

SFC Statistical publication

Student Satisfaction and Engagement 2015-16 (Experimental Statistics: data being developed)

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Summary: This publication provides summary information on the satisfaction and engagement of college students in Scotland, thereby supporting the Scottish Funding Council's work with colleges on outcome agreements.

FAO: Principals and Directors of Scotland's colleges

Further information:

Contact: Kenny Wilson
Directorate: Funding (Data Collections)
Tel: 0131 313 6509
Email: kwilson@sfc.ac.uk



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

Scottish Funding Council
Apex 2
97 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD
T 0131 313 6500
F 0131 313 6501
www.sfc.ac.uk

Contents

Executive summary.....	3
Introduction.....	6
Overview of pilot survey.....	7
Survey response rates	7
Survey results.....	8
Table A: Summary results including satisfaction percentage by question for full-time students	9
Table B: Summary results including satisfaction percentage by question for part-time students.....	9
Table C: Summary results including satisfaction percentage by question for distance / flexible students	10
Chart 1: Summary responses by question for full-time mode of attendance students	11
Chart 2: Summary responses by question for part-time mode of attendance students	12
Chart 3: Summary responses by question for distance / flexible mode of attendance students.....	13
Annex A: Timeline of student satisfaction and engagement survey pre-pilot development stages	14
Annex B: Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Pilot Questions	15

Executive summary

1. This publication provides summary information on the satisfaction and engagement of college students in Scotland, thereby supporting the Scottish Funding Council's work with colleges on outcome agreements.
2. This is the first publication of the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES)¹ for Scotland's colleges and covers the academic year 2015-16, reporting on students across all modes of attendance.
3. The overall 'satisfaction measures' gathered and reported from the 2015-16 academic year will be used as the Student Satisfaction and Engagement baseline data for the [2017-18 Outcome Agreement measure 9](#).
4. The main summary results are as follows:

Full-time courses:

- The overall survey response rate for full-time student was 36.8% (25,981 responses from a total full-time student sample population at the point of survey of 70,529).
- The proportion of full-time students with overall satisfaction with their college experience is 90.1%.

Part-time courses:

- The overall response rate for part-time students was 11.3% (5,138 responses from a total part-time student sample population at the point of survey of 45,604).
- The proportion of part-time students with overall satisfaction with their college experience is 93.1%.

Distance / Flexible courses²:

- The overall response rate for distance / flexible students was 6.4% (354 responses from a total distance / flexible student sample population at the point of survey of 5,550).

¹ The SSES consists of 10 questions, the first nine questions relating to student satisfaction with question 10 on engagement with the Students' Association.

² Due to the very low number of returns from students on distance / flexible courses care should be taken when making comparisons since small numbers can create large percentage differentials.

- The proportion of distance / flexible students with overall satisfaction with their college experience was 88.1%.

All modes of attendance groupings:

- The satisfaction question that elicited the highest satisfaction level across the three modes of attendance groupings was “*staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning*”, where the proportion of students satisfied is 94.2% for full-time, 95.8% for part-time and 90.7% for distance / flexible.
 - The satisfaction question that elicited the lowest satisfaction level across the three modes of attendance groupings was “*I believe that student suggestions are taken seriously*” where the proportion of students satisfied is 74.1% for full-time, 76.1% for part-time and 79.7% for distance / flexible.
 - For the engagement question “*The College Students’ Association influences change for the better*”, the average satisfaction across full-time and part-time students is 60%.
5. The statistics in this report are classed as ‘Experimental Statistics – data being developed’ which are defined in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics as: ‘new official statistics undergoing evaluation that are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development as a means to build in quality at an early stage’.
6. We will continue to develop the collection quality assurance processes and to refine and to improve the completeness and robustness of these data. Other key areas for development include:
- Expanding coverage to include Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) groups – including Senior Phase provision primarily based on College campus.
 - Working with the National Union of Students Scotland (NUS Scotland) and Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs) to further support Students’ Associations in their role of promoting student engagement with the survey and how to consider and make best use of the resulting data for improving the student experience.
 - Increasing response rates particularly for part-time and distance / flexible courses.
 - Extending the collection to allow results to be analysed by level of study (FE and HE).

