

# OfS postgraduate survey – data privacy notice

## 1. Introduction

The Office for Students' primary aim is to ensure that English higher education is delivering positive outcomes for students. It will seek to ensure that students, from all backgrounds (particularly the most disadvantaged), can access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

We are conducting research on how best to collect survey data from taught postgraduate students about their course experience. Direct feedback from students about their courses can be a valuable tool for shaping our understanding about the quality of Postgraduate Taught (PGT) course provision in England.

Universities and colleges that are registered with the OfS are required to meet certain Regulatory Framework conditions (B1, B2) relating to quality. For example, they must:

- provide well-designed courses that meet recognised standards
- offer a high-quality academic experience for all students
- support students from admission through to completion
- ensure students' achievements are valued by employers or enable further study

We currently have quite limited data on the quality of PGT provision and especially lack information and feedback from the student perspective.

Establishing a student survey is one mechanism for us to understand quality and this research work will help us develop our approach to this.

The OfS has appointed IFF Research to carry out this research on our behalf.

## 2. Who we are

The Office for Students ("OfS") is the regulator of the higher education sector in England and has certain statutory functions set out in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. You can find more information about OfS and the work that we do on our website:

[www.officeforstudents.org.uk](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk)

OfS is committed to protecting your personal information and being clear about what information we hold about you and how we use it. This privacy notice tells you what to expect when the OfS collects personal information.

## 3. Data controller, Data Processor and Data Protection Officer

OfS is the "data controller" of any personal information collected within scope of this privacy notice. This means that we determine the purposes and means of processing your personal data. Our location and contact details are below:

Office for Students  
Nicholson House  
Lime Kiln Close  
Bristol  
BS34 8SR

Tel: 0117 931 7317

Email: <mailto:dp@officeforstudents.org.uk>

Our Data Protection Officer (DPO) is the first point of contact for people whose information is processed. You can contact the DPO using the details above.

IFF Research is a processor working on behalf of the OfS to administer the PGT survey. Their GDPR policy is available here: <http://www.iffresearch.com/iff-research-gdpr-policy/>

OfS and IFF Research are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and you can check both organisations' entry details on the ICO's website: <https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/what-we-do/register-of-fee-payers/>

#### **4. How we will use your information**

We can only use your personal information where we have a specific purpose or purposes for doing so.

We will use your personal data for research purposes to help us understand how best to gather feedback from PGT students about their experiences of their courses. Participation in this research is voluntary.

Your personal information will be used to support our research to understand more about how different types of students, on different types of courses, respond to the survey to ensure the questions are applicable and understandable by all. To do this we may link to other data sources, such as the student returns submitted by your university or college.

To achieve the above aims, the specific uses that will be made of your personal information are listed below:

- To shape and validate survey questions by analysing the survey responses, ensuring all questions are applicable and understandable by all types of postgraduate taught students
- To ensure the timing of the survey works for all types of postgraduate taught students on all types of taught courses
- To inform research into understanding the experience of postgraduate taught students
- To provide a broad picture of student satisfaction with their postgraduate taught courses, in England.

- To link to the student data submitted to the designated data body, the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) or the Education and Skills Funding Agency by universities and colleges. This will enable us to consider survey data against particular student or course characteristics.

To do this we may link to other data sources, such as the student returns submitted by your university or college. This will allow us to analyse the data across specific characteristics (such as ethnicity, disability etc) in order to understand whether PGT students from all backgrounds and on all types of courses are receiving a positive experience of higher education.

Linking to these data sources will enable the OfS to gain deeper insight into the validity of the survey by considering the responses in the context of the sample of respondents compared to the whole postgraduate taught student population. It will also enable the OfS to calculate response rates.

If we want to use your personal information for a reason other than those purposes set out above, we will tell you before we start that use and provide further information about the new purpose(s).

## **5. Legal basis for using your personal information**

Under data protection legislation, we require a legal basis to be able to process your personal information for the purposes set out above.

