Condition of registration F1: transparency information

Guidance for providers on submitting the Transparency return 2019

Contents

The following annexes are published as separate documents:

Annex A: Example transparency return 2019

Annex B: Example transparency tables for publication 2019

Summary

Purpose

1. This document sets out guidance for English higher education providers that are registered with the Office for Students (OfS) on completing the transparency return that is a condition of registration.

Key points

2. The Transparency return 2019 must be completed by English higher education providers that are registered with the OfS up to and including Monday 3 June 2019.

3. This technical guidance must be read in conjunction with Regulatory advice 8: Guidance for providers about condition of registration F1: transparency information[1].

4. The data collected relates to:

   - the number of applications for admission on to higher education courses starting in 2018-19 that the provider has received

   - the number of offers made by the provider in relation to those applications

   - the number of those offers accepted and the number of those who go on to register at the provider.

5. In each case, the information must include those numbers by reference to the following:

   - the gender of the individuals to which they relate

   - their ethnicity

   - their socioeconomic background, measured using the English Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD).

6. After submission, providers will be supplied with information on the attainment of students that qualified during 2017-18. This is based on their 2017-18 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student and Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data. Providers must publish on their websites the information on applications, offers, acceptances and registrations, along with the attainment data. More information about this is available in Section 3.

Action required

7. Workbooks will be available to providers in June 2019 to download from the OfS portal[2]. Returns, including a copy of the sign-off sheet signed by the accountable officer, must be uploaded to the OfS portal by **noon on Thursday 22 August 2019.**

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[1] Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-8-guidance-for-providers-about-condition-of-registration-f1-transparency-information/

[2] See https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/data

Section 1: Introduction

Why are we requiring providers to complete and submit the transparency return 2019?

8. Providers are required to complete and submit transparency information to satisfy condition of registration F1, as set out in the OfS regulatory framework[3]. Section 9 of HERA and the Higher Education (Transparency Condition and Financial Support) (England) Regulations 2018, require the Office for Students (OfS) to ensure that the ongoing conditions of registration includes a transparency information condition. The transparency information may contribute to, but does not replace, the requirement for a self-assessment within an access and participation plan, as set out in regulatory notice 1[4].

Notes on terminology

9. All references to years in this document are to academic years (from 1 August to 31 July) unless otherwise specified. We acknowledge that providers will have a variety of admission points for their students; however we require the data to be returned on a basis of 1 August to 31 July.

Transparency data collection process 2019

10. To complete the Transparency return 2019, providers must download, complete and upload a table in Microsoft Excel workbook format using the OfS portal[5]. You must also provide a link to the place of your website where you plan to publish the data. A sample of the table you are required to complete and upload is provided in Annex A, available alongside this document[6].

11. Once the transparency return has been submitted to the OfS portal, you will receive a results file which will contain a sign-off sheet. The sign-off sheet must be signed by the accountable officer and uploaded to the portal by **noon on 22 August 2019**. We advise providers to upload their data to the OfS portal as soon as possible, in order to allow enough time for the data to be signed off before the deadline. The results file will also contain the information in the format that you are required to publish on your website by the end of August 2019. A sample of the tables you are required to publish is provided in Annex B, available alongside this document[7]. For more information about publishing your transparency information see page 11 of Regulatory advice 8: Guidance for providers about condition of registration F1: transparency information[8].

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[3] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/the-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/

[4] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-notice-1-access-and-participation-plan-guidance/

[5] See https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/data

[6] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/guidance-for-providers-on-submitting-the-transparency-return-2019/

[7] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/guidance-for-providers-on-submitting-the-transparency-return-2019/

[8] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-8-guidance-for-providers-about-condition-of-registration-f1-transparency-information/

12. Further information on how the workbook should be downloaded, completed and uploaded is provided in Section 3.

13. Failure to provide the required data and the sign-off sheet by the deadline may constitute a breach of conditions F1 and F3 of the regulatory framework.

Timetable

Table A: Outline timetable

June 2019	Transparency return 2019 workbooks available to providers on the OfS portal
Noon on 22 August 2019	Deadline for uploading Transparency return 2019, including sign-off sheet
31 August 2019	Deadline for providers publishing tables 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b on their website
Autumn 2019	OfS publication of sector analysis

Queries and further information

14. Any queries about this return should be emailed to transparency@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Section 2: Definitions

15. This section defines the terms that we use in Section 3 in the guidance on how to complete the application, offer, acceptance and registration table required as part of the transparency information condition.

