



Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience

The Scottish HE Data Landscape

An overview of: Postgraduate taught/research experience surveys (PTES/PRES)

Type and scope of the data

The PTES and PRES surveys offer HEIs data on the postgraduate learning experience. Commissioned by Advance HE (previously the Higher Education Academy), these surveys enable HEIs to monitor how satisfied students are about their course or research degree programme and provide an opportunity for students to offer feedback and suggest areas for improvement. The surveys are primarily used as enhancement surveys, fostering a culture of reflection and innovation while informing national debates on postgraduate education.

Time period of data renewal

These surveys are available for HEIs to run annually. HEIs are able to set the time period for opening and closing the surveys within limits set out by Advance HE - normally between February and July.

Questions that the data can help to explore or answer

While both surveys explore the quality of support and the services offered by HEIs, the PTES survey explores questions on learning and teaching, resources and services, course management, organisation and professional development, while the PRES survey explores questions on supervision, research culture and progression and other areas pertaining to a PhD or MPhil degree, for instance. The surveys also enable HEIs to monitor differences across departments and faculties, and demographic differences.

Important caveats, exclusions etc.

Common response rates are around 30-40 per cent and so making assumptions about the entire postgraduate taught or postgraduate research population in a given HEI should be done with caution. New starts are sometimes excluded by HEIs while it is not always clear who is eligible or available to answer the survey due to dependence on student records and email distribution. The mechanics of an online survey prevent students completing the survey by hand or the classroom unless otherwise instructed.

Publications/analyses which use the data

HEIs are able to analyse, report and publish their own data using the Online Surveys (formerly Bristol Online Surveys) tool. Advance HE also provides detailed Excel reports with benchmarking data to allow HEIs to compare themselves against the sector. Specific institution results are not published, but institutions are told which quartile they rank in.

Where to find the data and any further published analysis

www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/surveys/postgraduate-taught-experience-survey

www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/surveys/postgraduate-research-experience-survey