



Georg-August-Universität  
Göttingen

**International Survey of Masters' students  
of the University of Göttingen**

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**Methodology of International Survey of Masters' students  
in 2018/2019 winter semester**

This methodology report on the international survey of Masters' students (2018/2019 winter semester) by the University of Göttingen was written by the Quality Management in Teaching and Learning team of the Department of Student and Academic Services. Please write to the following e-mail address if you have any questions:

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*Göttingen, October 2019*

## International survey of Masters' students 2018/2019 winter semester

Survey timeframe	18 <sup>th</sup> January to 2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2019
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete survey of all Masters' students at the university in the first to fifth semester</li> <li>• Online survey in English</li> </ul>
Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matriculation and early experiences in postgraduate studies</li> <li>• Experience of research</li> <li>• Teaching experience</li> <li>• Atmosphere on the degree programme</li> <li>• Obstacles to completing the degree</li> <li>• Level of competence</li> <li>• Satisfaction</li> <li>• Health and welfare</li> <li>• Career development</li> <li>• Workload</li> <li>• International students</li> </ul>
Basic population	Masters' students in the first to fifth semester  <b>4,646</b> Masters' students
Survey participants total	<b>1,212</b>
Survey participants (completed)	<b>769</b>
Response rate (gross)	<b>16.55 %</b>
Exclusions <sup>1</sup> Refusals	<b>858</b> Agriculture and Forest Sciences students <b>11</b> refusals
Response rate (net)	<b>20.36 %</b> (after deducting students who were excluded or actively refused)

<sup>1</sup>On account of the survey not being suitably adapted, 858 Agriculture and Forest Sciences students had to be excluded from the survey.

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## SUMMARY

The International Survey of Masters' students of the University of Göttingen was planned as a full survey of all Masters' students in the first to fifth semester in the 2018/2019 winter semester and conducted by the Quality Management team in Student and Academic Services.

The survey timeframe was in the winter months (18<sup>th</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2019) and the survey was designed for **4,646 Masters' students**. The students were invited to take part in the online survey via e-mail sent by the Quality Management team, and could give information on various themes.

The first international survey of Masters' students in the 2018/2019 winter semester achieved a gross response rate of 16.55 per cent, i.e. 769 survey participants, from all the Masters' students approached. This figure does not include all the 869 Masters' students who had to be excluded on account of refusals and inappropriate questionnaire (all Agricultural and Forest Sciences students), resulting in a **net response rate of 20.36 per cent**.