The student population

16. You must include applications to start study in 2018-19 that would, if successful, lead to registration with your provider and that are:

- from UK domiciled students for courses which lead to a recognised[9] undergraduate higher education award. A student is UK domiciled if their permanent, home address is in the UK. Undergraduate awards are first degrees (including foundation degrees), integrated masters' programmes, and other awards at, or below, the level of a first degree that do not normally require a previous undergraduate qualification. This includes medical degrees

- for apprenticeship programmes, where these are at higher education level (Level 4 and above)

- for a foundation year where these are integrated into a full higher education qualification.

17. You must **not** include applications for:

- courses where you teach students who are registered with another provider under a subcontractual arrangement. A subcontractual arrangement (sometimes described as a 'franchise arrangement') is a relationship, based on a formal contract, in which a body with

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[9] For definition of 'recognised' see page 34 of 'Funding for academic year 2019-20: Approach and data collection' available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/funding-for-academic-year-2019-20-approach-and-data-collection/

degree awarding powers (the lead provider) allows another provider (the delivery provider) to deliver all or part of a programme which has been designed, approved and owned by the degree awarding body. The lead provider or subcontracting provider retains overall control of the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements

- postgraduate courses
- the study of credit only
- courses that will be delivered wholly overseas.

Progression agreements

18. Sometimes a progression agreement is in place, for example from a foundation degree delivered by the delivery provider to an honours degree at the lead provider, and the agreement offers guaranteed progression on successful completion of the foundation degree. In this case, you should record students progressing from one to the other as a new application, if those students take up the option to continue on to the full degree programme. For other agreements, which do not include guaranteed progression, students should be counted as a new application if they are offered a place on the degree programme.

Joint courses

19. 'Joint courses' are courses made available by two (or more) providers with degree awarding powers, in which each provider has responsibility for the provision of education to students. On successful completion, these courses lead to a joint award, or dual or multiple awards, from each provider involved. Teaching may be provided in varying proportions by the providers involved.

20. For joint courses, the provider a student is registered with is the provider to which the student is assigned for data reporting purposes when they start their course. Providers should determine at the outset what proportion of the initial entry cohort should be reported by each provider. Reflecting this proportion, each student should then be assigned to a single provider when they start their course, and retain this assignment until they finish it.

21. Applications that do not lead to a registration should be returned in the applications, offers, acceptances and registrations data by the provider to which they would have been assigned for data reporting purposes had they led to a registration. The same application must not be recorded multiple times by different providers, and providers should ensure they record how they determined which applications would be reported by each provider.

Applications

22. An application is any formal, documented request to be considered for a place at the provider. Typically, this will be either be through UCAS or through a formal application process hosted by the provider. Sometimes application processes are more informal, and discussions with providers may lead to an offer of a place. When this is the case, you should record the discussions as an application only if an offer has been made. Similarly, informal discussions with potential students in the context of the UCAS clearing process should not be counted as applications unless the potential student adds you as a clearing choice through UCAS.

23. For the purposes of the transparency information, we are interested in the number of applications rather than the number of individuals making an application. For example, a single individual who applies for two courses at a single provider would be counted in the data as two applications.

24. Only applications to start in the relevant academic year should be included. Deferred applications should be included in the data for the year in which the student intends to start the course.

Offers

25. You should record an application as leading to an offer when you have formally offered a place to the student for the relevant academic year, regardless of whether or not this is conditional on forthcoming results. If a prospective student applies for two courses and you offer a place on a single course, this should be recorded as a single offer. All offers must be linked to applications, so the number of offers recorded cannot be greater than the number of applications.

Accepted offers

26. You should record an offer as accepted when the prospective student formally accepts a place at the provider for the relevant academic year. If a prospective student formally accepts an offer but defers taking up their place until a later year, their application should not be included in the table but instead recorded in the data for the year they intend to start the course. For UCAS applications, an offer is defined as accepted when an applicant is placed to that application choice at the end of the cycle. All acceptances should be linked to offers, and so the number of acceptances cannot be greater than the number of offers.

