Cylchlythyr | Circular

Unistats and the Key Information Set: Data collection timetable and changes for 2015

Date:	10 April 2015
Reference:	W15/07HE
To:	Heads of higher education institutions in Wales Principals of further education institutions in Wales delivering HE provision
Response by:	Actions required as indicated in the timetable
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This circular provides information on:

- The processes and timetable for higher education institutions and further education institutions to submit their 2015 Key Information Set (KIS) data, so it can be published on the Unistats website in September 2015.
- Changes resulting from the consultation on data publication thresholds and aggregation for Unistats and the National Student Survey (NSS).
- Ongoing updates to the Unistats website.

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Introduction

1. This circular provides information on:

    - The processes and timetable for higher education institutions and further education institutions to submit their 2015 Key Information Set (KIS) data, so it can be published on the Unistats website in September 2015.
    - Changes resulting from the consultation on data publication thresholds and aggregation for Unistats and the National Student Survey (NSS).
    - Ongoing updates to the Unistats website.

2. To facilitate dissemination we are publishing a separate circular on the 2015 KIS and the publication of the 2015 NSS results (circular W15/06HE), as we recognise the information may relate to different areas within institutions.

Key points

3. The timetable for the collection of 2015 KIS data is shown in Table 1. Feedback from institutions and our own experience indicate that the timetable changes introduced last year were beneficial, so changes to this year's timetable have been minimal.

4. All institutions are required to have signed off data for publication by **noon on Thursday 6 August** to allow a full preview on the Unistats site, as this helps ensure data quality. Where institutions identify data errors, or course details changes during preview, they will need to resubmit and sign off updated data by **noon on Thursday 27 August** for the updates to be included on the site for the public launch. The initial sign-off for publication should be carried out by the head of institution, but formal responsibility for signing off any subsequent updates may be delegated to another member of the senior management team.

    Table 1: Timetable for the collection of KIS data

Date	Activity	Notes
28 May 2015	Data collection systems open.	
Early July 2015	NSS and Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey data added.	
16 July 2015	Valid data submission required.	By this date, institutions are required to have submitted a dataset which passes validation

		and contains the majority of their courses.
6 August 2015 (noon)	Deadline for sign-off of data.	Institutions are required to have signed off a valid dataset which is suitable for publication.
12 to 28 August 2015	Data available for preview on Unistats.	
27 August 2015 (noon)	Final deadline for submission and sign-off of any amendments prior to publication of new dataset on Unistats.	Data does not need to be signed off again if no amendments have been made during the preview period.
2 September 2015	Update of Unistats website with the 2015 dataset.	
Early September	Collection systems reopen for updates.	The KIS dataset is dynamic and it will be possible to make amendments on a weekly basis from September, as it is currently.
30 September	Deadline for update of KIS widgets to reflect new course data.	There are no changes to the coding of the KIS widget this year, but institutions should update these for new courses or changes to KISCourseID codes.

5.   Circular W11/27HE noted that the consensus of consultation was that Welsh higher education institutions (HEIs) and directly funded Further Education Institutions (FEIs) should participate in the production of the KIS. For FEIs, the principle is that each student is recorded, for the purposes of Unistats, against the institution at which they studied in their first year. Therefore, registering institutions should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to the KIS.

Outcomes of the consultation on data publication thresholds and aggregation for Unistats and the National Student Survey

6.   In response to feedback from the sector, between 15 December 2014 and 13 February 2015 the funding bodies consulted on proposals to:

a. Lower the headcount or full-person equivalent (FPE[1]) threshold for publication of student-level data on Unistats and for publicly available NSS data, from 23 to 10.

b. Revise the subject hierarchy used in the aggregation of data in recognition of feedback that the current hierarchy does not always reflect institutional structures well.

We would like to thank those who responded to the consultation.

7. Following the analysis of responses, a headcount or FPE threshold of 10 will be introduced for publication of student-related data on Unistats and for publicly available NSS data from 2015.

8. There will, however, be no changes to the subject hierarchy at this time. This is because the majority of respondents thought it preferable to defer to 2016, to preserve data continuity for NSS results in an important year and to allow further time to explore and agree potential changes. The funders will review whether it would be desirable to change the subject hierarchy for 2016 in January 2016, at which point we will know more about the future direction of Unistats and the timescales for implementation of the replacement for the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS), which is currently being developed by the HE Data and Information Improvement Programme (HEDIIP). This approach has been endorsed by the UK Higher Education Public Information Steering Group.

9. The consultation document is available on HEFCE's website and HEFCE will publish a full report of the analysis of responses on this page later in the spring, on behalf of all the funders.

10. The publication threshold change should have no impact on institutional processes or systems.

Change to data schema for KIS and new XML generation tool

11. The main change for the 2015-16 KIS collection is that the specification for the KIS file structure has changed. The XML schema sequence has been reordered, and this may affect how your institution produces the KIS XML file. Further details can be found on the HESA website on the 'Summary of changes' page (www.hesa.ac.uk/C15061/SummaryOfChanges) and revision history page (www.hesa.ac.uk/C15061/RevisionHistory). (Note that any further updates to the KIS collection will also be documented on the revision history page.)

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[1] FPE is a measure of headcount used where students are studying more than one subject as part of an award. For example, a student studying engineering and French would typically count as half an FPE in engineering and half an FPE in French. When considered over all subjects, every student will amount to one FPE. This measure is used for data drawn from the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey, the HESA student record, the Individualised Learner Record and the Lifelong Learning Wales record.

