

# How to improve satisfaction: FE Choices

## Background

The FE Choices Project is conducted by NUS and funded by the Skills Funding Agency as part of their work on the Further Education (FE) Public Information Framework since 2009.

### What is the Learner Satisfaction Survey?

The Learner Satisfaction Survey in its original form was launched across the English Further Education sector in 2009 as part of the Framework for Excellence. Upon its introduction it became one of the largest surveys of its kind in the UK.

**In the last five years, just under 2 million FE students have responded.**

The survey is conducted online and forms part of the Governments' Further Education Public Information framework.

The 2013/14 survey opened on 18th November 2013 and ran until 13th April. The findings of the Survey are published annually through the FE Choices website. The latest publication of results - for the 2012/13 survey - took place on 12 December 2013.

FE Choices is a national tool designed to offer current and prospective students with greater information so that they may make a more informed choice about what they want to study, and where.

Responsibility for the survey and the rest of this framework falls to the Skills Funding Agency. This is the Government agency responsible for distributing funding to

further education colleges and other post-16 education and training providers.

The 2013/14 survey focuses on several key themes including:

- quality of pre-course information
- respect shown to learners
- quality of teaching
- post-course advice
- academic support
- strength of learner voice
- overall quality of college

New to the survey for 2013/14, an additional question has been included regarding whether a student would recommend their college or provider to family or friends.

Although the survey is regulated by the Skills Funding Agency, the results are collated and analysed independently by a survey contractor. Due to this, the results are trustworthy and unbiased.

Each college has a minimum number of responses that they are required to achieve to ensure that their scores are robust and therefore can be published.

This target is based on the learner profile of each college and is set to ensure that response rates are representative of the providers' student body.

The Learner Satisfaction Survey can be completed by any student who is studying on a course that is funded (or part-funded) by the Agency. This includes students who are studying:

- at a further education college
- at an adult learning provider or university
- on an apprenticeship
- on an Entry to Employment or Train to Gain programme
- through employer training

### **The Learner Satisfaction Survey offers students the opportunity to directly feedback on their experiences at college.**

This information will be used to inform future FE students - through the FE Choices website - as well as having a number of other impacts, most importantly in relation to improving the quality of provision across the sector.

There is no feedback more valuable than that provided by students themselves. These views and experiences should be central to the learning providers' quality and improvement processes, and are also a great tool in helping to inform the choices made by current and prospective students about what and where to study.

The Learner Satisfaction Survey is designed to capture reliable and meaningful data than can be used to inform the choices of current and prospective students when entering into further education.

### **By having access to this information, students will be able to make more informed choices about their education.**

The results of the survey can be used by a number of other stakeholders within the sector. When a student completes the survey, they are not only informing future students of the quality of experiences but also the Skills Funding Agency, the body which funds their provider.

The survey is a vital tool for highlighting issues affecting FE students on a national level and the data can be used by the sector to inform their work on driving up the quality of provision.

In addition, the data can be used at a local level to conduct benchmarking exercises against other providers. In doing so, and by using the data in support of their own quality and feedback mechanisms, colleges will be able to increase their understanding of the issues affecting students and can look to develop their improvement policies and procedures based on the findings.

This work will not only benefit colleges in terms of their marketing strategy but more importantly will improve the teaching and learning experiences of its students.

The survey is important to student representatives because:

- the results can be used to support campaigns leading to evidence-based positive change
- it is an opportunity for all students within FE to have their say on issues affecting them personally
- prospective students will be more informed when choosing what and where to study

To discover more about the Survey and look at some useful case studies that showcase students' unions that have worked successfully with Quality staff, tutors and class reps to increase learner participation, please see our Learner Satisfaction Survey hub.

### **NUS can support students' unions through the FE Choices Project to interpret previous year's results, share best practice and look at ways of promoting the Survey with learners and relevant staff members.**