Registrations

27. You should record an application as leading to a registration if the student begins their course and does not leave within two weeks of the start date. This ensures that the number of registrations for a given year will align with the number of entrants as calculated by the OfS and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in various other analyses. All registrations must be linked to accepted offers, and so the number of registrations cannot be greater than the number of offers accepted.

Ethnicity

28. You should group applications into the following ethnic groups: white, black, Asian, mixed, other or unknown, as per the applicant's self-declaration. The unknown category should be used only exceptionally, typically where applications for the 2018-19 year were not accepted and therefore ethnicity data never gathered. Tolerance of unknowns is likely to reduce in the future, because we will expect providers to gather more complete data about the ethnicity of applicants.

29. These same groupings are used by UCAS, and map to the HESA and Individualised Learner Record (ILR) ethnicity codes as indicated in Table B.

Table B: Mapping of ethnic grouping to HESA and ILR codes

Ethnic grouping	HESA codes	ILR codes
White	10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15,19	31, 32, 33, 34,
Black	21, 22, 29	44, 45, 46
Asian	31, 32, 33, 34, 39	39, 40, 41, 42, 43
Mixed	41, 42, 43, 49	35, 36, 37, 38

Other	50, 80	47, 98
Unknown	90, 98	99

The Index of Multiple Deprivation

30. For the purposes of the Transparency return 2019 the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 will be used. The English IMD measures relative deprivation for small areas in England, and ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area). Further information about the English IMD is available on the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government website[10].

31. Similar measures of deprivation are available for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland but these are not directly comparable with the English IMD. We therefore require IMD to be returned only for applications from English-domiciled applicants; students domiciled in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland should be placed in the IMD 'N/A' category.

32. For applications through UCAS, IMD is included in the Provider EXACT record supply (PERS) extract. For applications that do not come through UCAS, you will need to derive the IMD quintile from the applicant's postcode. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government offers a free IMD look-up tool[11]. This provides IMD data in a single download for up to 10,000 postcodes. To use this tool you will need to upload an Excel file or CSV file containing the relevant postcodes and the lookup tool will return the relevant IMD information, along with several other data items. Note that these downloads group IMDs into deciles. You will need to convert these deciles into quintiles in order to return the transparency information (decile 1 and 2, for example, will map to quintile 1).

Gender

33. Applications should be returned in the following gender groups: male, female or other, as per the applicant's self-declaration.

34. Following guidance from the Equality Challenge Unit, we advise the use of 'other' for people who associate with the terms intersex, androgyne, intergender, ambigender, gender fluid, polygender and genderqueer.

35. Only the gender categories of male and female are available for UCAS applicants, although providers may adjust the data provided by UCAS if they are made aware of different information to that held by UCAS.

Mode

36. Applications for apprenticeships should be returned in the 'Apprenticeship' section of the applications, offers, acceptances, registrations table, regardless of mode.

37. All other applications should be returned in either the 'full time' or 'part time' section of the table.

38. An application should be returned as full time if the student would normally be expected to attend the provider, or elsewhere, for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks within the course

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[10] Available at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015

[11] Available at http://imd-by-postcode.opendatacommunities.org/

year, and during that time they are expected to undertake periods of study, tuition, learning in the workplace, or sandwich work placement.

39. An application should be returned as part time where the applicant has not applied for an apprenticeship and the course applied for does not meet the above definition for full time.

Section 3: Completing and submitting the Transparency return 2019

Compiling the data

40. For providers that use UCAS, much of the transparency information is collected by UCAS and shared with providers through the PERS End of Cycle extract. The 2018 PERS End of Cycle extract, including new IMD fields, is available to download from UCAS until 28 March 2019. We advise providers to download before this date if they wish to use the PERS extract as the basis of their Transparency return 2019. After this date UCAS can supply the PERS extract at an additional charge. The PERS extract contains full-time applications via UCAS and also non-UCAS full-time applications that lead to a registration with the provider (as they will have been reported to UCAS as a 'Record of Prior Acceptance'). The UCAS data will not contain part-time applications, or non-UCAS full-time applications that do not lead to a registration (for example, because the student does not receive an offer). In compiling the transparency information, you will need to add the information about these individual students to the data provided by UCAS.

41. The OfS, working with UCAS, has developed a data collection tool for providers for recording applications, which you will be able to download from the OfS website in spring 2019[12]. The tool allows you to copy your UCAS data into it and record your direct applications so that the two sets of data are consistent. It will then use this data to compile the aggregate data that you are required to submit.