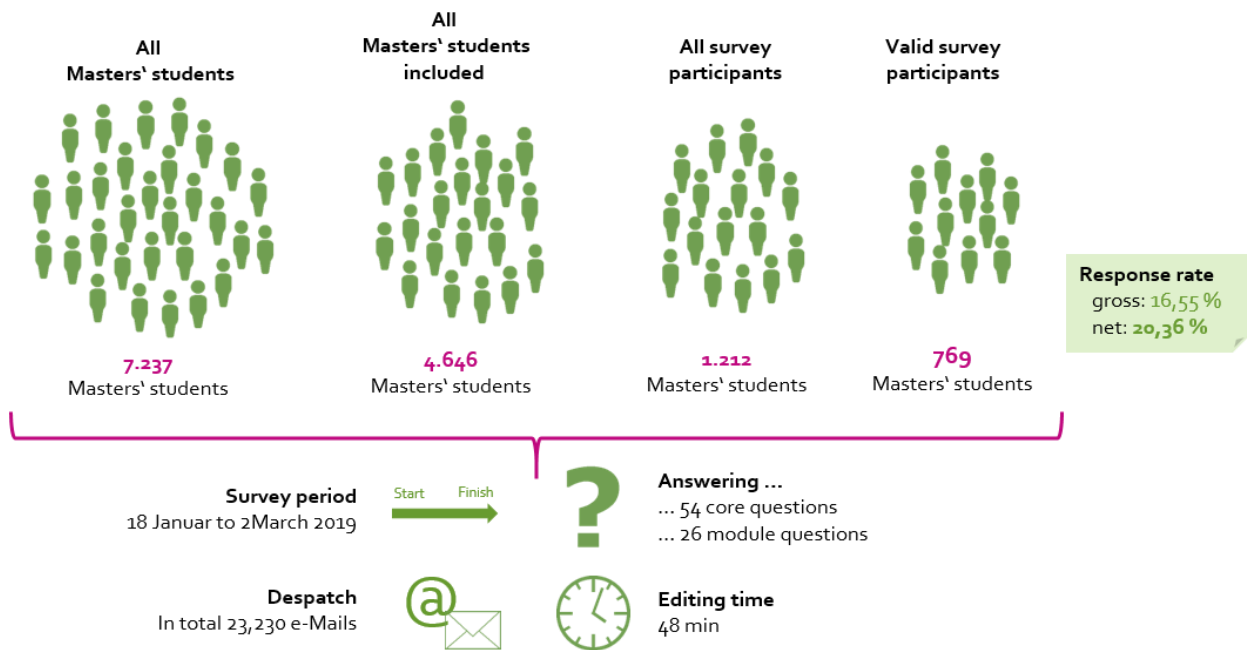


Diagram 1: Summary of the survey cycle

## CONCEPT OF THE INTERNATIONAL SURVEY OF MASTERS' STUDENTS

The University of Göttingen surveys its Masters' students using an international survey design, which is carried out in cooperation with the Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California – Berkeley (CSHE), with software support from i-graduate.

The survey takes place in the winter semester each academic year and will be held three times between 2018 and 2020. The questionnaire focuses on all Masters' students at the University of Göttingen in the first to fifth semester and is offered as an online questionnaire in English. It consists of a core questionnaire, which is used at all participating universities, and for modules, as determined by the university itself. The University of Göttingen decided that the modules "Health and welfare", "Professional development", "Workload" and "International students" would be surveyed in the 2018/2019 winter semester. All in all, the questionnaire contains 80 questions on the different themed areas.

