

Communicating to Support Students and Enable Informed Decisions

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The Higher and Further Education Marketing and
Communications Event 9 June 2021



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I will be covering

- Ensuring students can make informed decisions through clear and understandable data and information – what the OfS is doing
 - Discover Uni
 - The authoritative source of information for students
 - What it covers and plans for further development
- The role of universities and colleges in providing clear information to students
 - Improving the consistency, accessibility and clarity of information for students
- The NSS review and other student information updates from OfS

Who we are

- The independent regulator for higher education in England
- We aim to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers
- Our work covers all students:
 - undergraduate or postgraduate
 - young or mature
 - full-time or part-time
 - studying on a campus or by distance learning
 - regardless of nationality.

Our objectives

Every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers.

Participation

Objective 1

All students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

Experience

Objective 2

All students, from all backgrounds, receive a high quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of provider, campus or course closure.

Outcomes

Objective 3

All students, from all backgrounds, are able to progress into employment, further study, and fulfilling lives, and their qualifications hold their value over time.

Value for money

Objective 4

All students, from all backgrounds, receive value for money.

What we do

- Our functions, powers and duties are set out by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. Our regulatory framework explains how we will perform these duties.
- We regulate registered English higher education providers. We do this by:
 - creating and maintaining a register of higher education providers who must meet a range of conditions
 - working to ensure that students and prospective students have access to high quality information, advice and guidance
 - providing pressure and support to providers to improve equality of opportunity
 - promoting excellence and innovation in teaching
 - working with providers and employers to address skills gaps and make graduates more employable.

Why this matters

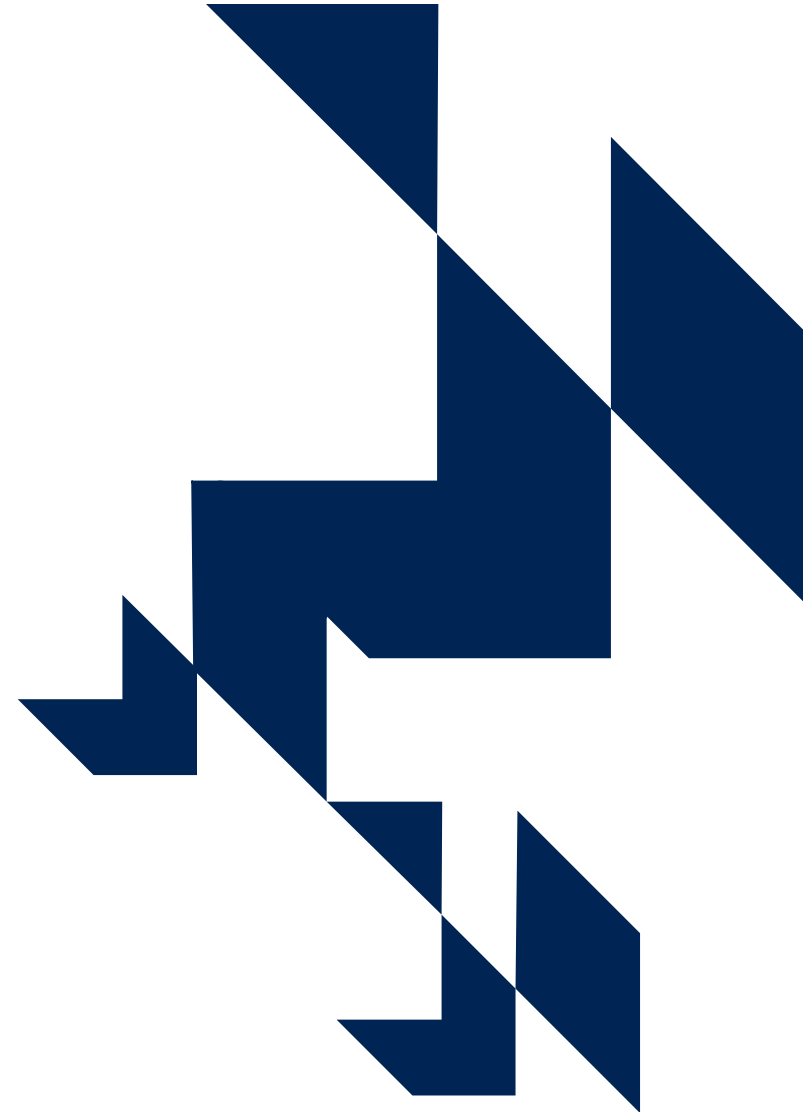
- Our work is important for all students. We want to ensure that all students, from all backgrounds, can:
 - access courses that meet their needs and aspirations
 - enjoy courses which stretch and inspire them, and lead to positive outcomes
 - leave courses equipped with the knowledge, qualifications, skills and attributes they need to find employment, embark on further study or to set up their own business
 - flourish in the world as it is today and might be tomorrow.

