



Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2025-26

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Introduction

This report summarises UHI North, West and Hebrides (UHI NWH) student feedback and satisfaction levels from the 2025-26 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES). The SSES provides a means to evaluate and enhance college provision in Scotland through a national approach to monitoring student satisfaction and engagement. This report provides survey response rates and satisfaction rates for students on full-time and part-time further education (FE) and higher education (HE) courses. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) require us to return data relating to FE students to them annually.

Methodology and Sample

The survey contains thirteen SFC questions and further questions set by the regional group. All SFC SSES questions are scored against a choice of four answers (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) except for one question with five possible answers. The regional questions use a similar format with a couple of yes/no questions. There are several free text questions for students to comment further in their own words.

The agreed student sample for the SSES regional survey was in line with SFC guidance and included students on courses of 4 credits or more, (nominal learning hours of 160 or greater). The sample included students studying FE and HE courses SCQF 1-10. The sample excluded students taking part in the National Student Survey (NSS) and students on postgraduate programmes of study (SCQF 11-12).

Summary

Whilst **response rates** remain lower than the internal target of 60% set; both the main survey and senior phase survey have seen an increase overall, at **25%** (up 2% from previous AY) and **38%** (up 13% from previous AY) respectively.

Of those students who did respond, **overall satisfaction** is high; 94% for the main survey (a 3% increase from the previous AY) and 94% for the Senior Phase survey (a 5% decrease from the previous AY). There are several standout areas where overall satisfaction is extremely high, sitting at 100%. Other areas fall under the overall college benchmark of 94%.

In analysing the data, it must be noted that for some the respondent numbers are low which does impact heavily on percentage figures.

Academic teams will be given access to results which allow them to filter by course to view satisfaction rates and comments. This is restricted so that staff cannot identify individual students or easily filter by our three legacy campuses to compare and complete. Results for all staff: [NWH Quality & Exams - Quality Enhancement - SSES Results Analysis - All Documents](#).

Main Survey

Response rates

	All			Further Education			Higher Education		
Cognate group	Sample	Response	%	Sample	Response	%	Sample	Response	%
Adventure Studies	96	36	39%	19	14	74%	77	23	30%
Built Environment, Construction	70	27	39%	64	26	41%	6	1	17%
Business	66	7	11%	33	4	12%	32	3	9%
Computing	71	17	24%	33	7	21%	38	10	26%
Creative Industries	203	85	42%	84	47	56%	119	38	32%
Early Education and Child Care	117	45	38%	45	31	69%	72	14	19%
Education	9	6	67%				9	6	67%
Engineering	270	74	31%	113	29	26%	157	55	35%
Equine	14	1	7%				14	1	7%
Golf	166	32	19%				166	32	19%
Hair & Beauty	59	36	61%	59	36	61%			
Health & Social Care	177	54	31%	135	51	38%	42	3	7%
Hospitality	50	26	52%	50	26	52%			
Humanities, Applied Social Sciences & Gaelic	135	9	7%	38	1	3%	97	8	8%
Land Sciences	145	20	14%	58	5	9%	87	15	17%
Marine Science	16	2	13%	16	2	13%			
Nat 5 & Higher	138	16	12%	138	16	12%			
Renewable Sciences	38	4	10%				38	4	10%
Supported Learning	46	13	28%	46	13	28%			
Vet Nursing	281	23	8%	247	9	4%	34	14	41%
Total	2167	533	25%	1169	315	27%	959	225	23%

Of the twenty cognate subject groups, ten areas response rates are higher than the overall response rate of 25%, with the highest response seen in the Education and Hair & Beauty areas. Of the areas that fall under the overall 25% response rate, responses range from 24% to 7%.

Response rates of FE students are higher than HE students at 27% compared to 23%. This represents a smaller range than the last AY, demonstrating a more even reach. (2024/25 SSES FE 34%, HE 14%).

There are strong response rates in Further Education Adventure Studies (74% of 19 students) and Higher Education (Education) (67% of 9 students). There are individual courses with exceptional high response rates. For example, NC Hairdressing SCQF 5, NC Jewellery SCQF 6, NQ Access to Nursing Level 6, NQ Hair and Beauty Level 4, NQ Hairdressing Level 5, NC Jewellery Units SCQF 6, SVQ 1 Professional Cookery Units (SQA) SCQF 4, Drawing Skills Level 5, Sound Production, PGDE Secondary (English medium) all at 100%.

Overall Satisfaction - Trend

All respondents have an overall satisfaction rate of **94%**, which means they have selected either Agree or Strongly Agree in relation to the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience”.

