



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

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College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Guidance 2025-26



College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Guidance 2025-26

Issue Date:	12 February 2026
Reference:	SFC/GD/01/2026
Deadline:	05 June 2026
Summary:	Guidance notes for the completion of the College Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey: Academic Year 2025-26.
FAO:	Principals, Chairs, Finance Directors, Boards of Scotland's Colleges and the general public.
Further Information:	datareturns@sfc.ac.uk

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Survey purpose

1. The Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) provide a means to evaluate and enhance college provision in Scotland.
2. The SSES is a national approach to monitoring student satisfaction and engagement that over time will provide a consistent basis for college regions to evidence impact and improvement within the Outcomes Framework & Assurance Model (OF&AM). The OF&AM was introduced in 2024-25 to enable SFC and colleges to demonstrate the impact of the sector and its contribution to meeting Scottish Government priorities.
3. 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 regions to utilise data to promote sharing of good practice both within and between regions and to contribute to continuous improvement. It will help to strengthen the role of Students' Associations in representation and advocacy and will contribute to public accountability.

Revisions to guidance

4. SFC will publish a summary report of SSES data and provide colleges with full sector-level satisfaction and response data.
5. We continue to consult with the sector and key stakeholders on the ownership, use and publication of disaggregated data from the survey. Following recent consultation with the College sector and other key stakeholders via the Statistical Advisory Group for Further Education (SAGE) group, it is intended to move the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey from its current aggregate-level return format to an individual-level return, from academic year 2026-27.
6. Colleges should be aware that under Data Protection Legislation they will be required to update their privacy notices accordingly and in time for the 2026-27 survey to make respondents to the survey aware that the data they provide may be used by SFC (as well as other bodies such as Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, Colleges Scotland, College Development Network and other organisations working for the benefit of the sector). Respondents should be advised on how their information will be used and shared.
7. Please note: Colleges are responsible for ensuring that any privacy notices are compliant with Data Protection Legislation, the above recommendation only covers processing in relation to data shared with the Scottish Funding Council. Colleges should ensure that their privacy statements cover all processing of student data in line with Data Protection Legislation
8. Further information, and templates, will be available in the 2026-27 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey guidance, due for release in early 2027.
9. Statement 1 from the SSES 'Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience' will be

used as a measure under the Outcomes Framework & Assurance Model.

Survey statements

10. The survey statements are attached in Annex A. The thirteen statements have been developed in light of existing college practice and will not be made mandatory which will provide flexibility for students who do not have an opinion on some statements. We ask that the statement wording, order and the ratings are used exactly as presented in Annex A.
11. We provide a Gaelic translation of the whole survey and this can be seen as blue text in Annex A.
12. We have further developed, through an SSES Accessibility Working Group, additional survey formats. These are specifically for students with assessed additional support needs and/or have SCQF level 1-3 literacy.
13. We provide at Annex B three alternative survey formats that colleges can use, as appropriate, with student groups at SCQF levels 1-3.
 - B1 - has the standard survey statements with additional responses symbols.
 - B2 - has survey statements written at SCQF level 3 literacy and with additional response symbols.
 - B3 - has survey statements written at SCQF level 3 literacy combined with recognisable supporting symbols to aid student understanding.
14. The three survey formats at Annex B have been tested with students. However, we will continue to evaluate the appropriateness of the alternative format surveys and adjust, where necessary.
15. 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.
16. The explanatory text for the survey should be kept together with the survey statements.

Survey returns

17. We are asking 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.
18. Include students with a "current" and appropriate group mode status at your college, at the point of survey, and use this figure to populate the Survey Sample Number box in

each mode grouping proforma.

19. We will collect data by level and student mode of attendance and will issue up to six separate templates that will cover summary data based on the following two levels and three modes of attendance groupings;
 - FE level - courses at SCQF or 'broadly comparable' level 6 and below.
 - HE level - courses at SCQF or 'broadly comparable' level 7 and above.
 - 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, 16).
20. An example template is attached (Annex C). We will issue electronic templates to your college SSES contact(s) in February 2026.

