

SENATE

Title of paper: National Student Survey Update

Main purpose of the paper: For discussion

Presenter(s): Professor Ruth Valentine, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education

Date of paper: For update and discussion at Senate Wednesday 23 September 2026

Purpose of the paper

To provide a summary and update on the NSS 2026 results and initial considerations for Institutional interventions for the next academic year. Full NSS data is available for Senators to interrogate via [Strategic Insights Portal](#).

Relation to strategy and values

Education Strategy

Recommendations: Table 1 summarises initial recommendations for Institutional support to in themes and Schools that are furthest from their Benchmarks, and have potential to have impact. Senators are asked to feedback on recommendations as part of the discussion and have time to suggest further actions which can be considered by UEC in October meeting.

Consultation to date (including any previous committee consideration and its outcome):

- Education Deans
- Discussion at UEB
- University Leadership Group feed in
- Onward trajectory and Governance through UEC

Information Classification:

- ☐ Strictly Confidential – Information that is deemed of higher risk if inappropriately disclosed. This includes information defined as ‘Special Category’ information in the UK GDPR.
- ☐ Confidential – Sensitive information that could cause harm to the University if disclosed and should be limited to specific groups within the University. Includes personal data and commercially sensitive information.
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National Student Survey 2026: Headlines, initial analysis and next steps. Update for Senate September 2026

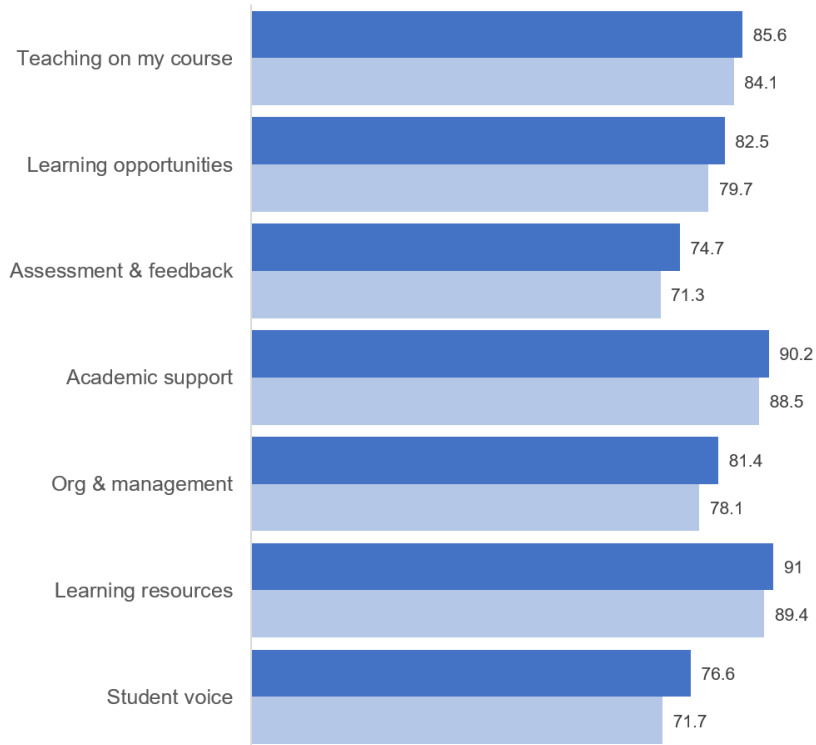
Context

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) is open to all final year undergraduates at UK higher education institutions. It provides key data for students when they are choosing an institution and for the Office for Students (OfS) Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise. In future, providers falling short on quality in TEF will be subject to regulatory intervention, including restrictions on student number growth.
2. NSS questions range across seven core themes: teaching on my course, learning opportunities, assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources and student voice; plus two additional questions relating to the communication of wellbeing support and freedom of speech. All themes are in scope for future TEF metrics excluding organisation and management.
3. NSS results are provided with an OfS benchmark for each metric. The benchmark is an adjusted sector average, giving a sense of an 'expected' performance, that is, how similar providers with similar students perform. Difference from benchmark is the key metric rather than absolute figures.
4. NSS results show a 'positivity measure', that is, the proportion of students responding who gave a positive answer to the question. There is no neutral response option.
5. Full results are available through the [Strategic Insights Portal](#).

