**National Student Survey 2015 – Academic staff briefing**

Edinburgh Napier University will be participating in the National Student Survey (NSS) for the sixth time in 2015. The survey is open to final year undergraduate students and is administered by the research agency Ipsos MORI. It runs from 12 January– 30 April 2015, but we want to encourage students to complete it as soon as possible.

This briefing provides details of the survey to help staff discuss the NSS with final year undergraduate students and highlights action which can be taken at department level to encourage participation. In 2014 we increased participation by 9% from 68% to 77% so your help is definitely making a difference. Overall satisfaction went up to 85%.

The University has decided to donate to Edinburgh Cyrenians charity every time a survey has been completed in order to incentivise participation. This charity was chosen by the students via the NSA, however it is the University giving the donation. This will work on a sliding scale, for every survey completed from 12 January – 6 February a £5 donation will be made, it will then decrease to £3.50 from 7 – 28 February and then the donation will be £2.50 until the end. Last year we raised £7,300 for CHAS and the money was used to buy toys, games and craft materials for one year at the hospice, which helped to create precious memories for the children, young people and their families.

There will also be a prize draw for students who complete the survey online before 28 February 2015. Prizes up for grabs are a Zoo Keeper Experience Day, a mini iPad and a Kindle.

**Central University-wide promotion**

A number of activities will be undertaken to promote the 2015 NSS. This year we have chosen a piggy bank theme which will be on our communications materials. These include:

* Promotional activities by the NSA, including shout outs in lecturers if your require these
* Posters on campus
* Details on myNapier, Nimweb, Moodle, Screensavers
* Emails to students and staff
* Details on social networking sites
* Postcards delivered to students’ home addresses
* Flyers handed out by students
* Plasma screen promotion
* Badges and Percy Pig sweets handed out by students
* Pig totaliser showing how much has been raised so far for our chosen charity (after the 28 Feb)

**Your role**

It is critically important that academic staff communicate to their students regarding the survey and encourage them to take part. There is flexibility when promoting the survey to students, this can be done in the first week of the survey or the 10th, depending on how it fits into each programme.

Colleagues who are teaching students are asked to:

* talk to their students about the purpose of the Survey (a PowerPoint slide has been made available which can be included at the end of lecture slides).
* encourage students to reflect on their whole experience and not necessarily what has just happened in the past few weeks.
* draw attention to the action that has been taken as a result of the feedback from the 2014 NSS to illustrate how it is making a difference.
* ask them to check their student email account for an email from Ipsos MORI.
* encourage students to complete promptly if they want to be eligible for the charity donation, this will also avoid a telephone call from Ipsos MORI.
* Where appropriate allow ‘Shout outs’ within lectures from class reps who will be asked to promote the NSS. These have been undertaken by Heads of School and also the NSA Student President.
* Where possible, set aside 5 – 10 minutes at the end of relevant classes to allow students to complete the survey during that time.

Other successful ideas in the past have included:

* Taking survey completion register in classes.
* Discussing last year’s feedback with current students.
* Setting up a bank of PCs on campus and employing student ambassadors to encourage students to complete the survey at that point. Additional incentives of a free cup of coffee have also been provided.
* Encouraging cohorts of students to complete the survey during induction sessions, again the additional incentive of a free coffee has also been used here.
* Email contact from the Head of School encouraging students to participate (sample lists of the students eligible to take part on a school by school basis have been made available).
* Ask all dissertation supervisors to make sure their students do it.

Please note: The Ipsos MORI NSS 2015 Guidance for Institutions and Students’ Unions has highlighted the need for local promotion of the NSS to be neutral. It is not acceptable for links between the NSS, League Tables and the perceived value of students’ degrees to be made in any promotional information.

Following the survey launch response rates will regularly be monitored and reported to Deans, Deputy/Associate/Assistant Deans and Heads of School. If response rates are low in a particular area you may have to give further encouragement to students to complete the survey. Remember a ***50% response rate and a minimum of 23 students*** responding have to be achieved for results to be published.

**What is the NSS?**

The NSS is commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and conducted on its behalf by Ipsos MORI. Currently the NSS is conducted in all HEIs and FEIs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland participation is optional; however the majority of HEIs in Scotland have now chosen to participate.