Our Approach

OfS's approach to regulation puts informed student choice and institutional autonomy at its heart.

It sees the dynamic of providers responding to informed student choice as the best mechanism for driving quality and improvement, creating the conditions for informed choice, competition.

It will publish student outcomes and current and future employer needs as a way of informing student choice. It will incentivise focus on student outcomes, and support mechanisms that allow student transfer



Aims of Student IAG Strategy

Aim 1

Identify gaps and opportunities for adding value to the current information available to students

Aim 2

Ensure that provider websites provide accurate, high quality, accessible information that matters to students

Aim 3

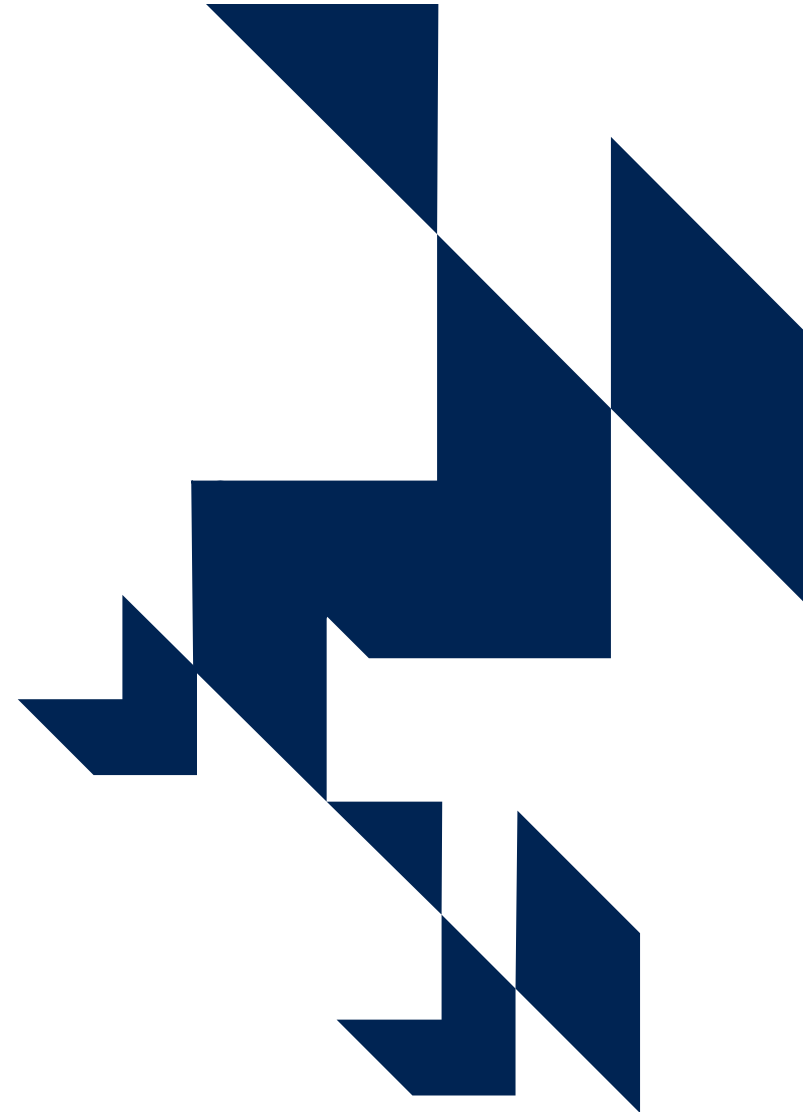
Create and maintain a partnership approach to the delivery of IAG, working with those providing information and advice to students to improve their impact

Aim 4

Secure effective information, advice and guidance for all students in relation to career choices

