

Statistics on Higher Education: User Engagement Event Findings

Date of Conference: 30 January 2014 at the BIS Conference Centre, Victoria Street, London.

INTRODUCTION

BIS held a Higher Education Statistics: User Engagement Event in the BIS Conference Centre on the 30 January to raise the profile of, and seek feedback on a range of Higher Education statistics and products. The themes of the event included:

- Student Numbers and Outcomes;
- Destinations and Widening Participation Data; and
- Student Finance.

The presentations were led by Analysts from BIS, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Student Loans Company (SLC), Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Education (DFE). A number of breakout sessions were arranged and delegates from a diverse section of education groups were invited to provide feedback on their data needs and the current tranche of HE statistical publications. There were delegates from Higher Education Institutions, Research Groups, Student Bodies, the national news media and other Government Departments.

This note summarises the main action points discussed at the meeting.

STUDENT NUMBERS AND OUTCOMES

Enrolments and Qualifications

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-enrolments-and-qualifications-obtained--2>

There was user interest in including additional breakdowns of participation statistics in January's Statistical First Release. Examples given were entry qualifications, age, participation background (POLAR) and types of post-graduate study (Doctorate/Masters). Users also enquired about the options for deriving metrics based on Parental Income data.

Action: HESA plans to review the content of the January Statistical First Release in Summer 2014 and will take note of these suggestions. Some of the characteristics discussed are published at institution-level in the *Performance indicators for Higher Education*; the Widening Participation measures are currently under review.

Users commented that more timely information on participation in Higher Education would be of greater use to users.

Action: HESA enrolments data is collected on completion of the academic year so as to minimise the burden on institutions, and is published in early January once time has been allowed for processing and quality assurance. The Higher Education Data and Information Improvement Programme (HEDIIP) is reviewing the mechanics of data collection on Higher Education.

Delegates expressed interest in improving the narrative for the SFR so that it gives more policy context and signposts other data sources that might give more timely indications of trends.

Action: As mentioned above HESA plans to review the content of the January SFR in Summer 2014. The Consultation team are considering the optimal location for a webpage describing the HE data cycle, i.e. from application, to enrolment, to qualifying, to employment.

Employment Outcomes of Leavers in Higher Education

http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1899

Delegates queried the usefulness of measuring employment outcomes only 6 months after graduation.

Response: Destinations data are collected after 6 months to maximise the response rate to the survey. HESA also collects a biennial follow-up survey for a structured sample of leavers 3.5 years after graduation. BIS is investigating whether this information can be supplemented with further longitudinal employment data collected via the UK tax system.

They also wanted to find out more about the outcomes for international students

Action: Institutions collected information on the outcomes overseas (non-EU) students as a pilot in 2011/12 and will do so again in 2012/13. The release of this information depends on improving response rates. HESA is working with HE institutions to improve response rates for International Students.

Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-higher-education-initial-participation-rates>

Delegates expressed an interest in seeing clearer guidance in the publication on how the measure is derived and calculated, and explanation of how it differs from other participation rates (including similar rates calculated and

used in international comparisons by the OECD, and qualification rates of the population.

Action: Improvements will be made to the BIS publication in 2014 to take account of the feedback.

DESTINATION MEASURES AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION DATA

Destinations data

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/destinations-of-key-stage-4-and-key-stage-5-pupils-2010-to-2011>

There was a great deal of interest in the potential for using employment and earnings information collected by other Government Departments (HMRC, DWP) data to improve destination measures from education.

Action: This is already a high priority in the Department for Education and work is underway to pursue this, although it will require amendments to existing legislation.

Users also focused on the issue of comparisons with other measures.

Action: DFE identified a requirement to include further editorial guidance in the technical note of the Statistical Release explaining how the measures relate to other participation measures, and make the headline figures on education, employment and training more prominent within the publication. Charts of trends over time cannot be included as yet as there is insufficient historical data to establish these trends

Performance Indicators for Higher Education

<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2072/141/>

Delegates expressed a general lack of awareness about the derivation of the benchmarks.

Action: These comments will be passed onto the United Kingdom Performance Indicator Steering group (UKPISG)

STUDENT FINANCE

<http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/national-statistics.aspx>
[http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/official-statistics-\(slc\).aspx](http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/official-statistics-(slc).aspx)

Delegates observed that it is not always easy to navigate the Student Loans Company web-site when searching for statistics.

Action: There is work in hand at the SLC to improve the organisation of their statistical releases on the website. The changes are expected to take effect by mid year 2014.

Delegates expressed interest in seeing the Student Support statistics presented in a holistic way that highlighted 'the whole student journey'. There was interest in new breakdowns of statistics showing the characteristics of student applicants, for example their age, if they have a disability, and whether they continue their studies past the first year of study. It was also suggested that users' interpretation could be assisted if statistics were described from the perspective of the student.

Action: Improvements will be made to SLC's outputs over the coming year taking account of the full range of feedback from their own user surveys, this event, and the UK Statistics Authority Assessment of their statistical outputs. This will include more information comparing the UK administrations, and changes to the web-site to reflect how users have different requirements from the data, e.g. those users who need technical data and those users who require more mainstream and topical narrative

CONTACT BIS:

BIS welcomes feedback on all its products and will continually review its publications to ensure they are fit for purpose for their users. If you have any queries or comments on BIS or partner statistical products, please contact hestatistics@bis.gsi.gov.uk.