Students are asked the extent to which they agree with a series of 23 questions about their course. The questions asked can be found in Appendix 1. Responses are rated on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= Definitely agree, 2= Mostly agree disagree, 3= Neither, 4= Mostly disagree, 5= Definitely disagree) or ‘not applicable’. The questions cover six main categories of learning and teaching. These include:

* Teaching on the Course (4 questions)
* Assessment and Feedback (5 questions)
* Academic Support (3 questions)
* Organisation and Management (3 questions)
* Learning Resources (3 questions)
* Personal Development (3 questions)

In addition the following questions are also asked:

* Overall Satisfaction (Q22)
* Student Association Question (Q23)

After answering the 23 questions which they are given the opportunity to respond to an open ended question highlighting any particular positive or negative aspects of their teaching and learning experience.

The same question set is used each year which allows directly comparable results and changes in student views over time to be identified.

Two thresholds have to be achieved for results to be published – a 50% response rate, and a minimum of 23 students responding.  The results are presented using the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) subject codes.  Results are available at the following levels –

* Overall School Level
* Subject Level
* Course Level (where a minimum of 10 students have completed the survey)

The NSS results are published on the Unistats website at [www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com), which is run by UCAS (on behalf of the Funding Council). It allows potential students and their advisors to compare subjects at universities and colleges in the UK to help applicants make choices about what and where to study. The results are also used when league table positions are being calculated.

1. **Why is the NSS Important?**

The survey has two key purposes:

* It provides feedback from final year students to departments that helps them pinpoint areas for change and the enhancement of teaching and learning – including assessment practices.
* It provides potential students and their advisers with an insight into the learning experience in different universities to help them make the right choice about what and where to study.

1. **What was the response to last year’s survey for the University?**

Please click [here](https://staffworkplace.napier.ac.uk/Services/SAS/Market-Intelligence-and-Evaluation/Market%20Research/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FServices%2FSAS%2FMarket%2DIntelligence%2Dand%2DEvaluation%2FMarket%20Research%2FNational%20Student%20Survey%2FNSS%202014) to see the analysis of last year’s survey.

1. **How are we using the results from 2013 and 2014?**

Action on Assessment and Feedback continues to be an institutional priority following the launch of the feedback for learning campaign and LTA resource bank in 2010. Further details on this campaign are available via the following link: [www.url.napier.ac.uk\feedbackforlearning](http://www.url.napier.ac.uk\feedbackforlearning)

Following on from the 2013 and 2014 NSS results each school has considered the issues raised within the survey with a view to enhancing the student experience. The NSS performance is a key indicator in planning processes. Results from the NSS and other student experience feedback are now included within the annual module and programme monitoring process. The reflective commentary template asks for comment on the outcome of evaluation which has been undertaken and identification of areas for future development.

1. **Arrangements for the NSS 2015**

The arrangements for the NSS 2015 are as follows:

* Final year students have been given the opportunity to opt out and the remaining 2,266 students will be invited to participate in NSS 2015.
* The survey for the University’s final year students will launch on **12 January 2015**. Students who are eligible to take part will receive an email from Ipsos MORI about the survey with a direct web link to the questionnaire.
* Students are given three weeks to complete the survey online. Non-completion during the first three weeks means a hard copy form will be sent to students’ term time address (the option of completing online remains).
* Non-completion within a further two week period means telephone contact by Ipsos begins (again, the option of completing online remains). Telephoning will commence on 16 February 2015.
* The survey will close on 30 April 2015.
* The University receives the results in August 2015.

1. **Promotion of the NSS**

If you have any questions about this information or have any ideas or advice that you think would be worth sharing more widely in the University please contact Nicola Kivlichan – Head of Market Intelligence & Evaluation ([n.kivlichan@napier.ac.uk](mailto:n.kivlichan@napier.ac.uk) or Ext 5007).

See Appendix 2 for a timeline of activities.

1. **NSS Sample**

Students eligible to take part in the 2015 NSS are contained in the sample list which is generated from the 2013/14 HESA data.