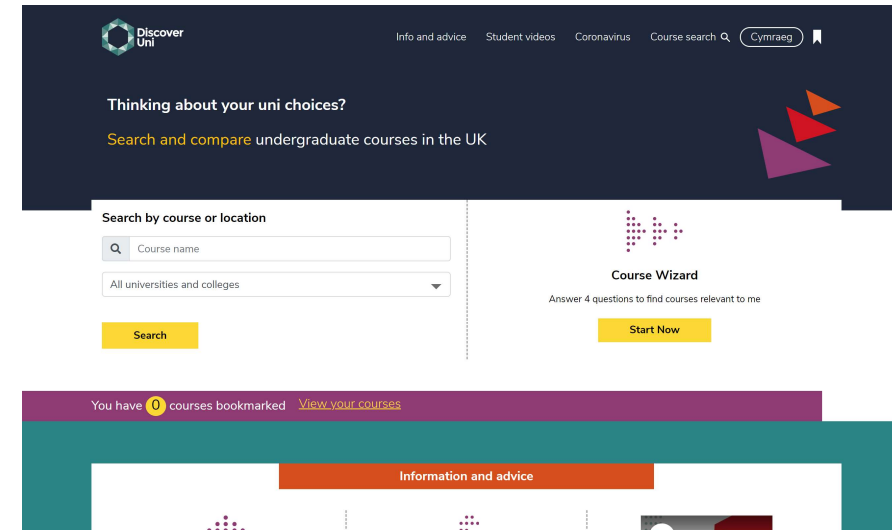
Discover Uni

The official source of information
about higher education



Discover Uni

- Discover Uni is an official source of information about higher education.
- It is owned and operated by the UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies
- It includes
 - Official statistics on over 30,000 higher education courses taken from national surveys and data collected from universities and colleges about all their students
 - Information and advice on how to choose a course, student finance including video's from actual students
 - One stop shop for information needs– we link to high quality sources of information, cutting through the clutter



Ensuring students can make informed decisions through clear and understandable data and information

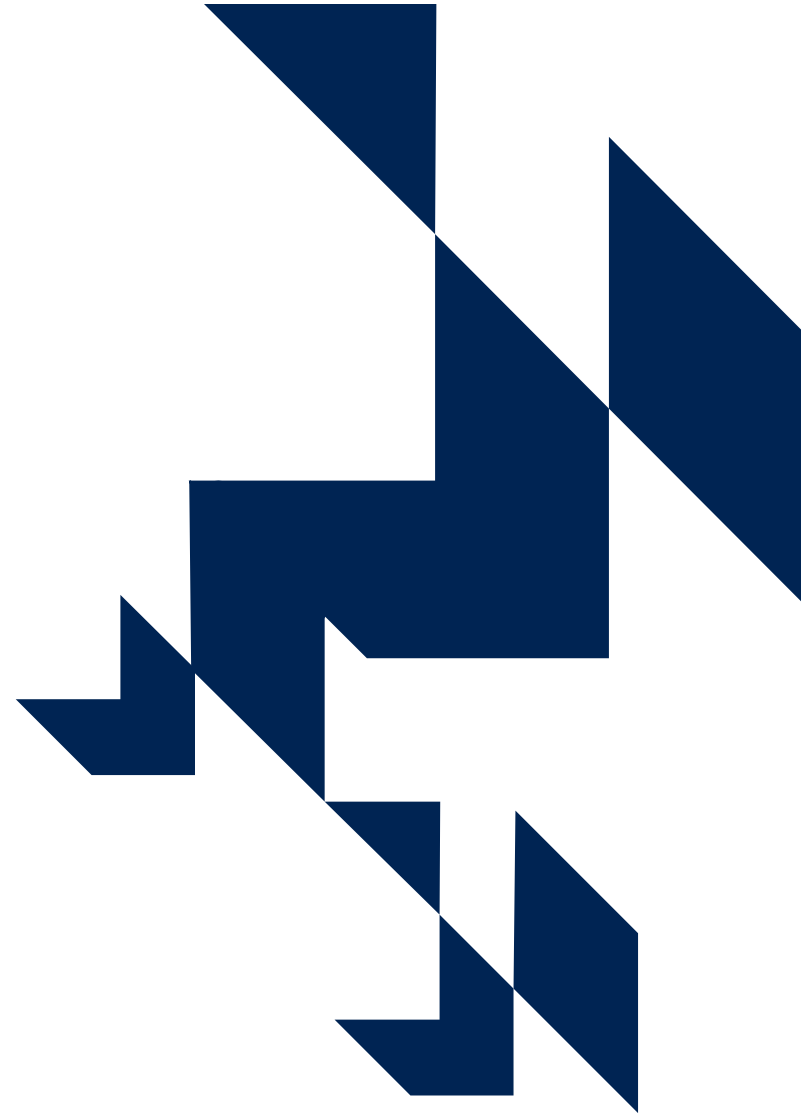
- New course pages were launched in 2020
 - New data summary headers- users can see the key data clearly upfront without having to scroll down the page
 - New data- Graduate outcomes featured for the first time, plus new regional salary comparisons
 - Improved data visualisations making the data easier to understand
- New downloadable resources
 - Guiding students and teachers/advisors through the decision making journey including how to navigate through course data and information and things to consider