Survey placement

21. The SSES statements 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.
22. Some colleges have already expressed a preference to combine the national survey statements as a grouping within one of their existing student surveys. This is acceptable and it is hoped this option will provide flexibility and reduce the potential for survey fatigue resulting from conducting two separate surveys.

Student target group

23. 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.
24. The SSES should include coverage of DYW groups – including Senior Phase provision – focusing on learners involved in programmes over 160 hours and would normally be primarily based on College campus.
25. If students are on multiple inter-linked courses that are subject related for example, 'apprenticeship programmes' then it is acceptable to have them complete a 'single survey response'.

Online survey

26. We would encourage online completion of the survey by students. However, where difficulties exist in fully understanding the statements, for example ESOL students or those students with additional learning needs, staff can provide additional support and guidance. The survey can be completed 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 and therefore colleges can tailor their own approach whether

that is QDP Services, Survey Monkey or other resources.

Response rates

27. For some colleges the survey response rates have been below expectations. It is essential that colleges comply with this guidance in full of the aim of improving response rates, where low, so that meaningful conclusions and comparisons can be made from the SSES results.
28. Students should be encouraged to participate in the 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 survey for Group A - full-time and Group B - part-time colleges should aim to achieve a target response rate of at least 50%.

Survey timing

29. The survey this year will operate within an 8 week window between 02 March and 24 April 2026. During this period colleges will be able to operate their survey for a period of 6 weeks (most likely on both sides of the Spring break). **Note:** this window can be flexed further on either side to accommodate the timetabling of 'block release' student groups in college.
30. 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

31. Electronic summary result templates will be sent out to colleges in February 2026. An example template is attached (Annex C). Summary survey results should be returned to data returns at SFC, email: datareturns@sfc.ac.uk by Friday 06 June 2025.

2025-26 SSES milestones

32. SSES Milestones are as follows:
 - Survey of current students by colleges **March - April 2026.**
 - Colleges return summary survey results to SFC by **05 June 2026.**
 - SSES publication **August 2026.**
 - Guidance for the SSES in March - April 2026 by **January 2027.**

Further information

33. If you have any queries or require any further information, please contact datareturns@sfc.ac.uk.

Steve McDonald

Chief Funding and Information Officer

Annex A: Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey statements

Leas-phàipear A: Ceistean Suirbhidh mu Thoil eachadh is Com-pàirteachadh nan Oileanach

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey

Suirbhidh Toileachadh is Com-pàirteachadh nan Oileanach

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.

Tha colaistean dealasach mu bhith a' sìor leasachadh saoghal nan oileanach agus gu h-àraidh mathas ionnsachaidh is teagaisg. Tha an t-suirbhidh seo ag amas air beachdan oileanaich a mheasadh agus bidh na freagairtean agad nan cuideachadh airson leasachadh a thoirt air an ionnsachadh is teagasg a thèid a libhrigeadh. Thèid geàrr-fhiosrachadh a fhuaras bhon t-suirbhidh a shìneadh gu Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba agus bheir iadsan luachadh air Toileachadh is Com-pàirteachadh nan Oileanach air feadh roinn nan colaistean.

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

Cuir AON chrois anns gach loidhne sa bhogsa as fheàrr a tha a' mìneachadh dè cho mòr 's a tha thu ag aontachadh no nach eil ag aontachadh ris gach aithris.

		Strongly Agree Aonta mòr	Agree Aonta	Disagree Eas-aonta	Strongly Disagree Eas-aonta mòr
1	Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience. San fharsaingeachd, tha mi riaraichte leis an t-saoghal colaiste agam.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Staff regularly discuss my progress with me. Bidh luchd-obrach a' bruidhinn rium gu riaghailteach mun adhartas agam.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. Bidh luchd-obrach a' misneachadh oileanaich gus uallach ionnsachaidh a ghabhail orra fhèin.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I am able to influence learning on my course. Is urrainn dhomh buaidh a thoirt air ionnsachadh air a' chùrsa agam.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning. Gheibh mi comhairlean feumail a bheir fios don ionnsachadh agam san àm ri teachd.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	The way I'm taught helps me learn. Tha an dòigh-teagaisg na cuideachadh dhomh a bhith ag ionnsachadh.	<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"/>