- Progressing work on the use of unique identifiers and data linkage to combine data with appropriate student data already collected by SFC.
7. We would welcome feedback on the above and any other aspects of the report in order to improve the quality and usefulness for users. Please pass any comments to Kenny Wilson, email: kwilson@sfc.ac.uk.

Introduction

8. As part of the development of a national performance framework for outcome agreements in 2013, the Quality Thematic Group³ considered approaches to student satisfaction and engagement. Following on from this earlier work, SFC commenced the development of a national approach to monitoring student satisfaction and engagement in the college sector.
9. Evidence gathered had suggested that there was significant variation across the sector in both practice and processes used to evidence student satisfaction and engagement; a national approach to monitoring student satisfaction and engagement would help to create a consistent sectoral measure and contribute to quality improvement. In addition, a national approach to monitoring student satisfaction would provide a consistent basis for college regions to evidence impact and improvement within their outcome agreements.
10. In 2014 work commenced to develop, with the support of the college sector and other key agencies, a national student satisfaction and engagement survey that would collect and report on summary satisfaction and engagement data from colleges.
11. The pre-pilot phase included: the setting up of a Working Group; a sector consultation; the development, informal testing and cognitive testing of an initial survey question set; and the pre-pilot surveying of full-time college students by 16 volunteer colleges. Annex A - provides a timeline and detail of the pre-pilot phase development stages.
12. SFC worked closely with colleges during 2014 and 2015 to build capacity and to share 'good practice' so that all college regions were confident that they could achieve a meaningful response rate when the survey came on-stream in 2016. A target response rate of 50% was set for the SSES which is in line with the target response rate for the [National Student Survey](#)⁴ (NSS).
13. The NSS does not include the surveying of students in Scotland's colleges.

³ The college thematic groups involved colleges and SFC collaborating between January and May 2013 to review how we measure impact across each of SFC's outcome agreement priorities. Outcome agreements were introduced in AY 2012-13, and are intended to enable SFC and colleges to demonstrate the impact of the sector and its contribution to meeting Scottish Government priorities.

⁴ The National Student Survey (NSS) gathers students' opinions on the quality of their courses. The NSS has been capturing final-year undergraduate students' feedback on their course experience since 2005. The purpose of this is to contribute to public accountability, help inform the choices of prospective students and provide data that assists institutions in enhancing the student experience.

14. Following feedback received from the 2015 pre-pilot survey and after further sector consultation a final set of 10 questions was developed. Annex B - outlines the survey questions used in the 2016 full pilot survey.
15. The pilot survey in 2016 was extended to include all colleges and to additionally cover students on courses with part-time and distance / flexible modes of attendance.
16. For further information on the SSES, read the pilot survey guidance - [College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Guidance 2015-16](#)

Overview of pilot survey

Survey response rates

17. We were anticipating achieving a sector target response rate of at least 50%. Although this was felt to be an ambitious target, we were hopeful that Students' Associations would play a significant part in promoting awareness and engagement with the survey.
18. The overall response rates achieved were lower than the 50% target across all the course mode of attendance groupings and, as expected, the higher response rates were for full-time students and the lowest for the distance / flexible students who have little or no physical college attendance:
 - Full-time students overall response rate – 36.8% (25,981 responses from a total full-time student sample population at the point of survey of 70,529).
 - Part-time students overall response rate – 11.3% (5,138 responses from a total part-time student sample population at the point of survey of 45,604).
 - Distance / Flexible students overall response rate – 6.4% (354 responses from a total distance / flexible student sample population at the point of survey of 5,550).
19. Response rates across colleges were extremely varied and ranged from under 5% to over 75%. Two colleges failed to administer the survey and a number did not survey students on part-time and / or distance / flexible courses. Two colleges omitted to include one question from the survey in error.
20. The response rate across colleges for students on distance / flexible courses was low. It was agreed that the data is valuable as it gives full survey coverage of all college students so, it should remain (see footnote 2).

