of results dashboards will need to be repeated with the results for the thematic groups. This will result in an increased burden on providers which is not in line with the OfS's mandate to reduce burden. This would be avoided were the thematic group results to be published at the same time as the results for the individual questions. There is also the risk that providers and league table compilers will calculate their own question grouping data, using the NSS question groupings. These results will differ from the delayed publication as the proposed methodology uses individualised respondent data and providers receive aggregated data. This could create confusion around the data for users e.g. prospective students. League table compilers will want to publish their rankings without delays and they may not incorporate the question group scores in their calculations if they are published at a later date. It is recognised though that to inform student choice the NSS results will need to be published in a timely way so that prospective students, and those advising them who will not be familiar with the new format, have time to digest the information. Publishing all NSS results (individual questions and question groupings) together as early as possible would therefore be welcome.

Questions for proposal 4: Splits of data presented on the OfS website**Q11. Do you agree with the proposal to expand the current splits at sector level?**

We agree with the proposal to expand the current splits at sector level. Expanding the splits at sector level serves to further highlight differences between different student groups and encourage action to be taken to address any areas of concern across the sector. The sector level data will also allow providers to contextualise their own data.

Q12. Please provide an explanation for your answers. If you consider that we should take a different approach, please explain how and the reasons for your view.

No further explanation needed.

Q13. Do you agree with the proposal to expand the current splits at provider level?

We agree with the proposal to expand the current splits at provider level. Expanding the splits at provider level will serve to further highlight differences between different student groups and encourage action to be taken to address any areas of concern within a provider. The expanded splits will also make it easier for providers to compare their NSS data with other sector data publications.

Q14. Please provide an explanation for your answers. If you consider that we should take a different approach, please explain how and the reasons for your view.

No further explanation needed.

Questions for proposal 5: Benchmarks**Q15. Do you agree with the factors used in our proposals for benchmarking?**

There are concerns in benchmarking with one year's data only, when there could be small numbers in some instances. We would encourage the benchmarking to be carried out as an unpublished pilot for the first year at least, to give time to assess and amend the process to avoid any unintended consequences.

Q16. Please provide an explanation for your answer. If you consider that we should take a different approach, please explain how and the reasons for your view.

No further explanation needed.

Questions for proposal 6: Healthcare, allied health and clinical practice placement questions

Q17. Do you agree with our proposed approach for the publication of questions relating to healthcare, allied health and clinical practice placements?

We agree with the proposed approach for the publication of these questions. It is important to ensure that these questions are being completed by relevant students and that their responses are meaningful.

Q18. Please provide an explanation for your answer. If you consider that we should take a different approach, please explain how and the reasons for your view.

No further explanation needed.

Other questions on the consultation

Q19. Are there aspects of the proposals you found unclear? If so, please specify which, and tell us why.

No comment

Q20. In your view, are there ways in which the objectives of this consultation could be delivered more efficiently or effectively than proposed here?

No comment

Q21. What effect will the proposals have on:
a. opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language?
b. treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

No comment

Q22. How could proposals be changed so that the policy decision would impact positively on, or not impact negatively on:
a. opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language?
b. treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

No comment