

Staff perceptions of NSS benefits and challenges



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Project research question:



What do course leaders think?

"Does the University of Portsmouth's involvement in the National Student Survey have any major disadvantages, the significance of which is not apparent due to the focus on the clear benefits that this involvement brings?"

- Benefits, changes & challenges associated with the NSS?
- Conflict of values?

Methodology and the sample

- Questionnaires / Jisc online surveys
- 85 course leaders
- 50% of current course leaders
- 44% of course leaders with 5 or more years of experience
- Good distribution of the sample, representing all five faculties.

Benefits

<i>The National Student Survey (NSS):</i>	Agree%	Neutral %	Disagr
<i>Gives an opportunity for students to raise their voice</i>	63.5	19	18
<i>Gives me a useful opportunity to compare my course results to the sector</i>	54	21	25
<i>Contributes to achieving a good position in university rankings locally, nationally, and internationally</i>	52	25	23.5
<i>Helps me understand where there is room for improvement in my course</i>	48	26	26
<i>Helps me identify the strengths of my course</i>	47	27	26
<i>Gives me a useful opportunity to compare my course results to other courses at the UoP</i>	36.5	33	31
<i>Enables me to get a good insight into the wider student experience</i>	31	31	39
<i>Provides student feedback that is used to make real changes to the student experience</i>	31	31	39
<i>Helps me understand the needs of different student demographics and enables me to make group comparisons</i>	22	23	54
<i>Successfully complements internal surveys (e.g. Evasys)</i>	22	32	46
<i>Enables me to see whether UoP strategies are implemented</i>	14	28	58
<i>Helps me understand how I could better cooperate with the professional services at the University</i>	14	32	54

Changes –who?

Students provide feedback through the NSS that may be used to make real changes to the student experience. To what extent do you think the following people/groups are responsible for the conception and/or implementation of these changes?

	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %
Course leaders	82	11	7
Academic teaching staff	76.5	14	9
Senior Leadership/UEB	58	14	28
Professional services	51	25	25
The Student Union	33	35	32
Office for Students	28	36.5	35

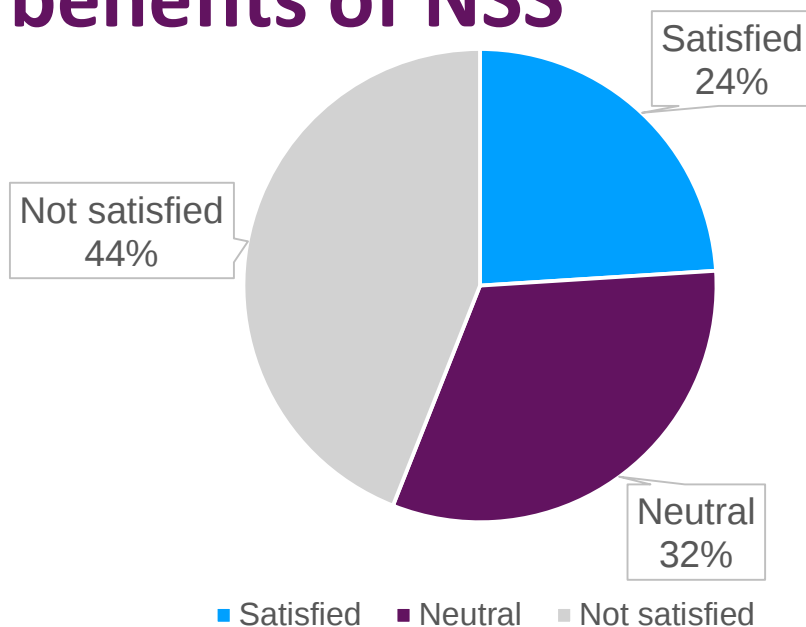
Changes – what?

<i>Actual changes made following the NSS feedback mainly aim to improve:</i>	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %
<i>The UoP's ranking in the sector</i>	72	19	9
<i>The UoP's profile</i>	71	20	9
<i>Course student satisfaction in the NSS</i>	66	19	15
<i>The student learning experience</i>	54	26	20
<i>Course content and teaching</i>	49	20	31
<i>The wider student experience</i>	41	33	26
<i>Professional services</i>	32	38	31
<i>No actual changes are made following the NSS feedback</i>	16.5	35	47