Survey results

21. The colleges returned summary results for the ten survey questions. The first nine questions relate to student satisfaction with question 10 on engagement with the Students' Association. Tables 1 to 3 present the percentage results for the three mode of attendance groups (full-time, part-time, distance / flexible) for the ten questions together with a 'satisfaction level' percentage that is the combined figure for "*Strongly Agree*" and "*Agree*" responses.
22. Although most questions elicited a combined satisfaction of "*Strongly Agree*" and "*Agree*" response of 80% and above, question 8 "*I believe student suggestions are taken seriously*"; 74.1% full-time, 76.1% part-time, 79.7% distance / flexible and question 10 "*The College Students' Association influences change for the better*"; 59.4% full-time, 60.1% part-time, 39.9% distance / flexible gave poorer satisfaction responses across all three modes of attendance groups.
23. Question 10, "*The College Students' Association influences change for the better*", allows for a 'don't know' response, enabling students with no information / experience to base their answer (for example, if a student was on a distance / flexible learning course with little or no physical college attendance). It also acts as a gauge to the effectiveness of student engagement with and awareness of the Students' Association, particularly for full-time and substantive part-time courses.
24. As would be expected the percentage of 'don't know' responses increased across mode of attendance from full-time (25.0%) to part-time (31.2%) to distance / flexible (53.2%). However, it is surprising that a quarter of full-time students responded that they didn't know whether or not the college Students' Association influences change for the better although the size of the responding group may be masking a more positive result.
25. Charts 1 to 3 provide a breakdown of summary responses for the ten survey questions across the three modes of attendance groups.
26. On a number of questions there is a significant variation in the ratings across colleges. We report only on summary data however, to contribute to quality improvement we have provided colleges with their results for each question benchmarked to the other colleges and the overall sector data.

Table A: Summary results including satisfaction percentage by question for full-time students

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) Summary Return for 2015-16								
College Name	Scotland	% Satisfied	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total Question Response
Mode grouping	Group A - Full-time							
Survey Sample Number	70,529							
Survey Response %	36.84%							
SSES summary question results		15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.		90.1%	39.8%	50.3%	8.0%	2.0%		100.0%
2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.		80.5%	30.8%	49.8%	16.3%	3.2%		100.0%
3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.		94.2%	48.9%	45.3%	4.4%	1.4%		100.0%
4. I am able to influence learning on my course.		85.6%	30.9%	54.7%	11.9%	2.5%		100.0%
5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.		83.9%	34.9%	49.0%	13.0%	3.0%		100.0%
6. The way I'm taught helps me learn.		84.7%	32.9%	51.8%	12.3%	3.1%		100.0%
7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.		88.8%	43.9%	44.9%	8.6%	2.6%		100.0%
8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.		74.1%	24.8%	49.3%	19.7%	6.3%		100.0%
9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.		82.0%	38.5%	43.6%	12.8%	5.2%		100.0%
10. The college Students' Association influences change for the better.		59.4%	19.2%	40.3%	11.3%	4.3%	25.0%	100.0%

Table B: Summary results including satisfaction percentage by question for part-time students

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) Summary Return for 2015-16								
College Name	Scotland	% Satisfied	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total Question Response
Mode grouping	Group B - part-time							
Survey Sample Number	45,604							
Survey Response %	11.27%							
SSES summary question results		15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.		93.1%	44.1%	49.0%	5.5%	1.4%		100.0%
2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.		86.0%	38.0%	48.0%	11.8%	2.1%		100.0%
3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.		95.8%	49.1%	46.7%	3.3%	0.9%		100.0%
4. I am able to influence learning on my course.		90.4%	36.3%	54.2%	8.1%	1.4%		100.0%
5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.		87.6%	40.8%	46.7%	10.4%	2.1%		100.0%
6. The way I'm taught helps me learn.		89.6%	41.5%	48.1%	8.2%	2.2%		100.0%
7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.		91.0%	46.7%	44.3%	7.1%	1.9%		100.0%
8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.		76.1%	29.7%	46.3%	21.2%	2.7%		100.0%
9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.		89.9%	46.0%	43.9%	7.7%	2.4%		100.0%
10. The college Students' Association influences change for the better.		60.1%	23.1%	37.0%	6.2%	2.5%	31.2%	100.0%

Table C: Summary results including satisfaction percentage by question for distance / flexible students