What's to come

We have improvements coming shortly

- New search and filter tool
 - Improved functionality so users can find the courses relevant to them
- Comparison tool
 - Ability to save and compare up to seven courses
 - Downloadable with a guide to the data to help users understand the facts and the figures
- New resources
 - international students. We also have guides for teachers and students.
- Content hubs- all the information you need in one place
 - Mature students

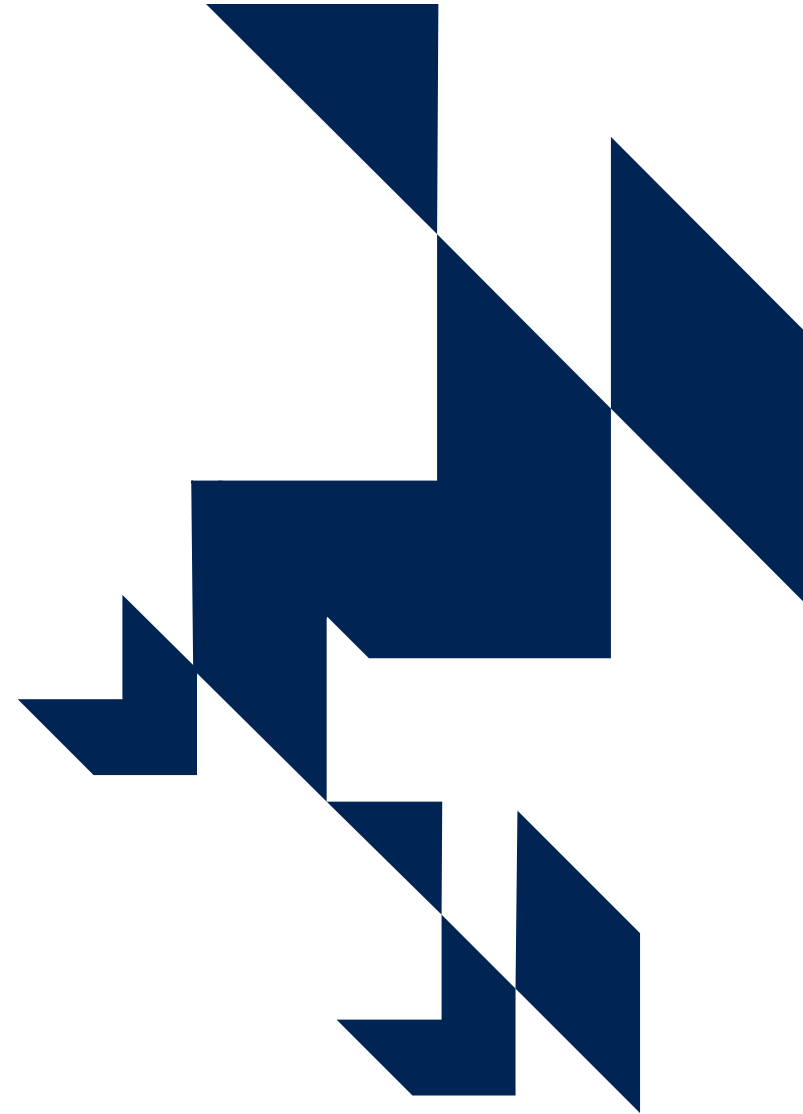
**The role of
universities and
colleges in
providing clear
information to
students**



