



SFC Statistical publication



Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2017-18 (experimental statistics: data being developed)

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Summary: To inform stakeholders of the publication of the college 2017-18 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Outcomes

FAO: Principals and Directors of Scotland's colleges, students and parents

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Purpose

1. SFC has been working with the college sector to conduct a Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) since 2015-16. This is the third publication based on the college SSES returns and covers the academic year 2017-18 only. The figures presented are considered to be experimental statistics.
2. The SSES provides a means to evaluate and enhance college provision in Scotland through a national approach to monitoring student satisfaction and engagement. Over time, this will provide a consistent basis for college regions to provide evidence of impact and improvement within their outcome agreements. It is envisaged that it will help to strengthen the role of Students' Associations in representation and advocacy and will contribute to public accountability.
3. The 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 to measure and improve performance.
4. The overall satisfaction figure is the key outcome agreement measure for student satisfaction and is based on the combined figure for "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" for the question "Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience".

Key Points

5. Survey response rates were extremely variable across colleges and as a result of this only full-time Further Education (FE) and full-time Higher Education (HE) satisfaction levels are presented and only for those colleges with a response rate of 50% or more.
6. Response rates are poorer for part-time and distance/flexible learning students and more work is required to improve response rates before SFC can publish these results.
7. The level of satisfaction for full-time HE students is lower than the results for full-time FE students at all colleges.
8. For those colleges that managed to achieve at least a 50% response rate, the proportion of students satisfied overall with their college experience is:
 - Full-time FE students - 93.1%.
 - Full-time HE students - 83.2%.
9. To ensure greater consistency and procedural accuracy across colleges and to

improve response rates for some colleges there is a real need to develop further the survey for future years.

SSES – context

10. The SSES has evolved from the development of a national performance framework for outcome agreements in 2013. Following on from this earlier work, SFC commenced the development of a national approach to monitoring student satisfaction and engagement in the college sector.
11. Evidence gathered had suggested that there was notable variation across the sector in both practice and processes used to provide evidence of 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 show evidence of impact and improvement within their outcome agreements.
12. In 2014, with the support of the college sector and other key agencies, work commenced to develop a national student satisfaction and engagement survey that would collect and report on summary satisfaction and engagement data from colleges.
13. 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. The first [Student Satisfaction and Engagement publication from 2015-16](#) provides a timeline and detail of the pre-pilot phase development stages.
14. Following feedback received from the pre-pilot survey and after further sector consultation a final set of 10 questions was developed: nine questions relate to satisfaction and one question to engagement with the Students' Association.
15. SFC worked closely with colleges to build capacity and 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](#)¹ (NSS).

16. The NSS does not include the surveying of students in Scotland's colleges.
17. UHI partner colleges and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) are given the opportunity to survey those Higher National students who are not routinely surveyed in the NSS.
18. Further information on the survey method, coverage and timing is available in separate guidance - [College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Guidance 2017-18](#).

SSES – overview

19. This year the survey sample numbers used to calculate response and satisfaction rates have highlighted that some colleges have not fully adhered to the guidance for completing the survey.
20. The student satisfaction and engagement survey did ask both part-time and flexible/distance learning students the same questions as the full-time students. However, response rates are poorer for part-time and distance/flexible learning students and more work is required to improve response rates before SFC can publish results.
21. SFC will work with the college sector, Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs) and NUS Scotland to understand what intelligence we can draw from the results for part-time and distance/flexible learning students for 2017-18. Where possible we will use this information to improve the educational experience for future years.
22. The SSES guidance includes the following instructions:
 - We ask all colleges to survey students across all levels and modes of attendance within a set period in the academic year (March-April) and return summary data from their surveys.
 - To include students with a "current" and appropriate group mode status at the college, at the point of survey, in the sample number box as noted in the survey return.

¹ 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.

- To conduct the survey within an eight week window between 5 March and 27 April 2018. During this period, colleges will be able to operate their survey for a period of 4 weeks (and this could straddle the Spring break).
23. The 5 March to 27 April survey period is late in the academic year and therefore, students will be providing an informed response after much of their learning has been completed. However, it is important to note that the majority of students who withdraw from their studies will have done so by this point and therefore will be less likely to take part in the survey. This will vary by college depending on the timing and management of student withdrawals.

SSES Analysis of Full-time Further Education (FE)

24. Overall 95% of full-time FE students were surveyed during this period. This ranged from 66% to 100% of students at the college level.
25. Just under half of the full-time further education students at college during the survey period took part in the survey. Twenty-six colleges surveyed their full-time further education students with fifteen of those seeing 50% or more of their full-time further education taking part in the survey. Overall, response rates ranged from 15% to 87%.
26. As a result of the varying response rates the results of the survey are highly unlikely to be comparable across all colleges and in particular those with low response rates. There is a need to improve the consistency of approach towards the survey for future years.

Nevertheless, 19,557 students have provided the sector with feedback on their satisfaction with their full-time further education course. Table 1 below provides the responses to the following question: *Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.*

Table 1: Full-time FE student satisfaction with their overall college experience

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Total</i>	Proportion Satisfied
8,253	9,958	1,078	268	19,557	93.1%
42%	51%	6%	1%		

27. If we add the strongly agree and agree responses we can show that 93.1% of those who responded to the survey were satisfied with the overall college experience.
28. As a result of some poor response rates and potential inconsistencies in the management of the student satisfaction survey it is difficult to say that these results are representative of the wider sector.