Challenges

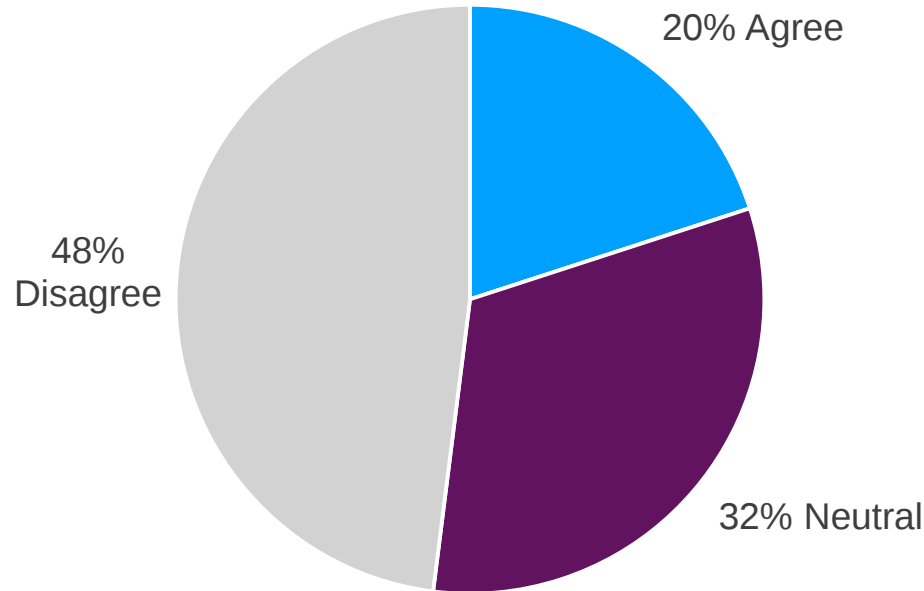
<i>As a former or current course leader I face(d) the following challenges or difficulties (in relation to the NSS):</i>	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %
<i>Doing what I think is best for the students' education, while at the same time keeping them satisfied</i>	77	11	13
<i>Aligning the aims of UK higher education, as reflected by the NSS, with my view of the aims of meaningful education</i>	66	23.5	11
<i>Dealing with encouragement or pressure to raise scores</i>	65	22	13
<i>Aligning course practices and content with the NSS metrics</i>	64	28	8
<i>Finding practical ways to improve the student experience</i>	61	17	22
<i>Finding time to implement ways to make real changes to the student experience</i>	61	21	18
<i>Achieving high response rates</i>	60	20	20
<i>Making sense of the results</i>	58	19	23.5
<i>Getting an insight into the wider student experience</i>	57	28	15
<i>Finding ways to cooperate with professional services at the UoP that affect my course score</i>	53	33	14
<i>Having an additional student experience survey for the students</i>	51	31.5	13
<i>Identifying room for improvement in my course</i>	44	29	27
<i>Achieving high student satisfaction</i>	44	28	28
<i>Identifying the strengths of my course</i>	41	32	27

