

Early Evaluation of the KIS Focus Group

Friday 12 October 2012, 11am

Conference Room at HESA Offices, 95 Promenade, Cheltenham, GL50 1HZ

Present:

Laura Bellingham (LBE)	Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
Catherine Benfield	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
David Blackmore	University of Liverpool
Louise Boyton (LBO)	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
Tim Burton	Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
Peter Clements	City University London
Mick Cottam	Myerscough College
Mathew Evans	UCAS
Jeanne Farrow	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
Andrew Horsman	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
Christine Jones	Swansea University
Martin Jones	Cardiff University
Emma Maskell	University College Falmouth
David McGregor	University of Cumbria
Thomas Moody	Royal Veterinary College
Helen Newcombe	Royal Holloway University of London
Emily North	University of Derby
Harriet Parfitt	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
Alice Redfearn	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
Michelle Spruce	University of Chester
Katarina Thomson	University of Greenwich
Steve Walsh	Aberystwyth University

1. Welcome and introductions

CB welcomed colleagues to the meeting and introduced it as the third session on the Early Evaluation of the KIS, looking at how institutions have found carrying out the KIS. CB then gave each member of the group the opportunity to introduce themselves and their role in the KIS. It was established that most members of the group had been involved in HESA returns before, but those who have not agreed that they had found the technical side of the KIS difficult at times. CB stated that in the GuildHE meeting she attended on the 11 October, it was proposed that an explanatory introduction page to the coding manual was added. Members of the group agreed this would be useful. One member also identified that the spread sheet for those with less knowledge of XML had been very useful.

2. Teaching and Learning and Assessment definitions, categories etc.

CB introduced this item by informing members of the group that any changes made would not be to redefine these categories but instead to think about how these affect the way data is

presented. Using this feedback HESA will be making the guidance clearer and possibly making minor changes.

One member of the group raised an issue around the difference between reporting work based learning, which falls under scheduled learning and teaching, and placements. It was stated that this means some institutions appear to not offer many placements, when in fact this is not that case and this confusion is leading to institutions changing the way they carry out work based learning in order to be able to categorise it as a placement. It was noted that the definition used for work based learning was not from QAA but was HEFCE's standard definition of this. CB agreed to discuss this further with QAA and HEFCE in order to clarify the guidance over this.

It was also highlighted that KISTYPE 3s do not necessarily include a year out and are therefore not always representative. This led the discussion on to how useful KISTYPE 2 and 3s are. There was mixed feedback around this, with many members of the group stating they found them much more difficult than KISTYPE 1s as information does not fit as neatly into KISTYPE 2 and 3s. However some members of the group disagreed as KISTYPE 2 and 3s work better for their institutions.

CB asked if members of the group had any other comments on teaching and learning and assessment definitions. An issue was raised that some institutions have additional contact hours which cannot be recorded at course stage level but instead need to be recorded at course level. One member of the group suggested they divide these hours by the number of years of the programme to allow them to record this at course level. Alternatively CB proposed that in a similar way to under assessment, a check box was added which if ticked, tells the student that there may be some additional hours over the course of the programme. It was agreed by most members of the group that this would be useful. However one member of the group questioned the use of the check box which exists under assessment already as they do not believe it is clear on the website what this is representing. CB agreed to take away this feedback for further consideration.

Several members of the group strongly requested that the rule in scheduled contact time that those with 10 minute travel time in hour timetable slots must record these sessions as 50 minutes, is removed as not all institutions are recording this data in this way which leads to inconsistent data. AH informed members of the group that this rule had been implemented following feedback from HEFCE. CB agreed to discuss with HEFCE the best way to approach this. A member of the group requested that if this rule is kept, they make sure it is implemented by all institutions.

Another member of the group identified issues with distance learning course regarding contact hours and online tuition. It was questioned whether these courses should be recorded mostly as guided independent study, as students are receiving contact through online tuition. LBO stated that it is understandable that contact hours for distance learning courses will look lower as they are conducted in a different way to other courses. However members of the group believe that in order for students to know how much time needs to be assigned to a distance learning course, the guidance around this should be made clearer. CB agreed to take this back for further discussion with HEFCE.