In this case, the legal basis is:

- *Performance of a task carried out in the public interest (Article 6(1)e)*
- *In the case of special category data, processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes in accordance with Article 89(Article 9(2)(j))*

## **6. What personal information we will collect**

The personal information we will collect and use as part of this survey is set out below:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Place of origin (UK, (other) EU, outside the UK and the EU)
- Gender
- Qualification award
- Distance learning
- Mode of study (i.e. full-time, part-time)
- Device information (i.e. device, operating system, browser information)

- Email address (from those respondents who wish to receive a link to complete the survey in a separate session)

### ***Special category data***

- Ethnicity
- Disability

## **7. Your personal information we obtain from another source**

Other than the personal information collected from you directly, we also obtain personal information about you from other sources, listed below. The purpose of obtaining personal information from other sources is set out in section 3 of this privacy notice.

- *The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)*
  - Email: [data.protection@hesa.ac.uk](mailto:data.protection@hesa.ac.uk)
  - Tel: 01242 211135
- *The Individualised Learner Record (ILR) held by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. You can contact them via the link found in the privacy notice below:*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-privacy-notice>

### ***Legal basis for obtaining personal information from other source(s)***

- *Performance of a task carried out in the public interest (Article 6(1)e)*
- *In the case of special category data, processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes in accordance with Article 89 (Article 9(2)(j))*

## **8. Who we give your personal information to**

We will not routinely pass your personal information to any other organisation except where required to do so as part of our functions or by law.

We will share aggregate level summary data with your University or College. You will not be identifiable from this data.

## **9. Where your personal information will be stored**

Your personal information will be stored securely within the UK and will not be transferred outside that territory unless required by a court order.

## 10. How we protect your personal information

The OfS has a number of security measures in place to protect your personal information, listed below:

- Accredited to the [Cyber Essentials](#) PLUS standard for cyber security
- All staff are required to undertake training in data protection and information security on joining OfS and then on an annual basis;
- Formal information security policies that must be read and understood by all staff;
- Personal information is only available to those members of staff who require access as part of their role.

IFF Research are ISO27001:2013 accredited. Data security awareness and practice for all members of staff is the foundation of ISO27001.

IFF Research are presently in the process of qualifying their systems for Cyber Essential PLUS certification with the expected completion date of 30 April 2019.

## 11. Your rights over your personal information

Once your personal information has been collected, you have certain rights in relation to that personal information that may be exercised. You have the right to request:

- A copy of your personal information;
- Inaccurate personal information held about you is corrected;
- Your personal information to be deleted;
- Processing of your personal information is restricted;
- A copy of your information in a format that allows easy transfer (“data portability”);
- That you are not subject to automated decision making or profiling (if these take place).

All these rights have certain limitations depending on the request and the purpose for which we are holding your personal information. Further information can be found about these rights and our processes for handling such requests at:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/privacy/individual-rights-under-the-general-data-protection-regulation/>

## 12. How long we will hold your personal information

We are only able to retain a copy of your personal information as long as it is still needed for the purpose(s) for which it was collected.

IFF Research will retain the personal information you have submitted for up to 90 days after the end of the survey period (16<sup>th</sup> August). After that point, your personal information will be confidentially and securely disposed of by IFF Research.

The OfS will retain your name and date of birth for 12 months after the end of the survey period (16<sup>th</sup> August), after which they will be securely deleted. The remaining data will be retained indefinitely for research purposes, subject to a review every 10 years. This information will not be used to make any decisions about you.

### **13. Complaints about the use of your personal information**

If you are unhappy with the way in which your personal information has been handled by OfS, please contact us via our Data Protection Officer (details in section 2) and we will try to resolve your issue informally.

If we have are not able to resolve the issue to your satisfaction, you can also make a complaint to the data protection supervisory authority. In the UK, this is the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and they can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Email: [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

### **14. Changes to this notice**

We keep our privacy notices under regular review and we will inform you of any changes to this notice by placing an update on our website.

This privacy notice was last updated on *12 April 2019*.