**Eligibility**

* Final year students and equivalent
  + students expected to be in their final year
  + students on flexible programmes where the final year cannot be predicted, after they have undertaken more than one FTE and not before their third year of study
* Part-time and full-time students
  + all full-time students registered at participating institutions
  + all part-time students registered at participating institutions

Students cannot be removed from the sample list but can be excluded if they fall into one of the following three categories:

* Students who are deceased
* Students with serious health difficulties (including mental health difficulties), where seeking a response may be distressing for the student.
* Students who have informed Edinburgh Napier that they wish to opt out of the survey.
* It will not be possible to add additional students to the population list when the survey has commenced.
* Undergraduates who are expected to be in their final year are eligible to complete the survey (this includes both full and part time students).
* The students eligible to complete the survey are due to complete their course between **1 February 2015** and **31 January 2016** (inclusive).
* Students are not eligible to take part if they fall into one of the following categories:
  + Students on programmes that do not lead to undergraduate qualifications or credits.
  + Students on courses lasting one year (this includes direct entry students who will only study at Edinburgh Napier for one year).
  + Any students who were eligible for the 2014 NSS survey (whether they responded or not).

**The Cyrenians charity**

* ﻿Edinburgh Cyrenians is an independent Scottish Charity which was founded from a deep concern for people who felt as though they were on the outside of society and thought that they had no way back in.
* Cyrenians vision is of an inclusive society where we all have the opportunities to live valued and fulfilling lives. We travel towards our vision by supporting people excluded from family, home, work or community on their life journey.
* The Cyrenian philosophy is one of journeying together on the road to change. Where one of us stumbles, the other will wait, lift their neighbour up again and once again walk on together.
* Cyrenians also has a care for the environment in which that journey happens. A sustainable future needs a sustainable planet.

**Appendix 1 – National Student Survey Questions**

Final year students will be asked to respond to the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= Definitely agree, 2= Mostly agree, 3= Neither, 4= Mostly disagree, 5= Definitely disagree)

**Teaching on Course**

1, Staff are good at explaining things

2, Staff have made the subject interesting

3, Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching

4, The course is intellectually stimulating

**Assessment and Feedback**

5, The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance

6, Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair

7, Feedback on my work has been prompt

8, I have received detailed comments on my work

9, Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand

**Academic Support**

10, I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies

11, I have been able to contact staff when I needed to

12, Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices

**Organisation and Management**

13, The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned

14, Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively

15, The course is well organised and running smoothly

**Learning Resources**

16, The library resources and services are good enough for my needs

17, I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to

18, I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities or rooms when I needed to

**Personal Development**

19, The course has helped me present myself with confidence

20, My communication skills have improved

21, As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems

**Overall Satisfaction**

22, Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course

**Student Association**

23, I am satisfied with the Students' Union (Association or Guild) at my institution

**Appendix 2 – NSS 2015 Timelines**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **12 Jan 2015** | **Launch of Survey** |
| **On-line phase**  **Week 1** | 12 – 16 Jan 2015 | * Email sent to students from Ipsos MORI. * Centralised and departmental promotion to encourage student participation. * Postcards sent to term time addresses * Charity donation display * Email sent to students from Vice Principal * Social media |
| **Week 2** | 19 – 23 Jan 2015 | * Reminder email sent to students who have not yet responded – sent from Ipsos MORI. * Emails sent to students from NSA * Social media * Charity donation display |
| **Week 3** | 26 Jan – 30 Jan 2015 | * Reminder text sent to students who have not yet responded with the NSS website address – sent from Ipsos MORI. * Social media * Email from academics * Charity donation display |
| **Postal phase**  **Weeks 4 + 5** | 2 – 13 Feb 2015 | * Ipsos MORI sends students who have not yet replied, a postal questionnaire, along with a reply-paid envelope. * On-line survey remains open for completion. * Charity donation display |
| **Telephone interviews phase**  **Week 6 to close of survey** | 16 Feb – end April 2015 | * Ipsos Mori contacts students who have not yet replied using the telephone contact details provided by Edinburgh Napier. * On-line survey remains open for completion. * Entry to prize draw for an i-Pad, kindle or zoo keeper experience. * Charity donation display |
| **Results Phase** | August 2015 | * Results received and analysed. * Results reported to ULT. * Results distributed to Deans, Deputy/Associate/Assistant Deans and Heads of School. |