CB then asked if any members of the group had any comments regarding assessment types as these had been mentioned in the Early Evaluation of the KIS survey. An issue was identified around class tests as members of the group had found guidance over this to be contradictory. CB agreed that this needed to be clarified. Another member of the group stated that there were some problems surrounding the difference between what was classified as coursework or exams; particularly that coursework is not the most accurate way to describe testing practical skills. Institutions found that in general a lot less was thought of as practical than expected. LBE stated that the original QAA definition offered more clarity



over this and so may be useful to consider. It was agreed that this would be further discussed by CB, LBE and HEFCE.

An issue was also over whether office hours should be added as a part of learning and teaching, as members of their institutions regarded this as very important. LBE questioned whether this is a method of learning. CB agreed to take away to consider further.

One member of the group stated that if Welsh language calculations need re-considering as at the moment they are not accurate. CB agreed to discuss this further with HEFCW.

3. Provision of fees information

CB introduced this by reminding the group that the record is set up so that if a course recruits through UCAS then UCAS will provide the fees but if it is not then the institution will enter the fees themselves and that ME was present to assist with any queries around this. Some members of the group stated that they had issues with fees not appearing on the Unistats website. ME stated that he did not know why this would be happening, but would take this away to find out. Another institution also stated that it can be difficult to know which KIS UCAS are entering information for and so it would be easier if institutions could enter UCAS data for all courses but HESA could ignore the information if it had already been provided by UCAS. CB raised the point of what to do if UCAS and institutions enter different data, and it was agreed that the UCAS data would take priority. CB is to take this away for further consideration.

Other issues that were raised include four year courses needing to be shown differently to three year, otherwise the average course fee is not comparable. Also one institution stated that some of their courses are entirely funded by the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NLIAH) and therefore zero fee information should be allowed in the KIS file. CB stated that the later of these issues will be fixed for next year.

One institution asked when UCAS fees will be updated if an institution amends them. CB stated that the UCAS fees are updated overnight but the Unistats file is updated weekly. Some members of the group questioned whether it was necessary to resubmit every time fees change. CB proposed that HESA could pick up the information from UCAS and so institutions just sign off these changes rather than resubmit. From this there was a discussion over whether institutions thought it was necessary to sign off the data themselves or whether they were satisfied with just receiving a notification when fees data was updated. It was concluded that most members of the group would be content with just receiving a notification of when fees data had been updated and so CB agreed to consider this.

It was also asked where fees information comes from for KISTYPE 2s which are linked to KISTYPE 3s. CB clarified that it came from KISTYPE 3s. Institutions believed HESA should be picking up the fees information from KISTYPE 2s. CB agreed to consider this. CB also asked members of the group whether they were happy for accreditation to be added to KISTYPE 2s as decided in previous meeting and they agreed that they were.

One member of the group stated that course stages and fees information for part time courses was not accurate. CB clarified that HESA will resolve this through the implementation of adding separate KIS for part time courses as decided in the previous EEK meeting.

It was asked whether flags could be put on the website to tell students that a course also runs part time and also for courses with optional placements. Another institution also asked whether course titles could be linked from UCAS as they should be the same as these. CB stated that course titles are being further discussed following feedback from the previous EEK meeting and the GuildHE meeting she attended on the 11 October. From this they had established that a flag was also needed to be able to search for one or two subject courses

separately. It was also raised that Welsh institutions are currently being returned under 'P' for 'Prifysgol' in the search and so this needs fixing. CB agreed to discuss these issues with HEFCE.

In order to address the issue of two courses having the same course name but different course lengths, one member of the group proposed adding a separate field, as proposed for qualification type, for number of years. CB agreed to consider this.

CB brought the focus of the discussion back to issues around fees data. She agreed to talk to UCAS about making the feed of fees more quickly up to date and asked if there were any other issues. One member of the group identified that the error message in the commit validation does not say where the problem is coming from in regards to fees and this makes it difficult to locate. JF agreed to raise this with HEFCE, and consider reporting for next year.