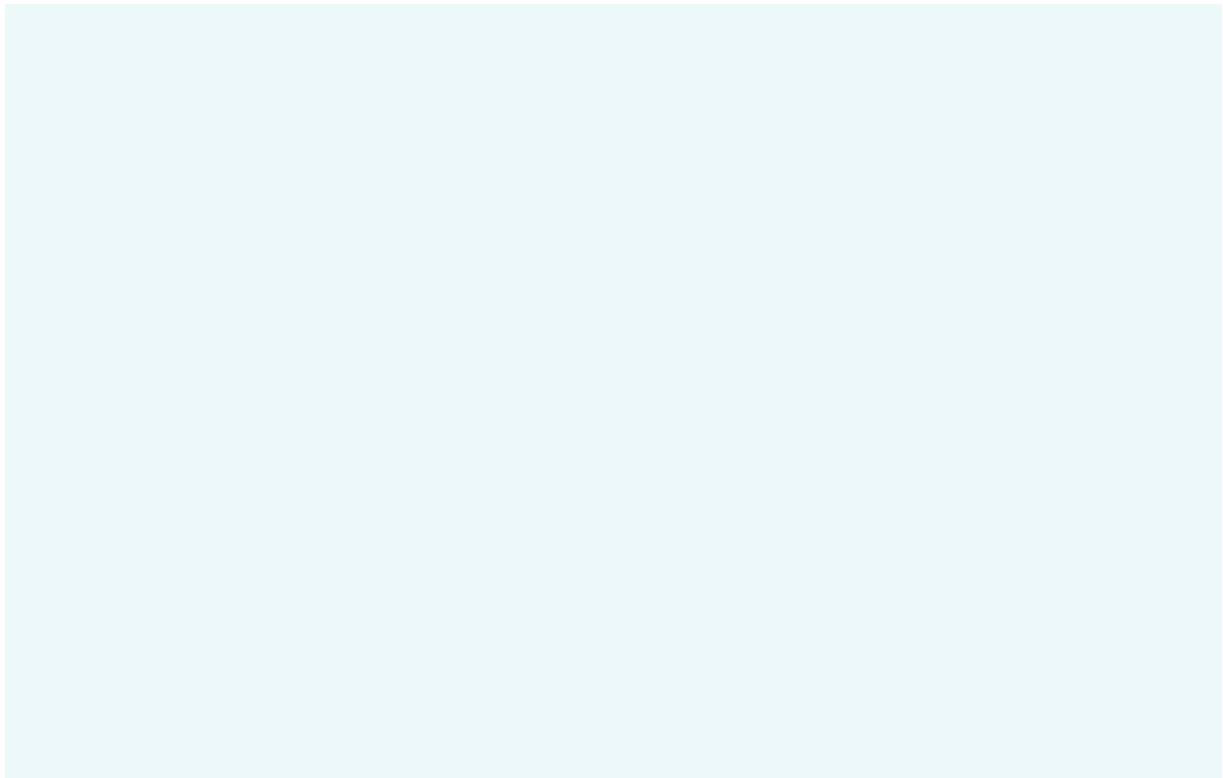
Chuidich an ùine agam aig a' cholaiste le bhith a' leasachadh eòlas is sgilean don àite-obrach.

- | | | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 8 | <p>I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.</p> <p>Saoilidh mi gu bheilear a' gabhail ri molaidhean nan oileanach an da-rìribh.</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 | <p>I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.</p> <p>Saoilidh mi gu bheil an luchd-obrach a' dèiligeadh ris a h-uile oileanach sa cholaiste air dòigh cho-ionann, chothromach.</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | <p>Any change in my course or teaching has been communicated well.</p> <p>Chaidh atharrachadh sam bith sa chùrsa agam no san teagasg a mhìneachadh gu math.</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 | <p>The online learning materials for my course have helped me learn.</p> <p>Bha na stuthan ionnsachaidh air-loidhne airson a' chùrsa agam nan cuideachadh le ionnsachadh.</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 | <p>I feel that I am part of the college community.</p> <p>Tha mi a' faireachdainn mar phàirt de choimhearsnachd na colaiste.</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

	Strongly Agree Aonta mòr	Agree Aonta	Disagree Eas-aonta	Strongly Disagree Eas-aonta mòr	Don't know Chan eil fios agam
13 The College Students' Association influences change for the better. Tha Comann Oileanaich nan Colaistean a' toirt deagh bhuidh air atharrachadh.	<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 on the next page.