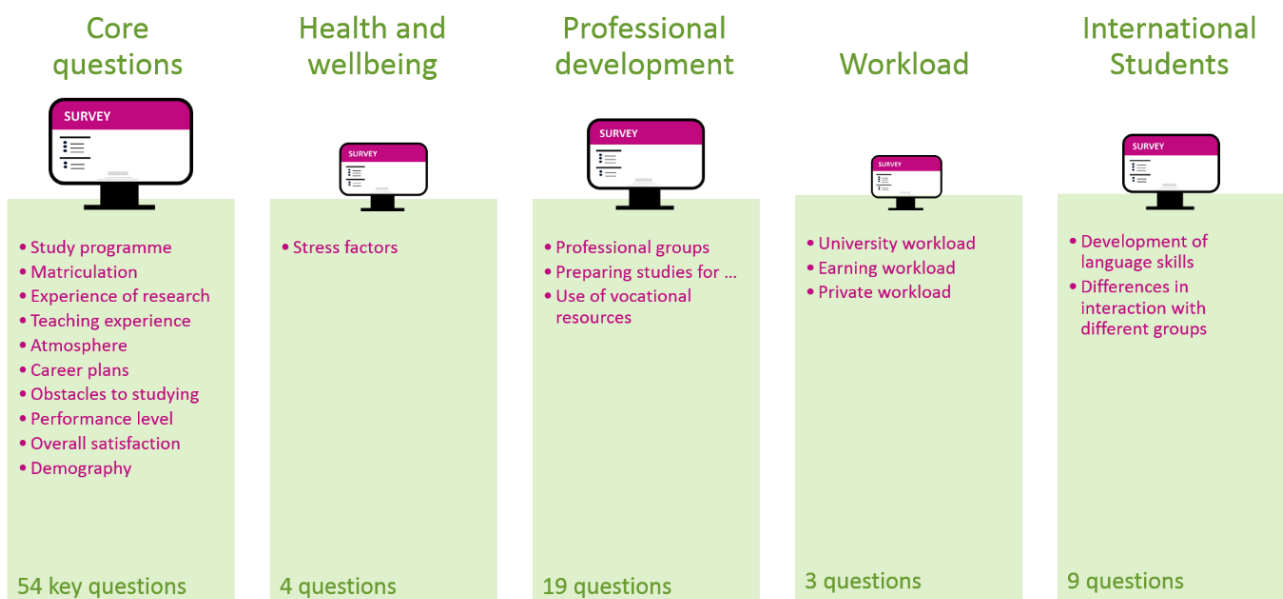


Diagram 2: Questionnaire design

## METHODICAL AND TECHNICAL FEATURES OF THE SURVEY

All Masters' students in the first to fifth semester were included in the international survey of Masters' students. The survey excluded Masters' students who were only conditionally registered on a degree programme at the time of the survey and those who had exceeded five semesters.

### ADDRESS QUALITY AND SURVEY CHARACTERISTICS

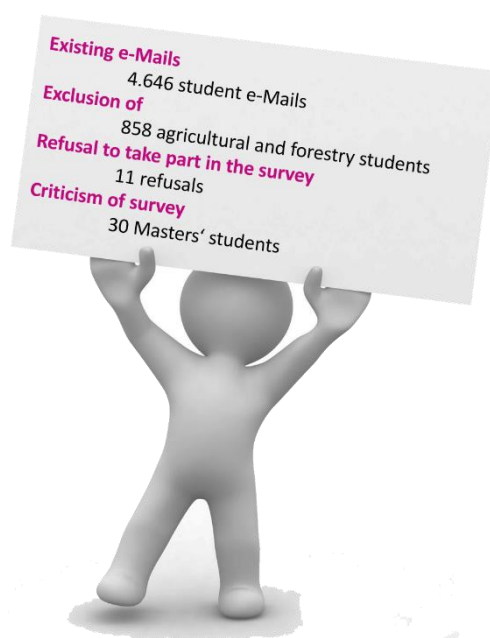
In the 2018/2019 winter semester, the available address file with contact details for the Masters' students to be surveyed contained in total **4,646 individuals**, all of whom were invited to take part in the survey using their personal student e-mail address.

### SURVEY LAUNCH AND PROGRESS

The first invitation to take part in the survey was sent on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019, and included brief information about the survey, the survey link, details about the survey incentives, and contact details for the survey team.

After the survey link was sent for the first time, however, initial feedback was received from a few students, stating that there were frequent crashes at one point in the questionnaire. As a result, the survey was only able to restart on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019 following technical support work. After that, the students were sent a total of four e-mail reminders to take part in the survey, which equals a total despatch of 23,230 e-mails.

Including the contact details for the survey team in the invitations to take part in the survey also led to a total of 30 Masters' students contacting the survey team with regard to various aspects of the survey:



Reason	Frequency
Too many reminders	14
No use of private e-mail addresses	6
No category for Agricultural and Forest Sciences students in the questionnaire	4
Technical problems	3
Questionnaire takes too much time and is also not adapted to the German higher education system	2

All these aspects were discussed with the cooperation partners and internally at the University of Göttingen and will be modified in the next survey in the 2019/2020 winter semester.

### SURVEY CHARACTERISTICS

By the end of the survey on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2019 a total of **769 Masters' students** had taken part in the survey, which equals a gross response rate of 16.55 per cent and a net response rate (after deduction of students who were not reached or had to be excluded) of 20.36 per cent.

Further detailed results of the survey have been published on the survey homepage ([www.uni-goettingen.de/SERU](http://www.uni-goettingen.de/SERU)).

### OUTLOOK

The international survey of Masters' students was able to obtain insights into the university life of Göttingen students. However it is important to obtain more precise information about the composition of the survey participants, so that assessment of the university's services can be analysed according to different groups.

As a result, the next survey in the 2019/2020 winter semester will aim for a more personalised approach. This will be realised using an individual PIN for each student, so that the students can log in to the survey. This enables including core data on the participating students (e.g. degree programme, faculty) in the analyses and analysing this information from the survey. Along with this, targeted reminders can also be sent, in order to reduce the frequency of contact, and allow for pausing and resuming the survey.

This should lead to a marked improvement in acceptance and survey participation, as well as in data quality and the potential for analysis levels.