

Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students

Data Confidentiality Agreement

1. The implementation of a national student survey was identified as a priority in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*. The StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group acts as a national steering group and provides overall strategic direction for continued development and implementation of StudentSurvey.ie, including PGR StudentSurvey.ie. This group discusses any individual requests for use or analysis of the StudentSurvey.ie or PGR StudentSurvey.ie dataset, beyond that undertaken by participating institutions or published by the national project.
2. Confidentiality is guaranteed to students responding to the survey, within the limits of the law. This is regarded as a vital commitment to encourage participation. Confidentiality is viewed as extremely important in the context of the much smaller cohorts involved in PGR StudentSurvey.ie and the critical role of the relationship between PGR student and supervisor(s). Institutional data files returned after fieldwork have been constructed to minimise risks to student confidentiality. The "Aspects" file, including demographics data, presents percentage responses to questions wherever the number of respondents exceeds 10. The "Open Comments" file presents free text responses without other demographic data. These comments have been cleaned to remove any names or expletives but may include reference to particular offices or roles.
3. It is acknowledged that, particularly for institutions with larger cohorts, the inherent value of PGR StudentSurvey.ie may be realised only by further disaggregation of the data. The Steering Group has carefully considered this matter and wish to facilitate such additional disaggregation to the greatest extent possible whilst maintaining the integrity of the instrument and resulting data as experiences continue to build. The Project Team will support bespoke presentation of institutional data confidentially and on request only.
4. In addition, there is a short process to approve further access to institutional data by formally nominated contacts within the relevant institution(s). A protocol has been established for some time regarding data from StudentSurvey.ie for taught students. Institutional data is made available to Registrars who determine whatever further dissemination is appropriate within their own institutions. This protocol also applies to data generated by PGR StudentSurvey.ie.

Process: Nomination of key recipient and confidentiality of PGR StudentSurvey.ie data

5. If additional access to anonymised data at respondent level is required, the Registrar will request such access and nominate a named recipient. The Registrar and nominee are expected to sign this data confidentiality agreement. This reaffirms the established responsibility of Registrars for the data and helps to ensure that appropriate consideration is given within institutions.
6. A summary of such requests will be provided to the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group, as appropriate, by the Project Team, prior to access being granted. Details of individuals involved in these requests will not be shared with the group but rather the nature of requests received. It is anticipated that, prior to commencement of the process, responsibility to resolve straightforward requests will be delegated to the Project Team. In case of any conflict or diverging views, StudentSurvey.ie co-sponsors (HEA, IUA, TUA, AMLE) will be consulted.
7. Any institutional analysis is expected to follow existing guidelines on student/ staff confidentiality, i.e. care should be taken to avoid unintended identification of individuals from

text included in Open Comments; numeric data should be reported "publicly" only where the number of respondents exceeds 10. In some cases, it may be appropriate to present results where the number of respondents exceed 5 with additional accompanying contextual caveats.

Terms

8. Access to the anonymised institutional dataset at respondent level (or specific subsets thereof) is provided solely for the purpose of defining and undertaking any such analysis, as is deemed appropriate by the institution in question. This agreement begins upon release of the specific dataset to the named data analyst.

9. The data will be made available solely for the purpose of the identified research. Therefore, no institution will have access to the data from any other institution, other than through any bilateral agreement that subsequently may be voluntarily and separately entered into by the institutions in question - taking due account of point 11 below.

10. The recipient of the dataset(s) must commit to ensuring that the data is maintained securely and will not copy or transfer the data (e.g. by USB or email) without making arrangements to protect the data.

11. Responsibility for ensuring confidentiality of the data and of all resulting outputs (reports, tables, presentations) rests with named signatories of this agreement.

Declaration

The Registrar requests access to additional anonymised PGR StudentSurvey.ie data at respondent level. The signatories below agree to abide by the terms set out in this agreement.

Institution name	
Registrar name	
Registrar signature	
Data recipient name	
Data recipient signature	
Date	

Please return an electronic copy of the signed document to info@studentsurvey.ie.