Overall satisfaction with the outcomes/benefits of NSS

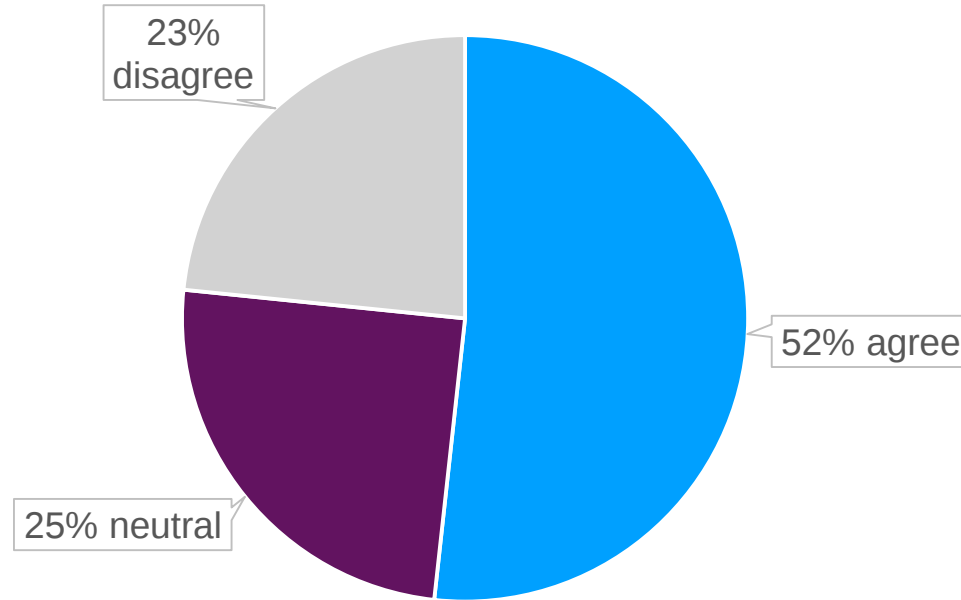


Similar responses when they were asked whether they find the NSS useful

When comparing benefits to challenges, the benefits outweigh the challenges



Student experience surveys are a useful tool for course leaders



Correlations

		5.1. I am satisfied with the outcomes from the NSS	10.1. I find the NSS useful	10.3. Student experience surveys are a useful tool for course leaders
9.1. I struggle with the challenges I face with the NSS	Correlation Coefficient	-0.298**	-0.284**	-0.231*
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.006	0.009	0.034
	N	85	85	85
10.2. When comparing benefits to challenges, the benefits outweigh the challenges	Correlation Coefficient	0.641**	0.751**	0.681**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0	0	0
	N	85	85	85
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).				
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).				

Correlations

- The higher (lower) the satisfaction with the outcomes/benefits of the NSS, the more (less) useful the NSS would be regarded as by the respondents.
- The more changes (following the NSS results) that the respondents can see, the more they appreciated the NSS – with the exception of the changes related to the UoP's ranking in the sector and the UoP's profile.
- The more the respondents struggle with the challenges they face, and the more they feel that the benefits do not outweigh the challenges, the less satisfied they will be with the outcomes from the NSS, the less useful they will find the NSS and the student experience surveys in general (and vice-versa).

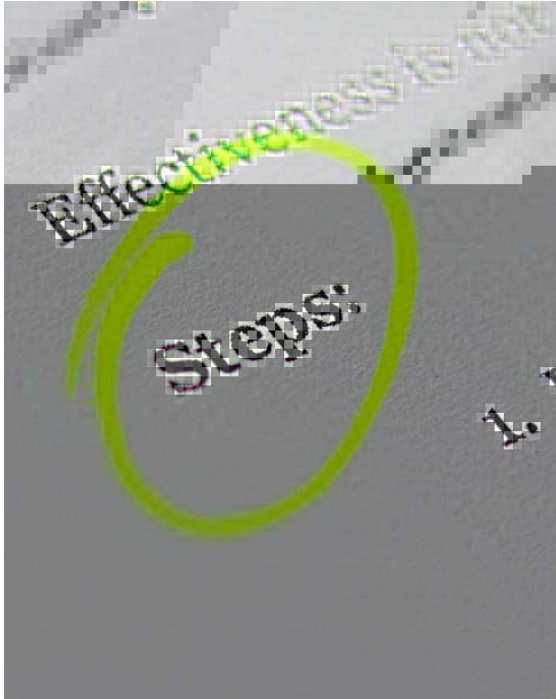
Conclusions

- *Does the University of Portsmouth's involvement in the National Student Survey have any major disadvantages, the significance of which is not apparent due to the focus on the clear benefits that this involvement brings?"*
- *In what ways does the NSS benefit or cause difficulties for UoP course leaders?*
- *Are there correlations between the benefits and difficulties associated with the NSS? If so, to what extent?, and*
- *Does the NSS encourage ethical strategic-management practices?*

Among other things we learned that

- In the end there may not be a conflict (for example of values, of interests etc) in the end, if there is better **communication** between course leaders and other stakeholders
- The organisational **culture**/ethos is multidimensional and can be fragile if one aspect is overlooked.
- Universities have a difficult task, to maintain a **balance** between the ideals of an educational institution and the demands of the competition that faces as an economic organisation

They said we did



- Got back to them with the findings and the way forward
- Introduced a more localised approach to deciding how/when to communicate with students about responses
- less pressure for an overarching response rate target to achieve
- DCQE surveys team prepared personalised one- or two-page reports for each course leader participant in the NSS.
- Further positive changes are planned.

Approx. 100 course leaders:
received personalised reports

Approx. 40 course leaders:
replied to us with gratitude



“Thanks for the explanation. The graphs were actually quite self-explanatory and certainly very helpful. Many thanks for the team effort - hopefully we will keep this going in the future.”

“Thank you very much for this extremely detailed and very useful information. Thank you Melita and team.”

“Many thanks for your email. This is really helpful and insightful. Gives a good way forward and makes me understand what's working and whatnot. Furthermore, I can totally relate the report to their grades as well. Look forward to improving this for an upcoming year.”



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(Happy) End

