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Abstract

Background - Measuring the student experience is becoming increasingly important in higher education in the UK. Student experience surveys are used as indicators of quality and form the basis of rankings of higher education institutions. They are also used by them as tools to assist their quality enhancement initiatives. However, these surveys frequently suffer from low response rates, which can reduce the reliability and usefulness of their data. The UK Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is a relatively new survey and suffers from a low response rate. As this survey is new, little is known about why students do not respond to it.
b Purpose - This study aimed to explore the reasons why postgraduate students do not respond to the PTES. Sample - Three hundred and fifty-five postgraduate taught students from four health faculties in one UK higher education institution completed an online survey. Of these, seven participated in one of two focus groups. Design and methods - The online survey was completed both by students who completed the PTES in 2011 and those who did not. This provided us with cross-sectional data to compare both groups' knowledge of

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PTES and their reasons for completing or not completing it. We used multivariate regression analysis to explore which variables were associated with response to PTES. We led two focus groups to explore the themes that emerged from the survey in more depth. This data was analysed by two researchers using thematic analysis. Results - The cross-sectional data found that students who were not clear about the purpose of PTES were less likely to respond, independent of other potential predictor variables. Focus group data indicated that if postgraduate students felt a stronger connection to the university community they may be more likely to respond to PTES. Conclusions - This study suggests that higher education institutions may wish to review their strategies for advertising student experience surveys to focus more on their purpose rather than their impact. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)