Providing clear information

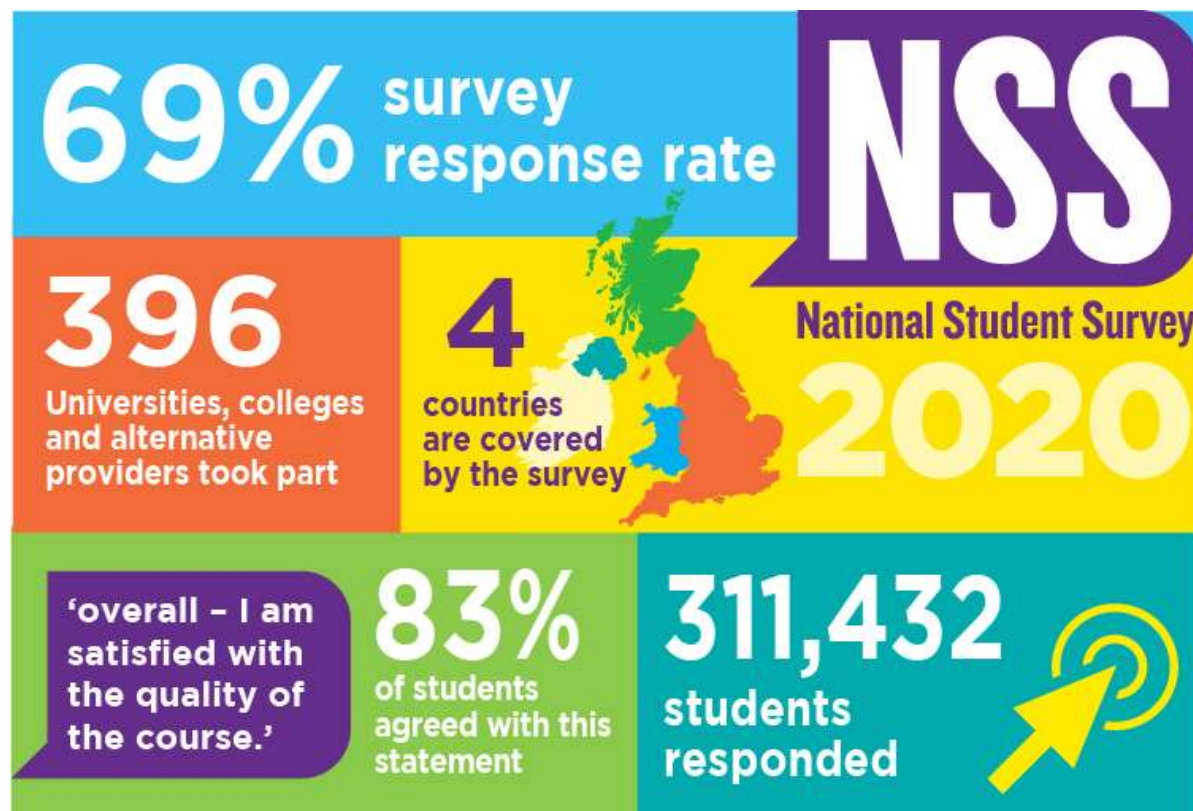
- We know university and college websites are a key piece of information applicants and their advisors use to make their choices
- Critical these pages are up to date, accurate and provide the information students need to make informed choices
- Our conditions of registration –C1 – require providers to have due regard to relevant guidance on how to comply with consumer protection law. Our regulatory framework defines ‘relevant guidance’ as guidance published by the Competition and Markets Authority.
- We have published guidance for registered providers about how we will approach the regulation of student protection during the period of disruption resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- We are also developing information for universities and colleges to help them improve the information they provide clear, timely information for students

National Student Survey



National Student Survey

- UK wide- managed by OfS on behalf of the four HE UK funders and regulators
- Introduced 2005
- Surveys around 300,000 final year undergraduate students each year
- 27 core questions about various aspects of the student academic experience
- Optional bank choices available for universities and colleges



