

## SurrIDGE P 'The National Student Survey 2005-2007: findings and trends' (July 2008)

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### Overview

This report presents analysis of the National Student Survey (NSS) in all three years. It focuses on mapping student, course and institutional effects on NSS scores, and institutional variation over the three years.

### Aims and background

2007 was the third year of the NSS, allowing for a full assessment of differences in NSS scores over time as well as changes in the impact of student, course and institutional characteristics on NSS scores.

### Methodology

Results are analysed using six scales: Teaching and learning, Assessment and feedback, Academic support, Organisation and managements, Learning resources, Personal development (pg 6). Three broad groups of characteristics are used to explore results within these scales: those of the student, course and institution (using HESA data) (pp 8-9). The composition of the student population and potential overlaps between groups are assessed using multi-variate techniques (pg 9).

### Key points

#### *Stability*

**Teaching and learning (T&L):** More positive were students who were: female; older; in subject areas with an RAE score of 5 or 5\*; in HEIs with fewer than 10,000 students. Less positive were: Black, Asian, Mixed and Other ethnic groups (than White students); in HEIs with low average A level scores on entry (pg 16).

**Assessment and feedback (A&FB):** More positive were students who were: 31 or over on entry, from Black ethnic groups, who entered from an Access course; living with parents; from outside the UK; in subject areas with an RAE score of 5 or 5\*; in HEIs with fewer than 10,000 students (pg 16).

**Academic support:** More positive were: outside the UK; in subject areas with an RAE score of 3 or 3a than those with 4; whose course was franchised; in HEIs with fewer than 10,000 students. Less positive: female; aged 19 than those 18 or under; from Asian, Mixed and Other ethnic groups than White (pg 17).

**Organisation and management (O&M):** More positive: Black ethnic groups; from outside UK; in subject areas with an RAE score of 5 or 5\*. Less positive: aged 19-40 (than 18 or under); with dyslexia; had previous experience of HE; in HEIs with low average A level scores on entry (pg 17).

**Learning resources:** More positive: living with parents; in subject areas with an



RAE score of 5 or 5\*. Less positive: female; aged 19 or older; from Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic groups; with dyslexia; on franchised course (pg 18).

**Personal development:** More positive: entered from Access courses; on Sandwich courses; in subject areas with an RAE score of 5 or 5\*; in HEIs with fewer than 10,000 students. Less positive: aged 19-30 on entry; Asian and Mixed; with dyslexia (pg 18).

**Overall satisfaction:** More positive: in subject areas with an RAE score of 5 or 5\*; courses in Historical and Philosophical studies more positive than Law; in HEIs with fewer than 10,000 students. Less positive: aged 19-21 (than 18 or under); Asian and Mixed (than White); dyslexic; franchised; in HEIs with low average A level scores on entry (pp 18-19).

- There is more stability than change in the effects of student, course and institution over the three years (pp 21-33); but note:
  - Narrowing of gender differences on T&L, A&FB and Learning resources.
  - Narrowing of difference between Asian students and students from White ethnic groups on T&L, A&FB scales.

### ***Institutional residuals (IRs) (pg 34ff)***

These provide a measure of how an HEI is performing relative to the scores we would expect given the student, course and institutional characteristics in the model. For any model, the majority of IRs are not statistically significant i.e. the majority of HEIs are not performing differently to expectations based on their student profile.

- For T&L, A&FB and O&M scales the largest reduction in the variance between HEIs is when course characteristics are added to the model.
- The Learning Resources scale had the greatest variation among HEIs; this has reduced substantially over the period of the surveys (pg 36). However, the HEIs at the bottom of the distribution for this scale have moved closer to the rest of the HEIs over time (pg 37).
- Personal Development has the lower proportion of variation at institutional level, perhaps as it is more individualised (pp 35-6).
- Overall, there is no suggestion that there has been a shift to HEIs becoming more similar in NSS scores over time once student, course and institutional characteristics have been accounted for, other than in the Learning Resources scale – perhaps a sign of responsiveness to NSS results since it is an areas to which HEIs might be expected to be able to effect changes more rapidly (pg 38).

### ***Subject of study***

The effects of JACS1 and JACS2 groups are stable over the three years (pg 39):

- The T&L scale shows greatest stability, A&FB the least (pg 43).

Four subjects are focused on (Biological Sciences, Social Studies, Business and Administration (B&A), Creative Arts and Design (CA&D)) to provide a cross-section to ascertain if the effect of the student, course and institutional characteristics are the same in different subject areas.