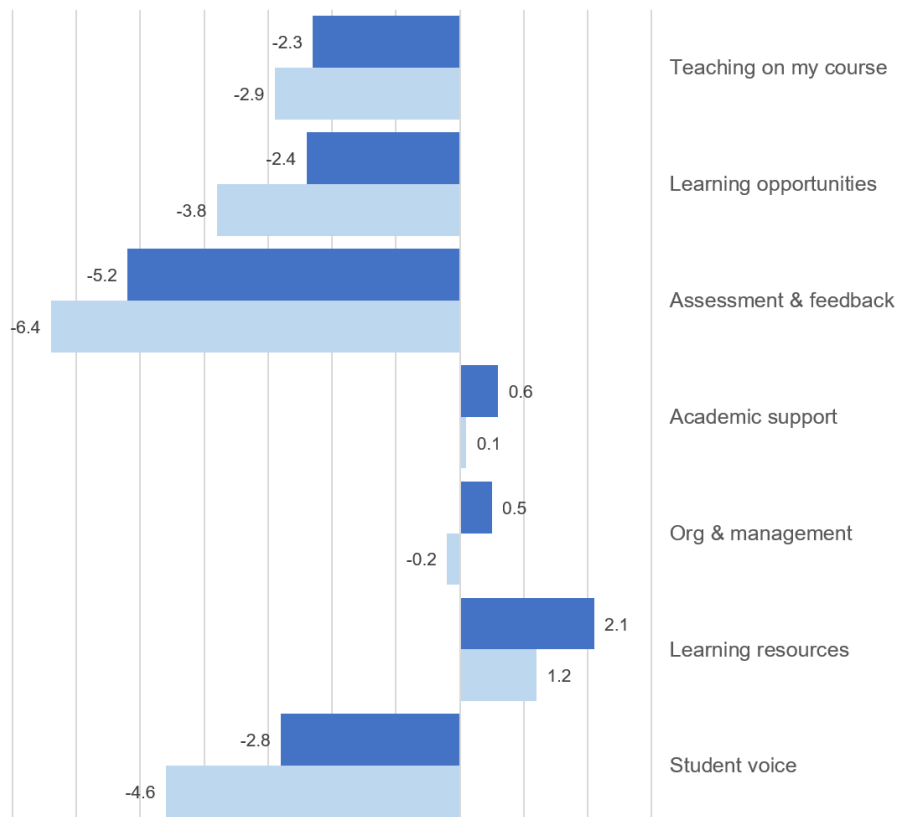
Performance 2026 vs 2025

6. The University has experienced a sustained decline in student satisfaction reported in the NSS across multiple areas of student experience over the last ten years, but the NSS 2026 results provide support for cautious optimism that efforts to enhance the student experience are bearing fruit with improvements in positivity measure and most importantly in results relative to benchmark across **all** NSS themes. In some subject areas we are seeing significant improvements.