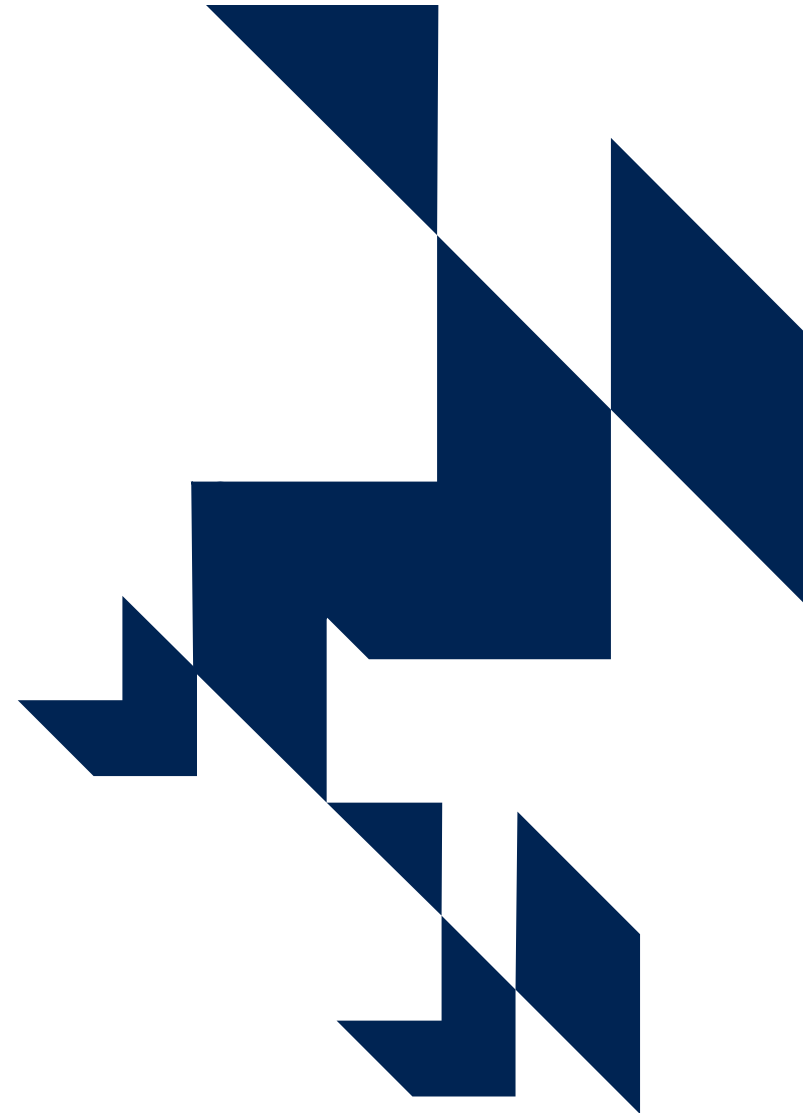
National Student Survey (NSS)

- The NSS has long been an important source of information for prospective students about perceptions of current students on their course or university/college
- Review of the NSS announced in 2020
 - Phase one concluded in January 2021
 - found that applicants use the survey to help sift their options but they weren't always aware where the information came from
 - Views of students about their student experience is important to applicants, they value a impartial, official source of information the NSS provides
 - Among those who said they had used it, 93 per cent said it had influenced their decision making.
 - Phase two commenced March 2021
 - will look at ways we can improve the questions to ensure they remain relevant to prospective students
 - Improvements to data publication- making the data easier to understand

NSS 2021

- For NSS 2021, the OfS and the UK funding and regulatory bodies have chosen to include a new set of questions in the NSS questionnaire to ask students about specific aspects of their experience during the pandemic.
- This year has been a year like no other. We felt it important to ask students about this aspect of their experience, particularly as the main survey focuses on their entire higher education experience
- We hope the information will be useful for providers in informing them about how students saw their responses to the pandemic
- We won't use the covid data for student information so we would not publish at course level, though providers will see their own data but we will publish the 2021 data nationally on July 15th.

OfS student information



OfS student pages

- In addition to our work for prospective student we also provide valuable information for current students including:
 - Student notifications- This guide aims to support students, student representatives and students' unions to use the OfS's notifications process.
 - Graduate guide- signposts resources and opportunities to help students and recent graduates develop skills, gain experience and build networks in preparation for their career
 - Low HE participation postcode checker- 2nd most visited page ~35k users per month
 - Up to date information on covid-19

Links

- Discover Uni -
<https://discoveruni.gov.uk/>
- OfS student pages-
<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/>
- Social media
 - Discover Uni
 - Twitter- @DiscoverUniUK
 - Instagram- @DiscoverUniUK
 - Facebook- DiscoverUniUK
- OfS
 - Twitter- @officestudents
 - Instagram- @OfficeForStudents
 - Facebook- OfficeforStudents
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Thank you for listening

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