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# **Counting what is measured or measuring what counts?**

## **League tables and their impact on higher education institutions in England**

Report to HEFCE by the Centre for Higher Education  
Research and Information (CHERI), Open University, and  
Hobsons Research

### **Appendix F The National Student Survey: A brief description**

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## **Appendix F: National Student Survey: A brief description**

As part of a new framework for assuring the quality and standards of education provided by higher education institutions, HEFCE, the HE sector, Government and student representatives agreed that regular and detailed information about teaching quality should be published, and in response to this, developed a national survey of students (the National Student Survey, or NSS for short). Its primary purpose is to inform prospective students and their advisers in choosing what and where to study. The first full-scale NSS took place in 2005.

Ipsos MORI administer the survey annually on behalf of HEFCE. All final-year undergraduate students in publicly funded higher education institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are eligible to participate. In addition some institutions in Scotland participate voluntarily in the survey. The NSS aims to achieve consistently high response rates and achieved a 60 per cent response rate in 2005; 56 per cent in 2006; and 60 per cent in 2007. To optimise response rates, those students who decide to respond are able to complete the survey online, by post or over the telephone.

The survey consists of six 'areas' covering: teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources and personal development. There is also an 'overall satisfaction' question about how satisfied the respondent is with the quality of their course. Overall satisfaction has remained relatively high for the past three surveys. The overall satisfaction score was 80 per cent in both 2005 and 2006, increasing to 81 per cent in the 2007 survey.

The survey begins in January and is usually completed by Easter. Ipsos MORI undertake a targeted campaign to boost response rates within any institutions that have not met the publication threshold (this is set at a 50 per cent response rate and at least 23 students responding for each institution and subject combination). The survey results are published on the Unistats web site during the summer each year.

From 2008 the survey will be extended to include students studying HE courses in all directly funded further education colleges in England.