Question	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.	94	91	91
2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.	84	85	85
3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.	97	97	97
4. I am able to influence learning on my course.	85	87	85
5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.	90	92	91
6. The way I'm taught helps me learn.	86	87	85
7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.	93	90	89
8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.	85	88	88
9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.	94	93	93
10. Any change in my course or teaching has been communicated well.	87	87	88
11. The online learning materials for my course have helped me learn.	89	87	86
12. I feel that I am part of the college community.	84	81	82
13. The College Students' Association influences change for the better.	93	92	91

Students clearly report that staff encourage them to take responsibility for their learning, reflected in a very high satisfaction rate of 97% and sustained consistently over the past three years.

Q7 (developing knowledge and skills) and Q13 (the student association influencing positive change) also demonstrate strong performance, each achieving a 93% satisfaction rate and showing a clear upward trend over the three-year period.

Among the questions scoring below 90%, Q8—relating to whether student suggestions are taken seriously—requires further attention. Satisfaction has declined from 88% to 85% over the last three years, indicating a need to better understand how students perceive the impact of their voice on both programme-level and wider college improvements.

While the satisfaction rate for feeling part of the college community (Q12) remains comparatively low at 84%, this represents a positive 3% increase over the same period, suggesting gradual improvement.

Overall satisfaction by curriculum area: FE and HE

	All		Further Education		Higher Education	
Cognate group	Raw data	Satisfaction rate	Raw data	Satisfaction rate	Raw data	Satisfaction rate
Adventure Studies	37	100%	14	100%	23	100%
Built Environment, Construction	39	97%	39	97%		
Business	6	100%	4	100%	2	100%
Computing	15	100%	6	100%	8	100%
Creative Industries	85	100%	47	100%	38	100%
Early Education and Child Care	38	92%	32	91%	6	100%
Education	12	92%			12	92%
Engineering	89	93%	33	100%	56	89%
Equine	16	100%	1	100%	15	100%
Golf	32	84%			32	84%
Hair & Beauty	36	100%			36	100%
Health & Social Care	55	86%	51	84%	4	100%
Hospitality	26	96%			26	96%
Humanities, Applied Social Sciences & Gaelic	11	100%	1	100%	10	100%
Land Sciences	18	89%	5	100%	13	85%
Marine Science	2	100%	2	100%		
Nat 5 & Higher	16	69%	16	69%		
Renewable Sciences	4	75%			4	75%
Supported Learning	13	100%	13	100%		
Vet Nursing	8	75%	8	75%		
Overall	558	94%	334	94%	224	93%

Of the twenty cognate subject groups, eleven areas satisfaction rates are higher than the overall satisfaction rate of **94%**, with **nine of those areas experiencing a 100% satisfaction rate**. Of the areas that fall under the overall 94% satisfaction rate, satisfaction ranges from 93% to 69%.

Satisfaction rates of FE students are marginally higher than HE students at **94%** compared to **93%**.

Main Survey Comments

Students were asked, “about their learning and teaching” and to comment about their overall student experience, the overall themes from the question are very similar as last year

1. Learning and Teaching

Strengths

- Many students describe lecturers as **knowledgeable, enthusiastic, approachable, and supportive**. Several individuals and course teams are explicitly praised as “excellent,” “amazing,” or “outstanding.”

Positive experiences often highlight:

- Engaging teaching styles
- Real-world relevance and lived experience shared by lecturers
- Adaptability to different student needs (e.g. disabilities, mature Students, working students)
- Strong delivery in practical, studio-based, or hands-on learning contexts
- Some courses are described as **well structured, inspiring, and transformative**, fostering confidence, skill development, and progression aspirations.

Challenges

- A major and recurring concern is the **inconsistency in teaching quality** between lecturers on the same course.

Students report:

- Lecturers reading directly from poorly prepared slides
- Content going off-topic or lacking relevance to assessments
- Insufficient explanation of key concepts needed for exams
- Over-reliance on self-study without adequate expert input

Online teaching is a key pressure point:

- Many students struggle to engage, ask questions, or learn effectively online
- Some feel online delivery is poorly adapted, cancelled frequently, or reduced to minimal contact time
- Others, however, value recordings and flexibility, especially mature, rural, disabled, or working students

Several comments identify **outdated or inaccurate materials** and instances of lecturers sharing personal opinions rather than evidence-based teaching.

2. Assessment

Strengths

Where assessment works well, students note:

- Helpful, constructive feedback
- Clear guidance on assignments
- Supportive approaches to re-sits framed as part of learning
- Practical and authentic assessment is valued more highly than reflective or heavily theoretical tasks on some courses.

