

# Cylchlythyr | Circular

## National Student Survey 2023: Technical Consultation

**Date:** 29 March 2023  
**Reference:** W23/05HE  
**To:** Governing bodies and heads of HEFCW regulated and/or directly funded institutions in Wales  
**Response by:** 26 May 2023, via the Office for Students website  
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This circular provides information regarding a technical consultation for the National Student Survey 2023. This technical consultation is part of the NSS Review undertaken by the UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please email [info@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk).



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## Introduction

1. This circular provides information regarding a technical consultation for the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023. This technical consultation is part of the NSS Review undertaken by the UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies.
2. The National Student Survey (NSS) is managed by the Office for Students (OfS) on behalf of the UK higher education (HE) funding and regulatory bodies – the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland), the Scottish Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. The survey provides information for prospective students and for stakeholders to support a high quality learning experience.
3. The outcomes from the NSS are used by HEFCW to inform institutional risk reviews, monitor the performance of the sector, and as part of the assessment of the quality of the education institutions provide.
4. In 2020, the UK HE funding and regulatory bodies began a [two-stage review](#) of the NSS. In summer 2022, the UK funding and regulatory bodies consulted on changes to the NSS, including the wording of the questions, the questionnaire structure and response scales.
5. The technical consultation sets out proposals for the publication of the outcomes of the revised NSS arising from the 2020-2022 review.

## Technical consultation

6. The technical consultation was launched on Wednesday 29 March 2023, and close on Friday 26 May 2023.
7. The OfS will manage the consultation on behalf of the UK HE funding and regulatory bodies. A summary will be published in summer 2023, explaining how and why the decisions were made and how any concerns raised by respondents were addressed. NSS outcomes for 2023 are expected to be published in July 2023.
8. The technical consultation proposes changes to the following aspects of the NSS; the full set of consultation questions are in available on the [OfS website](#).
  - **Proposal one: Publishing NSS results broadly in line with previous approach**  
The overall approach to publication of the NSS will remain broadly similar to previous years, with thresholds and aggregation, and publication at provider level and sector level.
  - **Proposal two: Positivity measure for each question**  
The proposal to replace the current agreement rate with a 'positivity' measure, calculated by drawing on the proportion of students who respond

positively to each of the core questions and the question on mental wellbeing.

- **Proposal three: Publication of theme measures**

Scales, or categories, have been previously published which summarise responses to groups of questions. It is proposed to continue publishing these groups of questions, provided that our review of the results confirms that they continue to be robust and helpful in interpreting the data. The summary measures would be published in autumn 2023.

- **Proposal four: Splits of data presented**

In publishing NSS results, student and course characteristics are used both to calculate the benchmarks and to break down the results. We propose to update the definitions of these characteristics and how they are used in the presentation of NSS results.

At a provider level, it is proposed to allow the results to be split by mode, which would now include apprenticeships as a separate mode, level of study, and subject. At a sector level, we propose to add personal characteristics to help identify students who are not benefitting as much from their educational experience as others. Data drawing on personal characteristics would be available both UK-wide and country-specific, to meet the needs of data users across the UK.

- **Proposal five: Benchmarks**

It is proposed to continue to use UK benchmarking as an important tool in comparing and measuring performance across similar higher education providers. A number of changes to the approach to benchmarking are proposed, including to extend the approach so that benchmarks are included at every level of aggregation.

- **Proposal six: Healthcare, allied health and clinical practice placement questions**

It is proposed to publish the outcomes to these questions once we have been assured that the students targeted for these questions accurately reflect the intended recipients. This means they will not be published in the initial NSS 2023 publication but will be made available subsequently if there is evidence to support this.

## Responding to the consultation

9. All responses to the consultation should be submitted via the Office for Students' [website](#) before 26 May 2023.
10. Responses are welcome in Welsh or English.

## Further information

11. For further information on the technical consultation and/or operation of the NSS, please contact [NSS@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:NSS@officeforstudents.org.uk).

12. For further information on the NSS, contact Taz Jones (029 2085 9759; [taz.jones@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:taz.jones@hefcw.ac.uk)).

### **Assessing the impact of our policies**

13. The consultation seeks views about the potential impact of the proposals on individuals on the basis of their protected characteristics. Responses to the consultation will inform the assessment of the impact of the proposals on different groups and the Welsh Language.
14. HEFCW will support the OfS with its impact assessment, and consider the impact of the proposals on the Welsh Language, the goals set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 including HEFCW's own Well-Being objectives. Contact [equality@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:equality@hefcw.ac.uk) for more information about impact assessments.
15. Due to the technical language of the consultation, the consultation documents have not been translated. However, the consultation questions are available in Welsh. All responses are welcome in Welsh or English.