Ma tha beachd sam bith eile agad mu ionnsachadh is teagasg aig a' cholaiste, sgrìobh iad sa bhogsa gu h-ìosal.



Thank you for completing this survey

Tapadh leat airson an t-suirbhidh seo a lìonadh

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

Annex B1: standard survey statements with additional response symbols

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES)

2024-25

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.

☐
☐
☐
☐

9 I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

10 Any change in my course or teaching has been communicated well. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

11 The online learning materials for my course have helped me learn. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

12 I feel that I am part of the college community. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Strongly
Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly
Disagree

Don't
know



13 The College Students' Association influences change for the better. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Annex B2: survey statements written at SCQF level 3 literacy and with additional response symbols

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES)

2024-25

Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



1. Overall, I am satisfied with my time at college.

☐
☐
☐
☐

2. Staff speak to me about how I am doing.

☐
☐
☐
☐

3. I am encouraged to work independently.

☐
☐
☐
☐

4. Staff listen to my opinion about my course.

☐
☐
☐
☐

5. Lecturers tell me how I am getting on, so I can improve my work.

☐
☐
☐
☐

6. The way I am taught helps me learn.

☐
☐
☐
☐

7. At college, I am taught life and work skills.

☐
☐
☐
☐

8. If students have ideas, the college staff listen.

☐
☐
☐
☐

9 All students are treated equally. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

10 I am told about changes to my course. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

11 Online teaching materials help me learn. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

12 I am included in what happens around college. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Strongly
Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly
Disagree

Don't
know



13 The college Students' Association helps make the college a better place. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Annex B3: survey statements written at SCQF level 3 literacy combined with recognisable supporting symbols to aid student understanding

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES)

2025-26

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree



Overall, I am satisfied with my time at college.



Staff speak to me about how I am doing.



Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES)

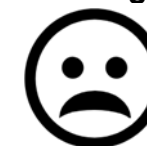
2024-25

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

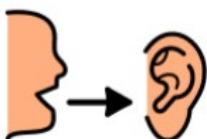
Strongly Disagree



I am encouraged to work independently.



Staff listen to my opinion about my course.



Lecturers tell me how I am getting on, so I can improve my work.



Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES)

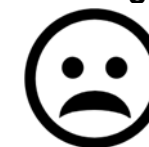
2024-25

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree



The way I am taught helps me learn.



At college, I am taught life and work skills.



If students have ideas, the college staff listen.



Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES)

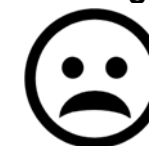
2024-25

Strongly Agree

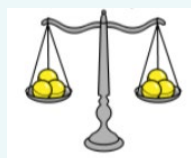
Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree



All students are treated equally.



I am told about changes to my course.

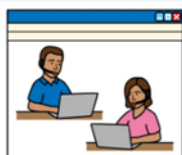


told



changes

Online teaching materials help me learn.



online teaching



learn

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES)

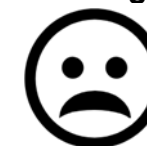
2024-25

Strongly Agree

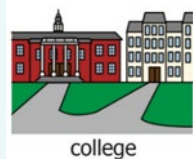
Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree



I am included in what happens around college



The college Students' Association helps make the college a better place.



Annex C: Summary Survey Results

Mode of Attendance	FE Level						
Mode Grouping	Group C - Distance/Flexible						
Survey Sample Number	xx	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total Question Response
Survey Response %	xx						
SSES summary question results		25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26
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. Any change in my course or teaching has been communicated well.							
11. The online learning materials for my course have helped me learn.							
12. I feel that I am part of the college community.							
13. The college Students' Association influences change for the better.							