SFC Guidance

College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Guidance 2015-16 (Pilot phase)

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Summary: Guidance notes for the completion of the College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (Pilot phase): Academic year 2015-16

FAO: Principals and directors of Scotland's colleges

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Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

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College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Guidance (Pilot phase)

The Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) is being developed as a means to evaluate and enhance college provision in Scotland.

Survey purpose

1. The pilot SSES will enable us to test what we expect will become a sector wide survey from which will derive, among other benefits, benchmarking and quality enhancement. A national approach to monitoring student satisfaction and engagement will provide a consistent basis for college regions to evidence impact and improvement within their outcome agreements. Outcome agreements were introduced in AY 2012-13. They are intended to enable SFC and colleges to demonstrate the impact of the sector and its contribution to meeting Scottish Government priorities. When running as an annual cross-sector survey, it will provide opportunities to monitor changes across the sector in a range of ways, for example by subject area or mode of attendance. Similarly the intention would be for use of the data by regions will promote sharing of good practice both within and between regions and contribute to continuous improvement. It will help to strengthen the role of Students' Associations in representation and advocacy and will contribute to public accountability.

Use of data

2. The intention is to share findings of the pilot phase - to include survey experiences, uptake levels and college and sector summary results - at a dissemination event in September 2016 and to inform future survey developments. Early in 2016 we will consult with the sector and key stakeholders on the ownership, use and publication of data from the survey. At the same time, we will consult on the use of unique student identifiers which both discussion in the Working Group and feedback from the sector event held in September suggest will greatly enhance the way in which the data may be used.

Survey Questions

3. The survey questions are attached in Annex A. The ten survey questions have been developed in light of existing college practice, the pre-pilot phase and consultation feedback and have undergone cognitive testing by Ipsos Mori. The ten questions will not be made mandatory which will provide flexibility for students who do have an opinion on questions. We ask that the question wording, order and the ratings are used exactly as are presented in Annex A.

A comment box has been provided for students to add any relevant written comments on learning and teaching at the college. This was included based on feedback from the Working Group suggesting the more valuable data from surveys often came through open text boxes. The expectation is that colleges will retain this open text data and use it for their own analysis. As part of the dissemination of findings we will seek feedback from colleges on the effectiveness of the open text box.

The explanatory text for the survey should be kept together with the survey questions.

Survey returns

4. We are asking that colleges taking part in the pilot return summary data from their surveys in order to fully test the data collection process. SFC and the SSES Working Group may use the returns to inform future versions of the survey and data use.

An example template is attached (Annex B). We will issue electronic templates in February 2016.

Survey Placement

5. The SSES questions should be standalone and sit separately from existing college surveys. This is to protect the methodological integrity and consistency of the national survey across institutions. This does not prevent colleges from grouping the SSES together in a separate section at the beginning of an existing internal survey.

Some colleges have already expressed a preference to combine the national survey questions as a grouping within one of their existing student surveys. It is hoped this option could provide flexibility and reduce the potential for survey fatigue resulting from conducting two separate surveys.

Student Target Group

6. The survey should only be targeted at students on courses of 4 credits or more i.e. of nominal learning hours of 160 or greater.

We will collect data by student mode of attendance and issue three separate templates that will cover summary data based on the following mode of attendance groupings;

- Group A – Full-time (include mode codes - 17 & 18)
- Group B – Part-time (include mode codes - 05, 06, 07, 08, 09)
- Group C – Distance/Flexible (include mode codes - 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16)

Online Survey

7. We would encourage online completion of the survey by students. However, where it may be more practicable considering access to the survey or completion of the survey by students with additional learning needs, this can be supported by completion of the survey on paper and thereafter the college would have to organise data entry of the survey. We have not specified what approach colleges use to capture survey data for the pilot and therefore colleges can tailor their own approach whether that is QDP Services, Survey Monkey or other resources.

Response Rates

8. Students should be encouraged to participate in the pilot survey. We expect Students' Associations will have a significant part to play both in promoting engagement with the survey and working with the college to consider the resulting data, sparqs will be able to support Students' Associations in this process. In the pilot we will be looking to achieve a sector target response rate of at least 50%.

Survey Timing

9. The survey will operate within an 8 week window between 7 March and 29 April 2016. During this period colleges will be able to operate their survey for a period of 4 weeks (and this could straddle Spring break). It is felt this provides the most flexibility and should help promote response rates as there would not be an overlap with student president elections and other events such as exam leave.

Results Reporting

10. Electronic summary result templates will be sent out to colleges in February 2016. An example template is attached (Annex B). Summary survey results should be returned to Michelle McNeill at SFC, email: mmcneill@sfc.ac.uk - by Friday 27 May 2016.

Future Plans

11. The sample set of data and learning from the pilot survey process will inform planning for the development of the SSES in 2016-17. Outcomes from the pilot survey will be shared with colleges at a dissemination event to be held in September 2016.

Pilot SSES Milestones

12.   SSES Milestones are as follows:

- Pilot survey of current students by colleges **March - April 2016**
- Colleges return pilot summary survey results to SFC by **27 May 2016**
- Working group to meet to discuss survey results **June 2016**
- SSES college sector dissemination event **September 2016**
- Develop processes and prepare Guidance for the national SSES in Mar – April 2017 by **December 2016**

Further information

13.   Please contact Kenny Wilson, Senior Policy/Analysis Officer, Funding Policy (Data Collections) for further information, tel: 0131 313 6509, email: kwilson@sfc.ac.uk

Martin Smith
Chief Funding and Information Officer

Annex A: 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.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I am able to influence learning on my course.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	The way I'm taught helps me learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.	☐	☐	☐	☐

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
9	I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
10	The College Students' Association influences change for the better.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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

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Thank you for completing this survey

Note: *student mode of attendance (m.o.a) data is required to be captured to allow summary results reporting by the m.o.a groupings as detailed in Clause 6 of this guidance.*

Annex B: Survey Template (Example)

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) Summary Return for 2015-16							
College Name	Example College	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total Question Response
Mode grouping	A - Full-time						
Survey Sample Number	2,356						
Survey Response %	55.30%						
SSES summary question results		15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16	15-16
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.							
2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.							
3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.							
4. I am able to influence learning on my course.							
5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.							
6. The way I'm taught helps me learn.							
7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.							
8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.							
9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.							
10. The college Students' Assocation influences change for the better.							

Notes:
1. Include students with a "current" and appropriate group mode status at your college, at the point of survey, in the Sample Number box (Cell B5).
2. The Survey Response % is calculated from Q1 Total Responses (Cell H9) divided by Survey Sample Number (Cell B5).
3. The completed template(s) should be returned, as an Excel attachment, to mmcneill@sfc.ac.uk, no later that 27 May 2016.