Positivity measure by theme 2026 vs 2025



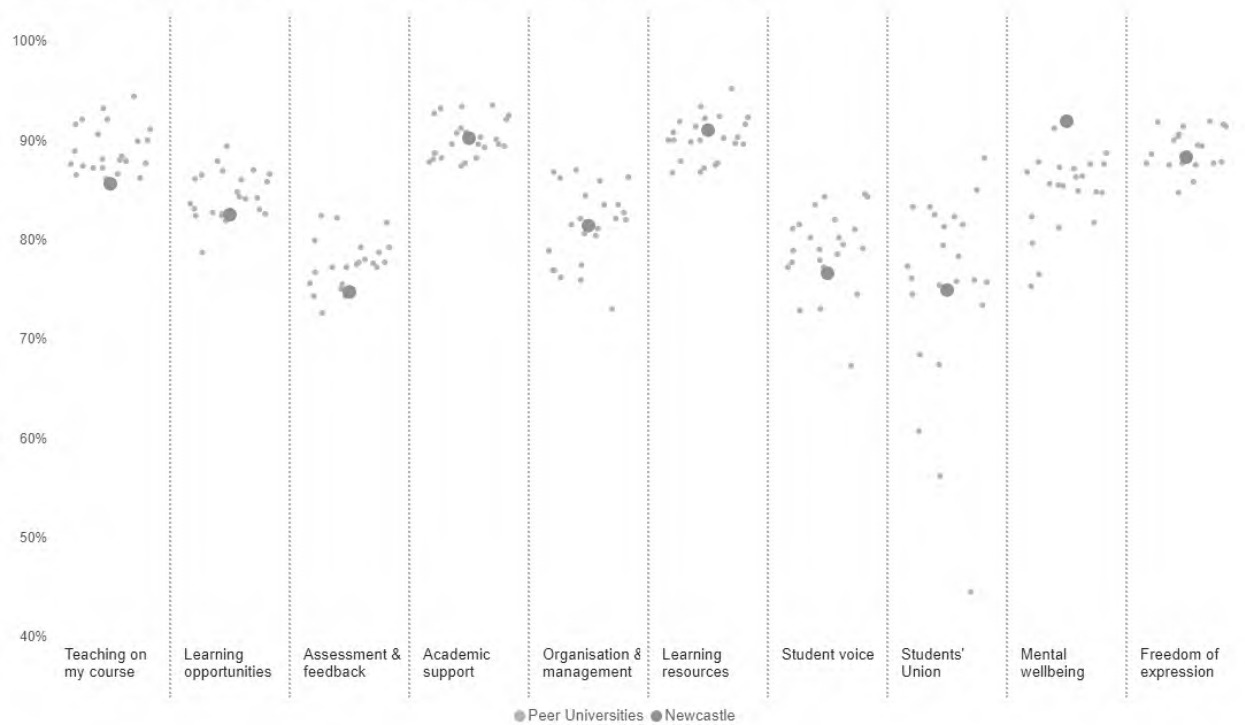
Distance from benchmark 2026 vs 2025



Performance in the RG, the region and the sector

7. The University's results relative to other Russell Group universities remain relatively unchanged in 2026 vs 2025. With rank improvements by three places for Learning Opportunities and Learning resources, decline by 1 place for organisation and management, with all other ranks remaining the same. Compared to the sector, our position is improving.

Distribution of positivity scores across Russell Group Universities by NSS question themes



RG and sector aggregate scores across each of the 7 main themes

	2025					2026				
	Newcastle	NCL/RG	RG	NCL/Sec	Sector	Newcastle	NCL/RG	RG	NCL/Sec	Sector
Teaching on my course	84.1	-3.5	87.6	-2.3	86.4	85.6	-3.5	89.1	-2.1	87.7
Learning opportunities	79.7	-3.0	82.7	-4.4	84.1	82.5	-2.0	84.5	-3.1	85.6
Assessment & feedback	71.3	-3.3	74.6	-9.4	80.7	74.7	-2.8	77.5	-8.0	82.7
Academic support	88.5	0.3	88.2	1.1	87.4	90.2	0.0	90.2	1.0	89.2
Organisation & management	78.1	-0.6	78.7	1.2	76.9	81.4	0.0	81.4	1.9	79.5
Learning resources	89.4	0.5	88.9	2.2	87.2	91.0	0.8	90.2	2.7	88.3
Student voice	71.7	-4.2	75.9	-5.3	77.0	76.6	-2.3	78.9	-3.3	79.9
N.B. RG & Sector averages excluding Newcastle										
Shading - difference										
-1.0 or lower										
-0.9 to +0.9										
+1.0 or higher										

8. With regards to our regional position, Newcastle's overall performance is below our regional competitors with the exception of Northumbria.

	Teaching on my course	Learning opportunities	Assessment & feedback	Academic support	Organisation & management	Learning resources	Student voice
Newcastle	85.6	82.5	74.7	90.2	81.4	91.0	76.6
Durham	92.1	86.5	82.4	93.2	86.2	91.9	81.5
Northumbria	84.9	84.3	80.1	87.3	80.4	91.2	77.6
Sunderland	89.4	89.1	88.1	92.0	83.3	90.3	84.7
Teesside	90.3	88.0	89.1	89.4	77.4	90.4	82.6

Full service quartile



Next steps

9. Faculties will be undertaking their own reviews of NSS 2026 results reporting to University Education Committee (UEC) in October, including, but not limited to targeted interventions focused on subject areas who are not showing results at or above benchmark or progression towards benchmark.
10. In addition to Faculty interventions at subject level, at a University level, UEC will agree targeted interventions. These will be discussed and agreed in October. See Table 1.

Action	How	When	Led by
Institutional level - Assessment and Feedback	Assessment and Feedback policy was introduced AY 2025/26. This should be adhered to and monitored by DPDs through report to	September 2026	PVCE, LTDS and HoAU/FPVCs

	BoS (raised to SEB if necessary) and FEC. Institutionally, LTDS will now monitor compliance of policy through audit of guidance on canvas (along with an audit of Canvas Baseline compliance). Any School not compliant, HoAU will be contacted and will result in follow up action		
Targeted – T&L theme: School/Programmes with scores furthest away from BM, where increases in scores could have the biggest impact on institutional position.	Based upon analysis by planning, target schools where return on improvement will be greatest. Meetings are scheduled with these School/Programmes in October. Action plans from Schools to included agreed institutional support. Support/resource provided could be, but not limited to: 11. Feedback turnaround time audit and quality audit with targeted training 12. VLE baseline audit and learning material quality check with targeted training 13. End of module evaluation 14. Teaching development observations	September 2026	PVCE, Faculty Deans, SLT within School (DoE, School Manager and HoAU)