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) Summary Return for 2015-16								
College Name	Scotland	% Satisfied	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total Question Response
Mode grouping	Group C - Distance/Flexible							
Survey Sample Number	5,550							
Survey Response %	6.38%							
SSES summary question results		15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.		88.1%	36.7%	51.4%	8.8%	3.1%		100.0%
2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.		72.2%	24.7%	47.4%	22.4%	5.4%		100.0%
3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.		90.7%	36.7%	54.0%	7.1%	2.3%		100.0%
4. I am able to influence learning on my course.		82.5%	26.3%	56.2%	13.3%	4.2%		100.0%
5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.		82.4%	30.5%	51.8%	12.9%	4.8%		100.0%
6. The way I'm taught helps me learn.		81.5%	25.7%	55.8%	15.0%	3.4%		100.0%
7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.		84.9%	33.5%	51.4%	11.9%	3.1%		100.0%
8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.		79.7%	23.2%	56.4%	16.3%	4.0%		100.0%
9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.		86.4%	33.5%	52.8%	10.2%	3.4%		100.0%
10. The college Students' Association influences change for the better.		39.9%	9.6%	30.3%	4.7%	2.2%	53.2%	100.0%

Chart 1: Summary responses by question for full-time mode of attendance students

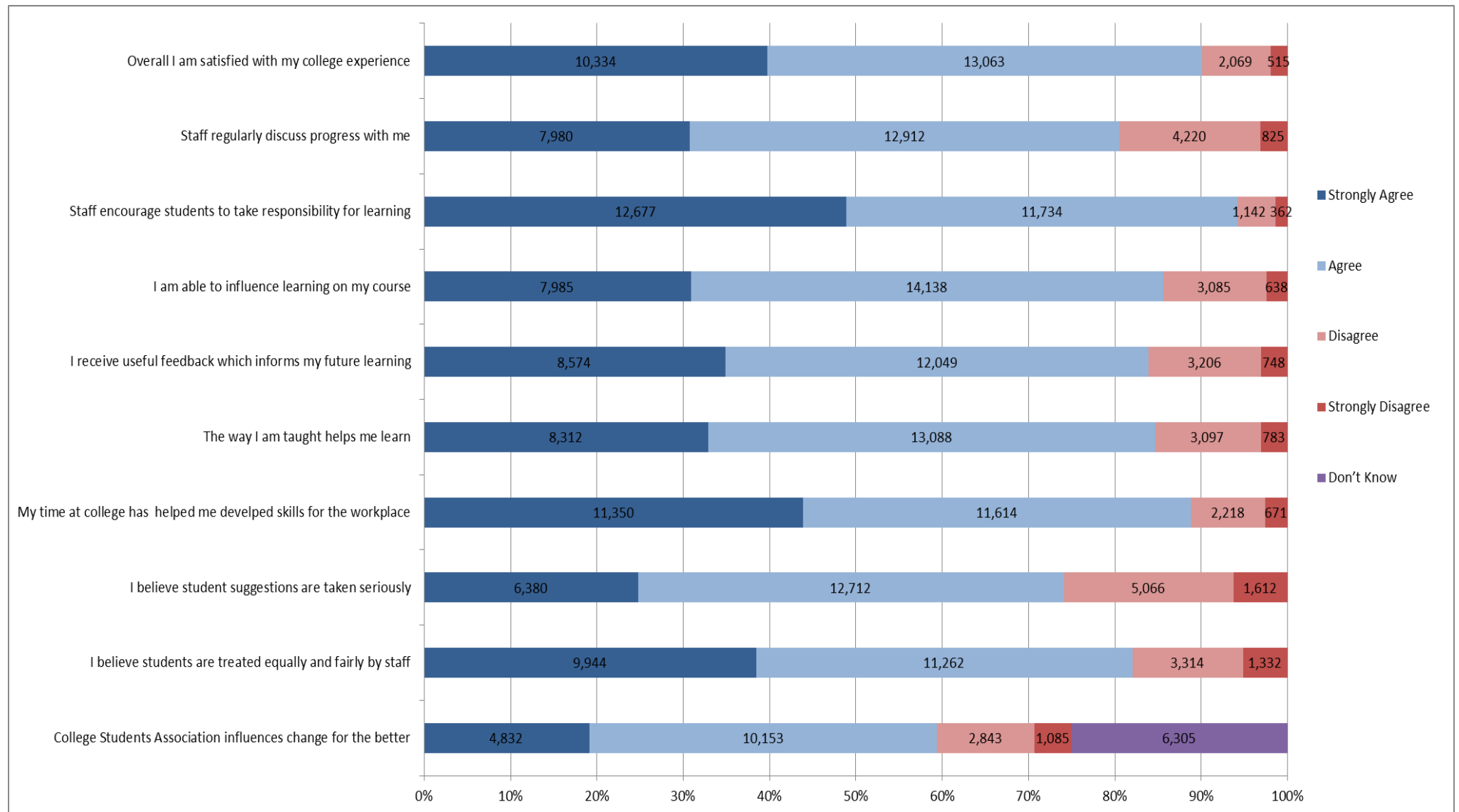


Chart 2: Summary responses by question for part-time mode of attendance students

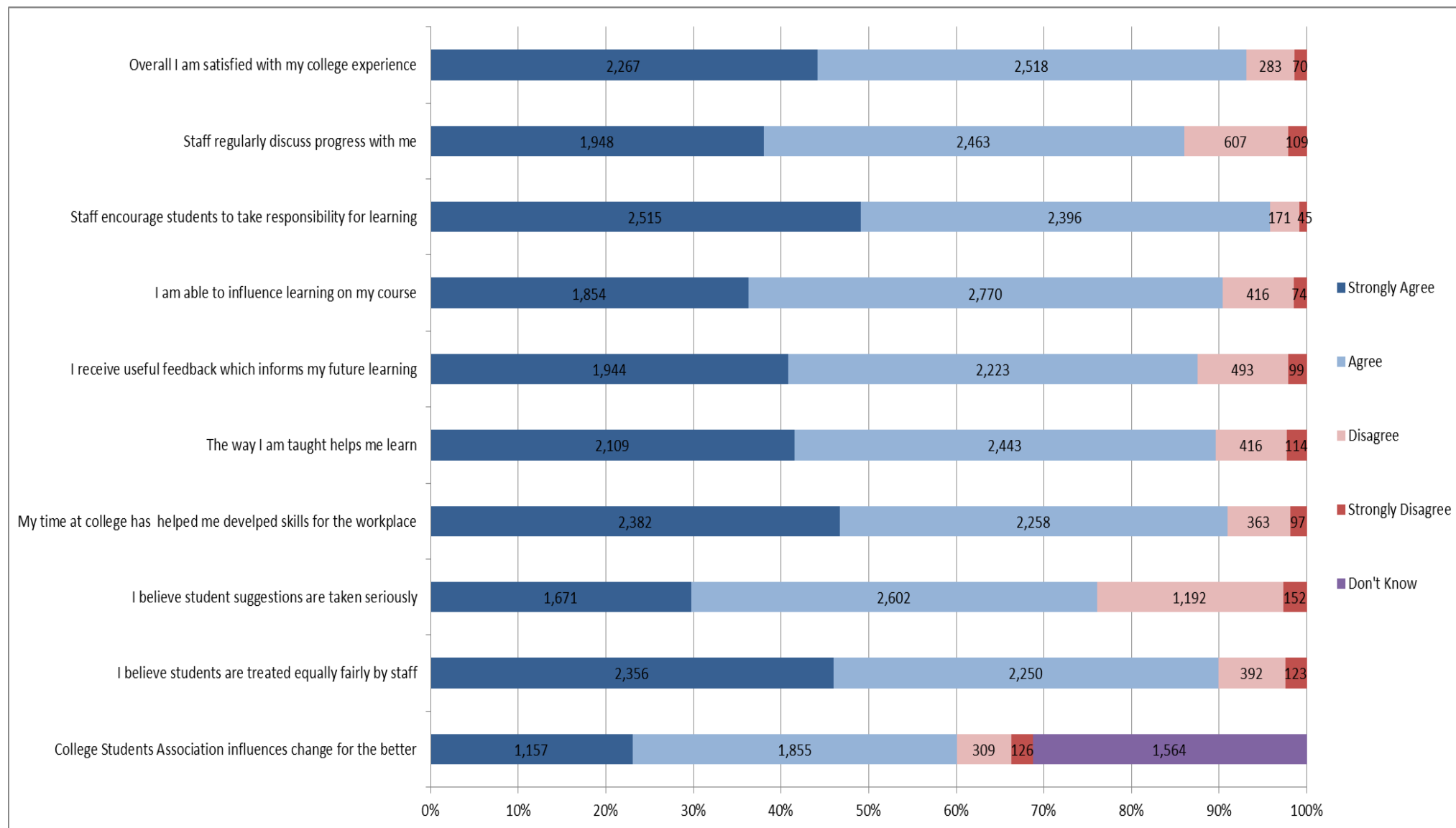