29. However, if we only include those colleges with a response rate of 50% or more based on the full-time FE students still attending at 05 March then we still have a satisfaction rate of 93.1% as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Full-time FE student satisfaction (Colleges with at least a 50% response rate for full-time FE students)

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Total</i>	Proportion Satisfied
6,272	6,996	784	207	14,259	93.1%
44%	49%	5%	1%		

30. The results are slightly better for the more selective group with at least a 50% response rate as the proportion who strongly agree that they were satisfied with their college experience rises to 44%. However, there is still a need to improve the consistency of the survey for future years.

SSSES Analysis of Full-time Higher Education (HE)

31. Similar issues exist with the survey of the full-time HE students and the overall response rates are actually poorer at around 42%. Overall response rates ranged from 14% to 88%. As a result, there are similar limitations on what can be drawn from these figures.
32. Table 3 below shows the overall satisfaction rates for the same question as above but now for full-time higher education students at Scotland’s colleges only. For clarity the question is shown again below: *Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.*

Table 3: Full-time HE student satisfaction with their overall college experience

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Total</i>	Proportion Satisfied
4,776	6,024	1,324	388	12,512	86.3%
38%	48%	11%	3%		

33. Table 3 provides the results for all Full-time HE students responding to the survey. There is a lower response rate for this group with fewer colleges meeting the 50% threshold, five from 15 colleges.
34. Table 4 below provides the summary results for those colleges that managed to achieve at least a 50% response rate only.

Table 4: Full-time HE student satisfaction with their college experience (colleges with at least a 50% response rate for FT students)

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Total</i>	Proportion Satisfied
2,984	3,004	919	286	7,193	83.2%
41%	42%	13%	4%		

35. The proportion satisfied for this subgroup is lower at 83.2%. It is not possible to directly compare the results for the two groups as a result of differences in response rates and because of the relative size of the HE cohort at some colleges that can impact more heavily on the sector results. From looking at the more detailed college results we can however say that the level of satisfaction for full-time HE students is lower than the results for full-time FE students at all colleges.
36. The survey includes 10 questions for each student group. There is a concern about the college response rates for this survey and as a result, table 5 which summarises the survey results only includes the results for those colleges with at least a 50% response rate. Table 5 shows the results to each question for full-time further education students only.

Table 5: Summary of student satisfaction results for full-time further education students at colleges with a survey response rate of at least 50%

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total respondees (excluding don't know)	Total Strongly Agree or Agree	Proportion Satisfied
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.	6,272	6,996	784	207		14,259	13,268	93.1%
2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.	4,928	7,190	1,774	351		14,243	12,118	85.1%
3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.	7,115	6,343	510	214		14,182	13,458	94.9%
4. I am able to influence learning on my course.	4,687	7,832	1,321	272		14,112	12,519	88.7%
5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.	5,491	7,054	1,348	278		14,171	12,545	88.5%
6. The way I'm taught helps me learn.	5,277	7,305	1,325	303		14,210	12,582	88.5%
7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.	6,692	6,269	915	276		14,152	12,961	91.6%
8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.	3,984	7,309	2,210	633		14,136	11,293	79.9%
9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.	5,838	6,148	1,552	646		14,184	11,986	84.5%
10. The college Students' Association influences change for the better.	2,818	6,269	991	344	3,667	10,422	9,087	87.2%

37. Table 5 shows that fewer students are satisfied when asked if they feel their 'suggestions are taken seriously'. The question 'staff encourage students to

take responsibility for their own learning' had the highest level of agreement at almost 95%. More than 50% of students strongly agreed that this was the case.

38. The question '*the college student's association influences change for the better*' had a high level of agreement but not all students would have the same level of engagement in this area.
39. Table 6 below provides the same summary for full-time higher education students. Once again, this only includes results for colleges with at least a 50% response rate for full-time higher education students.

Table 6: Summary of student satisfaction results for full-time higher education students at colleges with a survey response rate of at least 50%

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total Responsees (excluding don't know)	Total Strongly Agree or Agree	Proportion Satisfied
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.	2,984	3,004	919	286		7,193	5,988	83.2%
2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.	2,133	3,050	1,544	443		7,170	5,183	72.3%
3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.	3,647	2,679	573	268		7,167	6,326	88.3%
4. I am able to influence learning on my course.	2,221	3,192	1,325	411		7,149	5,413	75.7%
5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.	2,487	3,078	1,176	409		7,150	5,565	77.8%
6. The way I'm taught helps me learn.	2,279	3,153	1,330	401		7,163	5,432	75.8%
7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.	3,059	2,837	897	357		7,150	5,896	82.5%
8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.	1,844	2,882	1,669	737		7,132	4,726	66.3%
9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.	3,047	2,555	957	565		7,124	5,602	78.6%
10. The college Students' Association influences change for the better.	1,058	2,847	602	271	2,299	4,778	3,905	81.7%

40. The results for the full-time HE students were less positive than for the full-time FE students. HE students are encouraged to be more independent in their learning which may explain some of the differences across the two groups.
41. However, the level of satisfaction for full-time HE students is lower than the results for full-time FE students at all colleges.
42. There is therefore a need to better understand why the 'satisfaction' levels are lower for the HE students.