4. Proposed Aardvark process for C13061

LBO walked the group through the proposed Aardvark process for C13061 and clarified this is only for HEIs and Alternative Providers as FECs will still be returning their data to HEFCE. LBO then explained that the validation kit will be released in March, allowing institutions to check their data before the KIS opens in May. The first stage of checking will be the same as done in the validation kit, followed by more complex checks to make sure the data fits into the HESA set. From this, reports will be released which will allow institutions to see what the data will look like. UCAS data will be added when it is available and institutions will receive an email notification of this. When institutions are satisfied with this they can sign off, with the initial sign off in August. The collection then reopens in October. Institutions will have to resubmit the complete data every time they make changes.

This raised the issue again around whether institutions wanted to sign off updated UCAS data, as if they do not sign off and the data is incorrect they will have to wait a week to resubmit. There was mixed feedback from institutions over whether they would like to sign off or were happy to just be notified of changes. CB agreed to consider this further with HEFCE and that if they did conclude this should require a sign off, they would make it as simple as possible.

One institution raised the issue that if no fees have yet been put in for a course, this shows up on the website as a blank. They proposed that this was changed to say fees to be confirmed.

One member of the group questioned whether sign off was to be done electronically or by paper and CB informed them that this was currently under discussion at HESA.

5. Feedback from earlier EEK sessions on changes that are planned to the specifications

a. Recording a location for each course and collecting accommodation by location

CB informed members of the group that following discussions at the previous EEK meeting, HESA were proposing to add a new location entity which would enable location to be recorded at course level. CB invited colleagues to respond to this. One member of the group questioned what would be done when a student completed a course in two different locations. JF stated that she was unsure whether this would be done by where the student is for the first year of the course or where they are for the majority of the course, but agreed to take this away to consider.

It was asked how precise the location will have to be and CB informed them that it will be recorded through coordinates. CB also clarified that for those with another location within the same town, this will be optional, and HESA are to clarify guidance around what is meant by town. It was established this information could not be gathered from the institution



profile record, as this only covers campuses and is retrospective, whereas the KIS is looking forward for students.

b. FT/PT – should there be two KIS?

CB explained the proposal to have separate KIS for full time and part time courses, only if the part time course is advertised and acknowledged this is something HESA will need to consider further if it is to be implemented. One institution asked if there could be a flag for those who are not advertising their part time courses, just offering them in some circumstances. Other institutions asked if this could also be done for sandwich courses. CB agreed to consider.

One member of the group mentioned that part time courses are not usually 120 credits per year, but the system is currently based around this and asked if this could be changed. CB stated that she was not sure but would discuss further with colleagues.

c. Type 2 KIS – data items, display issues and accreditation

CB mentioned that HESA are planning to add accreditation and fees to KISTYPE 2 following feedback and members of the group agreed this would be useful. One institution stated that they had difficulties in linking between KISTYPE 2 and 3s, and KISTYPE 1 and 2s, and asked if there should be four course stages for these. Another member of the group clarified this is what they had done.

It was asked if it was possible to do a KISTYPE 1 for joint honours without programme specifications as some courses are too different to do a KISTYPE 2. CB agreed to take this back for further discussion and to also discuss the burden of KISTYPE 2 and 3s altogether. One member of the group mentioned that they believed KISTYPE 3s could be made more useful by dropping JACs codes down a level and CB agreed to feed this back to HEFCE.

d. HE/FE – currently one classroom two KIS, courses that move indirectly to directly funded (students registered at one institution who need to be reported at another

CB explained this issue and stated that SD had been further considering this following the previous EEK meeting. It was proposed that this could be resolved by allowing people to claim other institutions course codes. One institution asked how this would work if a course was franchised to a number of partners from an HEI and CB asked if they would have the same course code. The group member clarified that they wouldn't and so CB explained this would be not be a problem. One member of the group explained that this was similar to the approach about joint medical schools, which they had struggled with in this year's return due to lack of guidance, so any changes which need to be made should include explicit guidance.