Institutional T&L themes: Support teaching quality improvement through module level data	Dashboard to support Boards of Studies in their programme oversight role via Continuous programme review (CPR) dashboard. (replacing AMR) Version 1.0 Metrics from October 2026 include: • Continuation rates • Degree attainment • Graduate Outcomes data • Module registration / population • Student performance data Future metrics being explored: • Student attendance data 15. Student engagement data 16. Assessment engagement data	Semester 1 2026 and throughout year	EPGS BoS to review teaching quality as per CPR. HoAU to review data to inform any deep dive into module level issues.
Institutional T&L theme: Support teaching quality improvement through evidence – based enhancement.	Introduce quick ‘Pulse Surveys’ to acquire Student Feedback. Formalise Mid Module Feedback in Semester 1: Adapt current mid module feedback policy, to include agreed formalised questions in pulse survey format – these will be reported to BoS and flagged if below 80% positivity score.	Mid Semester 1 and mid and end of Semester 2	Dean of Students/PVCE. HoAU and DoE/module leads to review results and respond to issues raised - (1) acting to resolve any issue (where appropriate), and (2) communicating this to students (Ask, Act, Acknowledge)

	Develop end of module feedback pulse survey and post module feedback pulse survey in addition to mid module to roll out in Semester 2. Peer Dialogue. To continue as published but introduce more formal monitoring and reporting of compliance of completion– to be fed back to HoAU (future addition to CPR dashboard). Develop further toolkit for peer observers. Where issues with teaching are identified through peer dialogue/C&P colleagues can be required to engage with ‘Teaching development observation’ - support from colleagues trained in teaching observation and feedback. Sharing Successful approaches from high/improved performing Schools, through DoE forum, ULG, case studies and targeted workshops/interventions		For positivity scores below 80%, deep dive into module and could be triangulated with teaching development observations. Student Voice Working Group to agree questions for pulse surveys and consistency of messaging. LTDS to support teaching development observations and training where needed.
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Institutional Student Voice theme: Strengthen Student voice through visible action	Build on the 25-26 “You said, we listened” campaign at University and school level, focusing resource on schools performing below benchmark in this area and highlight what has changed Townhall sessions in large schools, and schools significantly below BM Email/student noticeboard updates SSC meetings Opportunities for students to come to drop ins with PVCE, Dean of Students, Academic registrar	Semester 1 2026 and throughout year	Dean of Students /Student Voice working group (including NUSU)
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17. In addition, all student services will review results, reporting to Student Experience Wellbeing Subcommittee (SEWSC). The Dean of Students, working in partnership with NUSU, will accelerate plans to enhance student voice, including changes to student representation, reporting through SWESC and UEC.

Ruth Valentine, PVC Education
Sept 2026

Annex A

	PM 2026 (%)	PM 2025 (%)	<i>Change in score</i>	Bmk 2026 (%)	Diff from Bmk 2026 (%point)	<i>Diff from Bmk 2025 (%point)</i>	<i>Change in diff from Bmk</i>	RG Rank 2026*	<i>RG Rank 2025*</i>	<i>Change in RG Rank</i>
Theme 1: Teaching on my course	85.6	84.1	<i>1.5</i>	87.9	-2.3	-2.9	<i>0.6</i>	24	24	<i>0</i>
Theme 2: Learning opportunities	82.5	79.7	<i>2.8</i>	84.9	-2.4	-3.8	<i>1.4</i>	20	23	<i>3</i>
Theme 3: Assessment and feedback	74.7	71.3	<i>3.4</i>	79.9	-5.2	-6.4	<i>1.2</i>	21	21	<i>0</i>
Theme 4: Academic support	90.2	88.5	<i>1.7</i>	89.6	0.6	0.1	<i>0.5</i>	11	11	<i>0</i>
Theme 5: Organisation and management	81.4	78.1	<i>3.3</i>	80.9	0.5	-0.2	<i>0.7</i>	14	=13	<i>-1</i>
Theme 6: Learning resources	91.0	89.4	<i>1.6</i>	88.9	2.1	1.2	<i>0.9</i>	9	12	<i>3</i>
Theme 7: Student voice	76.6	71.7	<i>4.9</i>	79.4	-2.8	-4.6	<i>1.8</i>	20	20	<i>0</i>
Students' Union (Q25)	74.9	73.0	<i>1.9</i>	76.7	-1.8	-0.3	<i>-1.5</i>	17	14	<i>-3</i>
Mental Wellbeing (Q26)	91.9	89.8	<i>2.1</i>	84.8	7.1	7.7	<i>-0.6</i>	2	1	<i>-1</i>
Freedom of expression (Q27)	88.3	86.6	<i>1.7</i>	88.9	-0.6	-1.0	<i>0.4</i>	12 (out of 20)	13 (out of 20)	<i>1</i>

*out of 24 unless stated