Challenges

Feedback quality and timeliness is one of the most significant issues raised:

- Feedback is sometimes extremely brief, unclear, or delayed beyond expected turnaround times
- Students often feel unsure whether they are “on track”

Lack of clarity around:

- Assessment criteria
- Expectations
- How assessments link to teaching content
- Heavy clustering of exams and deadlines causes stress and overwhelm.

Group assessments (particularly online) are perceived as difficult and not always effective for learning.

Some assessments are viewed as irrelevant, outdated, or misaligned with future study or professional goals.

Graded Units and high-stakes exams are criticised by some as barriers rather than supports to learning.

3. Student Support

Strengths

Individual examples of **excellent academic and pastoral support** are common:

- Staff going “above and beyond”
- Support services praised for disability accommodations and accessibility
- Flexibility for mature students and those returning to education

Where support is effective, students feel:

- Encouraged
- Seen as individuals
- More confident in their progress

Challenges

Support is **unevenly experienced**.

Key issues include:

- Difficulty getting responses to emails or requests for help
- Lack of proactive check-ins on progress or wellbeing
- Some students unaware of their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) for long periods

Some students perceive:

- Unequal access to staff time
- An emphasis on academic performance over health and wellbeing

Online Students, in particular, report feelings of isolation, hesitation to ask questions, and uncertainty about their standing.

4. Organisation and Management

Strengths

Where organisation works well, students mention:

- Clear course structures
- Well-maintained online learning environments
- Improved systems following recent staff or management changes
- Recorded lectures and fully online delivery are seen as enabling access for rural and working students.

Challenges This is one of the most consistently criticised areas.

Common issues include:

- Poor communication about timetables, assessment dates, and changes
- Frequent lecture cancellations or shortened sessions
- Late delivery of learning materials and revision resources
- Inconsistent or contradictory information across lecturers (e.g. UCAS, grading, resits)
- Brightspace and online systems are sometimes described as sparse, unclear, outdated, or confusing
- Practical/logistical concerns also appear, such as insufficient printer credit for paper-based courses and timetable clashes left unresolved.

Course starts are sometimes described as chaotic, with:

- Staff changes
- Unclear leadership
- Lack of early induction or consistency

5. Community and Belonging

Strengths

Some students report:

- Strong course identities
- A sense of belonging fostered by lecturers
- Active encouragement of collaboration and discussion—even in fully remote contexts

Small, supportive cohorts and enthusiastic staff contribute positively to student morale. Where inclusion is intentional, students feel valued and motivated.

Challenges

Many online students feel **disconnected from both the course community and wider college life**. Some students describe isolation, particularly when studying remotely or part-time.

Limited opportunities to:

- Interact with peers
- Participate in live classes
- Engage beyond assignments

Practical intensity or sparse timetables can prevent deeper engagement with the college community, even where opportunities theoretically exist.

Senior Phase

Response and Satisfaction rates

Commented [LC1]: Donna McAndrew to update table

Department	Total Enrolments	Responses	Responses %	Satisfaction %
Adventure Studies	10	8	80%	100%
Built Environment, Construction	56	41	73%	100%
Business	45	21	47%	86%
Computing	66	9	14%	100%
Creative Industries	5	1	20%	100%
Early Education and Child Care	51	22	43%	100%
Engineering	69	0	0%	0%
ESOL	5	3	60%	100%
Hair & Beauty	60	36	60%	97%
Health and Social Care	67	36	54%	92%
Hospitality	60	21	35%	100%
Humanities, Applied Social Sciences & Gaelic	9	0	0%	0%
Land Sciences	23	6	26%	100%
Marine Science	55	23	42%	100%
Nat 5 & Higher/Adv	160	53	33%	79%
Total	741	280	38%	94%

NB the Senior Phase survey uses an open survey link. Several students did not select a course to which their responses could be identified. This will have a marginal impact on the results displayed above.

Response Rates

There are five cognate groups above 50% response rate target; Adventure Studies (80%), ESOL and Hair & Beauty (60%), Health & Social Care (54%). There are individual courses with high response rates, for example, NPA Social Services and Healthcare SCQF 6, Higher ESOL SCQF 6, Foundation Apprenticeship Social Services Healthcare 2 Year SCQF 6, SfW Maritime Studies SCQF 5, all at (100%).

Overall Satisfaction Rate

All respondents have a satisfaction rate of 94%, which means they have selected either Agree or Strongly Agree in relation to the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience”.

Almost all cognate subject areas had an overall satisfaction rate over the 94% benchmark. Three areas fell under this, ranging from 92% to 79%. One area did not receive any responses.