- **T&L** (pg 45): In all subject areas older students are more positive; Asian students are less positive than White students (pg 45). Biological Science students on franchised courses were negative, whilst in Social Science the effect was positive.
- **A&FB** (pp 46-7): Few effects significant over all three years; students on courses other than first degrees were more positive than students on 1<sup>st</sup> degree courses in all but Social Studies.
- **Academic support** (pg 47): Very few statistically sig. effects other than ethnic group: Asian students being less positive than White students in Social Studies and B&A.
- **O&M** (pg 49): Few significant effects; as with T&L some differences in effect of franchised teaching – those on franchised courses more negative about O&M than those not.
- **Learning Resources** (pp 50-1): Significant gender effect across all subjects, with female students less positive than male.
- **Personal Development** (pp 52-4): Few effects; positive effect for those on Sandwich course for B&A and CA&D in all three years.
- **Overall satisfaction** (pp 55-6): Social Studies students whose teaching was franchised were more positive overall than those whose wasn't; those studying for a qualification other than a 1<sup>st</sup> degree in Social Studies were more satisfied.
- Breakdown by subject for institutional residuals:
  - Biological Science (pp 57-8): Greatest institutional variation on Learning Resources scale, though with no clear decline over time.
  - Social Studies (pg 58-9): Higher proportion of variation than all FT students, esp A&FB. Greatest variation in Learning Resources scale (with reduction over three years), whereas the other scales increased variation 2006-7.
  - B&A (pp 59-60): Greatest variation on O&M scale.
  - CA&D (pg 61): Greater variation at institutional level than all FT students; substantial reduction in variation on Learning Resources scale.
- Overall satisfaction – JACS1 groups (pp 62-3): No evidence that there has been reduction in institutional variation over time within subject groups.
  - Largest variation at institutional level is Subjects Allied to Medicine and Law; variation risen in Medicine and Dentistry and B&A; reduction in Law.

### ***Non-traditional students***

Explored through ascribed characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity, disability) and acquired characteristics (social class, tuition fee status, home distance, type of school, geographical position) (pg 64).

- In most scales students from Black: Caribbean groups were more positive than students from Black: African groups.
- For Overall Satisfaction all of the Asian groups were less positive than White students.



- For Black: Caribbean groups there is a significant positive interaction with age for each age group over 21 on all scales and overall. None of the other groups shows this effect (pg 71).
- There are no significant effects between gender and ethnicity (pg 71).
- Relatively few effects of socio-economic group (SEG); those with parents in SEG4 were more positive about A&FB than those in SEG1; those with parents in SEG5 were more positive about A&FB and more satisfied overall than SEG1 (pg 72).
- Students who attended state schools were more positive about T&L, A&FB, Academic Support and Personal Development than those from independent schools (pg 72).

#### ***Prior experience of HE*** (pp 74-5)

9.1% of FT students had prior HE experience: this is significant on A&FB, Learning Resources, Personal Development and Overall Satisfaction, those who had prior experience being less positive than those who had not. Since the effects are not on all scales it is unlikely that this is 'rose-tinted glasses' but rather specific to those areas. This suggests that focus group based research should include those with prior HE experience.

#### ***NHS students***

Those on NHS-funded courses were positive about Personal Development and other areas, but rated O&M lower (pp 75-7).

#### ***Overall satisfaction***

- In 2007 81.4% of FT students either agreed or mostly agreed that they were satisfied overall; this varied across institutions from 52.8% to 93.7%.
- Of FT students in 2007, 9.3% were dissatisfied, compared with 10.1% in 2006 and 9.9% in 2005.
  - Students aged 19-30 were more likely to be dissatisfied with those 18 or under; those 31 or over were more positive.
  - Students with dyslexia were more likely to express dissatisfaction, as were students in institutions with low average A level scores on entry.
  - In 2006 and 2007, female students and those from Black ethnic groups were less likely to be dissatisfied than male and White students respectively, as were students from outside the UK and those in subjects with a 5 or 5\* RAE rating (pg 84).

#### ***Part-time students***

Overall, similarities between FT/ PT students are greater than the differences.

- There are no consistent effects of distance learning (pg 86).
- PT students on courses other than 1<sup>st</sup> degrees were more positive than those on first degrees (pg 88).
- For FTs the effect of being in an HEI with 15,000-19,999 students was



not significant, whereas PTs in HEIs of this size were less positive about T&L than those in HEIs with 20,000+ (pg 88).

- Among PTs females were more positive about A&FB than males, in contrast with no significant gender difference for FTs on A&FB.
- Franchised teaching has a positive effect among PTs, and not FTs.

### **Conclusion**

- The most important finding is the stability of the majority of student, course and institutional effects over time.
- The majority of the institutional residuals are not statistically significant i.e. HEIs are performing as we would expect given their student profiles; though there is a small but significant proportion of the variation between scores attributable to institutions.
- With the exception of Learning Resources, there is no evidence of a reduction in the differences between HEIs over time.

### **Select bibliography**

See also:

Surridge P 'The National Student Survey three years on: What have we learned?' (York 2009)

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/alldisplay?type=resources&newid=ourwork/nss/Paula\\_Surridge\\_NSS\\_Three\\_Years\\_On&site=york](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/alldisplay?type=resources&newid=ourwork/nss/Paula_Surridge_NSS_Three_Years_On&site=york)

Marsh H and Cheng J 'National Student Survey of teaching in UK universities: dimensionality, multilevel structure, and differentiation at the level of university and discipline: preliminary results' (Oxford 2008)

### **Link to full text**

[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/RDreports/2008/rd12\\_08/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/RDreports/2008/rd12_08/)