42. Use of the data collection tool is not mandatory. You can use your own systems, as long as the way in which you record the application data enables you to provide aggregated data in the format required by the OfS for submission.

Downloading the workbook

43. An Excel workbook containing the table to be completed will be available on the OfS portal in June 2019. We will contact the accountable officer of each provider to notify you that the workbook is available.

Completing the workbook

44. You will be required to copy your aggregate application data (either from the OfS data collection tool or from your own systems) into the workbook which you will need to submit to the OfS.

45. When copying and pasting data into the return, you should use the 'Paste Special - Values' option to ensure the formatting of the return is not corrupted, as corrupted workbooks may fail to upload successfully.

46. The workbook available for download will contain the three worksheets as show in Table C.

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[12] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/guidance-for-providers-on-submitting-the-transparency-return-2019/

Table C: Worksheets included in Transparency return 2019

Name of worksheet	Description
AOAR1819	Contains the table of applications, offers, acceptances and registrations data for students applying to start studying in 2018-19, which needs to be completed.
Definitions	Contains definitions to assist with completing the table.
Validation	Contains validation checks to ensure the data you have entered is valid. You should ensure you pass validation before uploading your return.

Uploading the workbook and signing off the data

47. Your completed Transparency return 2019 workbook must be uploaded to the OfS portal. Once the return has been successfully submitted to the portal, you will receive a results file with a sign-off sheet. The sign-off sheet must be signed by the accountable officer and uploaded to the portal by **noon on Thursday 22 August 2019**. We advise providers to upload their data to the OfS portal as soon as possible in order to allow enough time for the data to be signed off before the deadline.

Downloading the data for publication on your website

48. The results file which you receive after successfully submitting your data will also contain the information that you are required to publish on your website by the end of August 2019. This includes:

- Table 1a – Summary of applications, offers, acceptances and registrations for 2018-19 entrants

- Table 1b – Detailed information on applications, offers, acceptances and registrations for 2018-19 entrants

- Table 2a – Percentage of first degrees at grade 2:1 or above by characteristic for 2017-18 qualifiers

- Table 2b – Detailed information on attainment for 2017-18 qualifiers.

49. The data in Tables 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b will be rounded and suppressed ready for publishing. For more information about publishing your transparency information see page 11 of Regulatory advice 8: Guidance for providers about condition of registration F1: transparency information[13]. In future years, information on the completion status of students will also be provided and must be published, but not for the 2019 publication.

50. Providers should ensure that they publish the final version of their transparency data.

Data assurance

51. Data assurance is an essential part of how we can ensure that our approach to regulation is appropriate and effective. The requirement to permit verification of information is set out in

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[13] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-8-guidance-for-providers-about-condition-of-registration-f1-transparency-information/.

condition F3, which applies to all registered providers. More information on condition F3 is set out on pages 127-131 of the Regulatory framework[14].

52. We may audit your transparency data. Therefore, it is essential to keep an audit trail when completing your Transparency return, recording how your decisions have been made and the data used to support them. Our audits may involve desk-based work and visits to providers to review how the return was produced, including testing the systems and processes used by a provider to prepare specific aspects of their data.

Good practice

Audit trail

53. We recommend that you keep an audit trail between raw data and the transparency return for at least five years. This should include any relevant electronically stored data, printouts and working papers used in completing the return. Source documents such as application forms should also be retained.

Knowledge management and staff training

54. It is advisable to have at least two people who know how to prepare the Transparency data return. This reduces the risk that in a person's absence, particularly at crucial times of the year, the provider may not be able to prepare the return on time and to the appropriate standard. A good audit trail and documentation on how to compile the transparency data also help to reduce this risk.

Self-check questions

Please ensure that you can answer 'Yes' to all these questions before submitting the completed Transparency return 2019 to the OfS.

1. Have you checked your data internally?

2. Have you completed the table in full?

3. Have you complied with the definitions set out in Section 2?

4. Have you kept an effective audit trail?

5. Have you passed all of the validation checks?

6. Where the workbook shows credibility warnings:

    a. Have you checked your data to make sure it is correct?

    b. Have you checked that you are using the definitions set out in this guidance?

    c. Have you explained why the data is correct in the box provided in the template?

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[14] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/the-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/