Satisfaction: Trend

Question	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience.	94	99	97
2. Staff regularly discuss my progress with me.	90	88	91
3. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.	99	99	99
4. I am able to influence learning on my course.	91	94	96
5. I receive useful feedback which informs my future learning.	94	95	95
6. The way I'm taught helps me learn.	93	89	93
7. My time at college has helped me develop knowledge and skills for the workplace.	92	94	94
8. I believe student suggestions are taken seriously.	96	95	96
9. I believe all students at the college are treated equally and fairly by staff.	99	97	96
10. Any change in my course or teaching has been communicated well.	96	97	96
11. The online learning materials for my course have helped me learn.	92	91	91
12. I feel that I am part of the college community.	89	85	85
13. The College Students' Association influences change for the better.	100	100	98

It is interesting to see the decrease (5%) in overall satisfaction (from 99% to 94%) has not been reflected throughout the remainder of the students' responses. Early indications (see previous table) suggest this could be related to the Advanced Higher / Higher / National 5 students, although further analysis is required to confirm this.

Students clearly report that staff encourage them to take responsibility for their learning, reflected in a very high satisfaction rate of 99% and sustained consistently over the past three years. Students also feel staff treat them equally and fairly (99%) representing a 3% increase over the last three years.

The difference in responses to Q4 – students able to influence learning on my course and Q8 – I believe student suggestions are taken seriously, with Q4 showing a decrease in satisfaction over the three-year period; and Q8 showing a consistent level will be an interesting area to further explore. Coupled with the increase in satisfaction for Q12 – feeling part of a college community, it is suggestive of enhanced pastoral and local arrangements being implemented.

Senior Phase Comments

Students were asked, “tell us what you like about your course and the college”, the overall themes from the question are:

1. Learning and Teaching

Strengths

- Students frequently praise the quality of teaching, describing it as *clear, engaging, fun, and supportive*.
- Several comments highlight that lecturers help students understand topics well and deliver material in an accessible way.
- Practical skill development is noted positively (e.g. learning to use sewing machines, scissors, and colour matching).
- Lecturers are described as kind, encouraging, funny, and committed, which contributes to enjoyment of learning.

- Feedback indicates staff enthusiasm and strong relationships with Students (“very lovely lecturers”, “great stories”).

Areas for Improvement

- Some students report difficulties with online learning, preferring more in-person delivery.
- Requests for *more practical work* and *more individual writing assignments* rather than group exercises suggest a desire for varied teaching approaches.

2. Assessment

Strengths

- Positive comments about open-book assessments, which help students perform to the best of their ability.
- Students appreciate clear preparation and support for assessments.
- Feedback on assessments is described as encouraging and helpful, with staff providing excellent guidance.

Areas for Improvement

- “Too many assessments” is a recurring concern.
- One learner highlights the burden of work outside the course and the pace of assessment, particularly in an online context.

3. Student Support

Strengths

- Strong emphasis on staff support: Students feel lecturers are helpful, available, and committed to keeping students “on track”.
- Students feel comfortable asking for help and value the encouragement they receive.
- Many Students express gratitude, noting personal achievement and growth during the course.
- Lecturers are recognised for preparing students well and offering continuous feedback.

4. Organisation and Management

Strengths

- General satisfaction with the course structure and delivery is evident (“good course”, “very good course”).
- Online teaching style is appreciated by some Students.

Areas for Improvement

- Some students struggle with keeping on top of workload, course pace, and expectations.
- Requests for better balance in workload and assessment volume.
- Preference expressed by some Students for in-person delivery or a blended approach to improve engagement and organisation.

5. Community and Belonging

Strengths

- Strong sense of enjoyment and belonging: Students describe the course as *fun*, *cool*, and enjoyable.
- Students value the social environment and “college life” experience.
- Warm, positive relationships with staff foster a supportive community atmosphere.
- Repeated humorous comments about staff deserving pay rises reflect affection and appreciation.
- Students express happiness attending the course and feeling welcomed.

Next Steps for the Survey Results:

- Disseminate the Headline report to all relevant committees and groups
- Share the database for both the main survey and the Senior Phase survey with curriculum and professional service teams to allow granular analysis
- Request a response from each team regarding actions to be taken to address any areas of concern and to highlight good practice where students have identified this
- Undertake more detailed analysis at organisational level to incorporate protected characteristics, trend data and the areas for exploration identified in the report above.
- Identify areas of focus for 2026-27 in liaison with SMT to inform the Quality Enhancement plan. Initial areas include the student voice – influencing learning on their course, and whether student suggestions are taken seriously; and areas relating to learning, teaching and assessment – methods, inconsistency in learning materials, supporting progress.