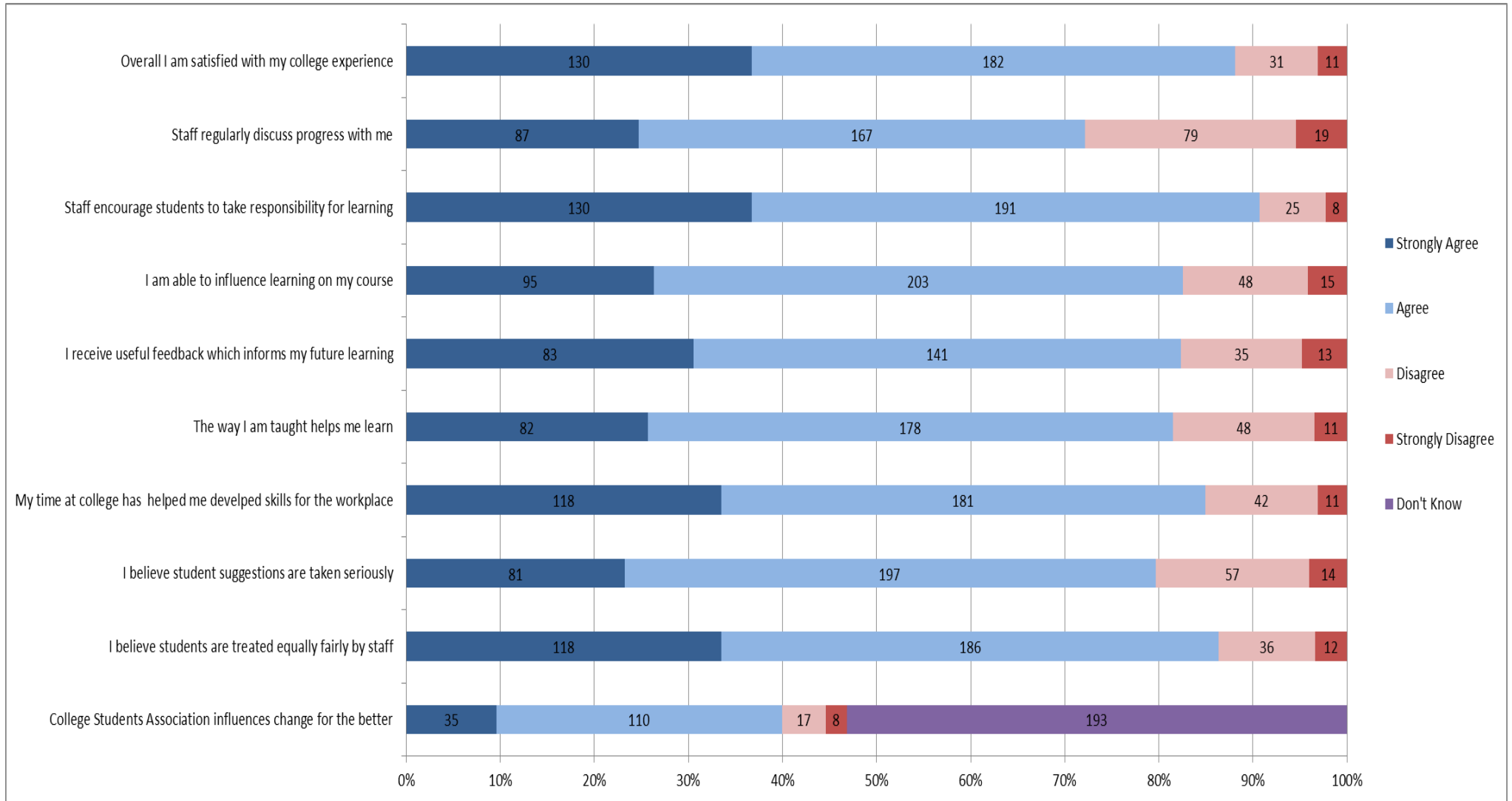
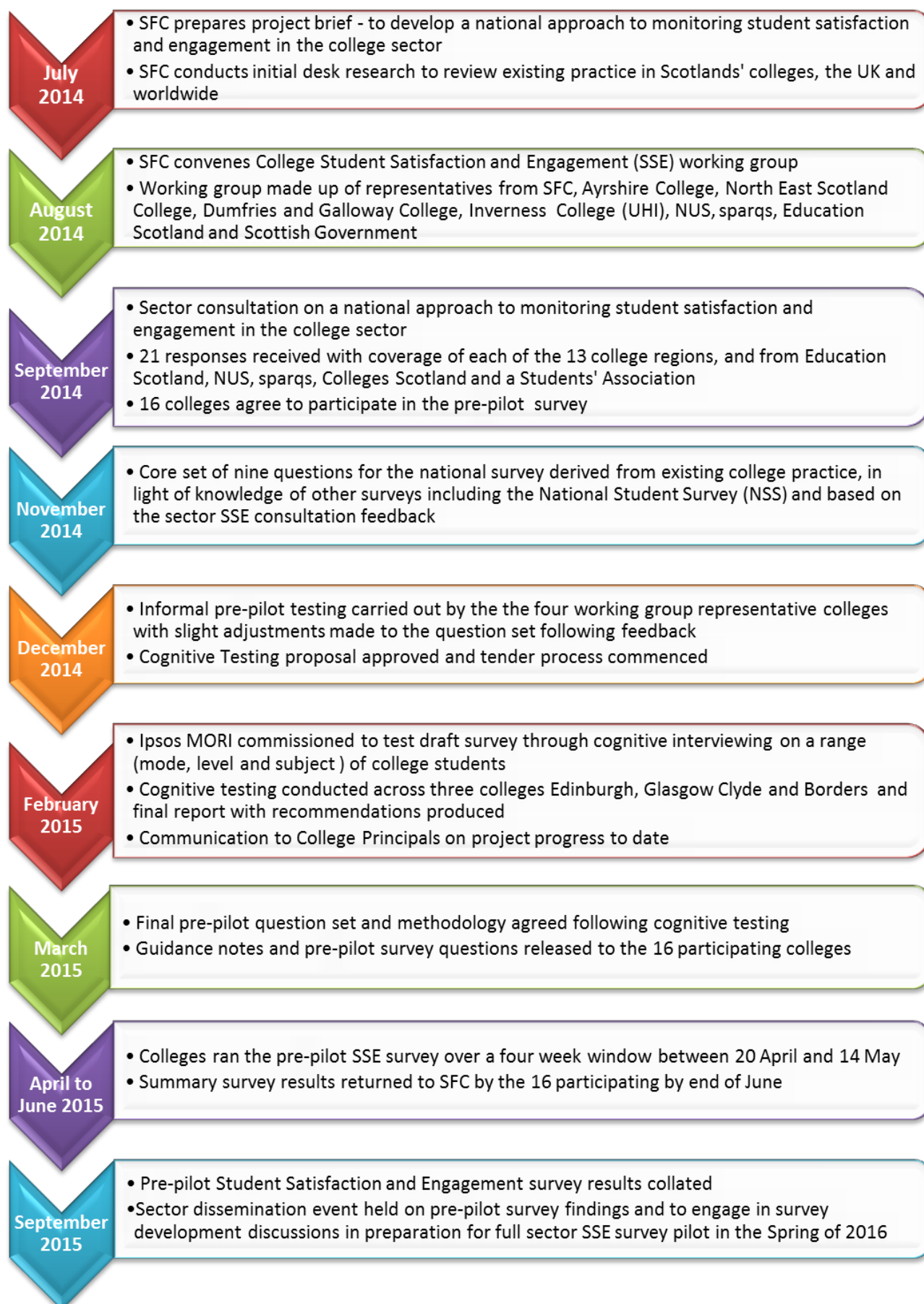


Chart 3: Summary responses by question for distance / flexible mode of attendance students



Annex A: Timeline of student satisfaction and engagement survey pre-pilot development stages



Annex B: Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Pilot Questions

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey

Colleges are committed to constantly improving the student experience and especially the quality of the learning and teaching. This survey aims to assess student opinion and the answers you give will help improve the learning and teaching provided. Summary information collected from the survey will be forwarded to the Scottish Funding Council who will provide an evaluation of Student Satisfaction and Engagement across the college sector.

Please place ONE cross on each line in the box that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each of the statements.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I am able to influence learning on my course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	The way I'm taught helps me learn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
9	I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10	The College Students' Association influences change for the better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have any other comments about learning and teaching at the college, please write them in the box below.

Thank you for completing this survey