12. HESA has informed its software supplier contacts of this change, but institutions that have their own systems may need to make changes to them. If you have any questions about the change, please contact kis@hefce.ac.uk.

13. In response to requests from some institutions, HESA has created a data-entry tool that outputs a valid XML file which is compliant with the new schema. This is intended to help those without the relevant systems to produce returns, and replaces the Excel file that has been available in previous years. The tool and guidance on how to use it can be accessed from the HESA website:
   - XML tool: https://submit.hesa.ac.uk/Downloads/C15061/C15061XMLDataEntryTool.msi
   - Guidance on how to use the tool: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&task=show_file&mnl=15061&href=XMLtoolguide.html

Internal and external quality assurance relating to the KIS

14. Institutions are responsible for the quality assurance of their KIS data. As KIS data is not static and can be updated weekly, it does not undergo the same additional manual checks as other data streams. We strongly encourage institutions to use the reports made available by HEFCE and HESA to confirm that the data is accurate, and to make use of the institutional preview period.

15. The head of institution must provide the initial sign-off to confirm the accuracy of the data. Any subsequent updates must be signed off either by the head of institution or by another member of the senior management team they have nominated to act on their behalf.

16. We reserve the right to carry out an external audit on any of the information and data contributing to the KIS for Welsh institutions. The purpose of the audit is to gain assurance of the systems and protocols used in deriving the KIS data, and to check the reliability of data including the reasonableness of any estimates used.

Site updates to Unistats

17. As a result of advice received when examining the issues around reducing publication thresholds, the following changes will be made to Unistats for publication of the 2015 KIS:

   a. Improve the tooltip text where data has been aggregated, by providing contextualised information on the specific aggregation method used.
   b. Provide a short video on the homepage to guide users on how to

consider statistical uncertainty when comparing values.

Review of Unistats and the Key Information Set

18. The UK higher education funding bodies are currently undertaking a review of Unistats and the KIS. We will be consulting the sector in autumn 2015 on our proposed approach to providing information to support student choice. HEFCE has published further information about the wider review of the provision of information on its website on behalf of all the funders (www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/review/).

Further information

19. Further information on the data submission process and where to find guidance and support can be found in **Annex A** (for higher education institutions), and **Annex B** (for further education institutions).

20. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Annex A: Further information for higher education institutions

1. Higher education institutions making a Key Information Set (KIS) data return should submit KIS data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

2. Detailed guidance on submitting KIS record data is available on the HESA website (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&Itemid=232&mnl=15061). Access to the HESA data collection system is managed through the Identity system (https://identity.hesa.ac.uk).

3. HESA monitors the data collection system to ensure institutions are progressing well and not encountering difficulties. For assistance with the submission process, contact HESA's institutional liaison, tel 01242 211144, email liaison@hesa.ac.uk, website www.hesa.ac.uk/liaison.

4. Published KIS data is based on the institution at which a course is taught, regardless of funding arrangements. The principle is that each student is recorded, for the purposes of Unistats, against the institution at which they studied in their first year. This means that where institutions receive funding through a variety of routes they must submit a KIS even if they do not directly receive HEFCW funding. Therefore, registering institutions should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to the KIS. For further guidance, see the 'Collaborative provision' document under 'Further guidance' on the HESA website (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&Itemid=232&mnl=15061).

5. HESA and HEFCE will liaise with institutional KIS contacts about the provision of KIS data, and will direct further communications to them. It is essential that institutions ensure their institutional KIS contact details are up to date. Please note that HEFCE and HESA hold separate lists of KIS contacts as these have slightly different purposes for each organisation. Institutions are responsible for ensuring that their KIS contact details are up to date on both HEFCE's and HESA's records. HESA has an online contact management system through which institutions can update the details of their nominated HESA KIS contact. Institutions should communicate any change in staff to the institutional liaison by email at the address in the paragraph above, and will then be given access to HESA's online system so that they can make the necessary changes. Institutions can amend their KIS contacts by emailing kis@hefce.ac.uk.

Annex B: Further information for further education institutions

1. Further education institutions should return Key Information Set (KIS) data to HEFCE.

2. Further education institutions will need to collect the data outlined in the KIS technical guidance (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&Itemid=232&mnl=15061) and upload it to the HEFCE extranet. Details of how to access the extranet will be sent to KIS contacts before data collection opens.

3. Published KIS data is based on the institution at which a course is taught, regardless of funding arrangements. The principle is that each student is recorded, for the purposes of Unistats, against the institution at which they studied in their first year. This means that where institutions receive funding through a variety of routes they must submit a KIS even if they do not directly receive HEFCW funding. Therefore, registering institutions should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to the KIS. For further guidance, see the 'Collaborative provision' document under 'Further guidance' on the HESA website (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&Itemid=232&mnl=15061).

4. We encourage institutions to upload their data as early as possible after Thursday 28 May, so that any issues of data quality can be resolved as soon as possible. For assistance with the submission process, contact kis@hefce.ac.uk.

5. HEFCE will liaise with KIS contacts in FECs about the provision of KIS data and will direct further communications to them. It is essential that institutions ensure their institutional KIS contact is up to date. Email kis@hefce.ac.uk to amend KIS contact details.

6. Please note that the data should not be signed off by the individual compiling and submitting the KIS return.