The point was also raised that the validation kits need to be similar enough to cope when a course changes from HE to FE with JACs codes or ILR aims and CB agreed with this. It was asked if NSS and DLHE data would move with a course and CB stated it would.

e. All linked courses having the same set of JACS codes

CB informed the group this had been discussed in the previous EEK meeting and that Richard Puttock from HEFCE had stated that the design/display on the site becomes increasingly compromised when the number of subjects increased and so concluded it should only be done if there is enough NSS/DLHE data. One member of the group stated they had had this issue in this year's return. The latest decision from HEFCE was that different JACs codes may be let through on a switch. However it was raised that foundation years need to be considered separately as they do not fit in the same way.

f. Accreditation

It was stated that accreditation was proposed to be added to KISTYPE 2s which are linked to KISTYPE 3s. There was then much discussion over how the ACCTYPE field should be recorded. It was acknowledged that there should be a more standard formatting for the different types of accreditation. One institution asked if the accrediting body could provide this sentence. CB agreed to consider these issues further.

The discussion then moved on to the ACCURL field and how this should be managed. Many institutions agreed there were issues around this as the pages they linked to had often changed last minute and institutions were not aware of this. It was also stated that it was very difficult to find the right page to link to and many accrediting bodies link to PDFs which cannot be used to link to. Therefore they established that it may be of as much use to use the homepage as it would a specific page and then explain the accreditation further on the universities own website. It was proposed that all institutions with similar courses could agree on the most useful link for those courses and then this link be maintained by HESA. However there were some issues raised about how possible this would be. It was asked if accrediting bodies themselves could help and CB responded that this was a possibility although this would then involve contacting all the accrediting bodies. One member of the group asked if it was possible to have the name of the body and then a list of different types of accreditation given from which the institution picks the most relevant. AH highlighted there may be difficulties in the way this would be done, in terms of a valid entry list. CB agreed to use all this feedback to discuss the issue further with colleagues and create a proposal.

g. Course titles

CB introduced this topic and mentioned that this is something HEFCE are already looking into. She highlighted that the possibility of separate qualification type and number of year fields, as well as additional guidance should make this clearer. One member of the group asked what the impact of this would be on KISTYPE 2s and CB agreed to consider this further.

h. Need to capture three years of HESA course IDs

CB stated that this is planned to happen as it should have been done from the beginning and the group agreed this was acceptable.

6. Website and onwards use of data

CB stated that issues around the website were already being investigated by HEFCE and that she would discuss with them whether the extra flags which have been proposed in this meeting would help the search function. The issue was raised that flashing items on the page were not appropriate for accessibility but AH confirmed that the website had had an accessibility check before it was released.

One institution raised the issue of FEC courses being listed under the main institution. CB stated that this would be resolved by the proposed location entity but members of the group were unsure if this would resolve this. Therefore CB will take this back for further consideration with colleagues at HESA.

It was mentioned that many institutions have used a large amount of estimated data in their KIS return and other institutions feel uncomfortable with this as they have kept their data as accurate as possible. CB stated that this would only be an issue in the first year as a concession and that from now onwards the amount of estimated data allowed would be significantly reduced.

One member of the group asked whether HESA will be checking the course webpages, as institution may not have a web link as soon as a new course has been added to the Unistats website. CB confirmed that they would not.

It was mentioned that where data is aggregated there needs to be more clarification about where it has been aggregated from as the current wording on the website is not sufficiently detailed to be useful and CB agreed to refer this to HEFCE.

7. Any other business

CB asked the group if there were any other issues they believed needed raising. One member of the group mentioned that courses look different when they are a new programme and asked if it was possible to flag when something is new. It was also asked whether the institutions would be able to set this flag themselves to avoid confusion and CB agreed to consider this.

One member of the group raised the issue that guidance over assessment data is inconsistent for those on a year out and CB agreed to clarify this.

It was stated that in scheduled contact hours there is no differentiation between a small scale seminar and a lecture. The possibility of an average group size field was discussed but CB stated that this was an issue for major reviews which are done in a few years.

It was also raised that it is difficult to understand the difference between a typical student and an average student, especially for example when all students do compulsory modules for half a year and have many different optional modules in the other half of the year. Therefore they proposed using all students not just the average. However as this would be a major change, CB proposed also looking into this further at the major review in a few years.

8. Next steps

- The documentation for next year's return will be released before Christmas with all significant changes to be made
- Any items which cannot be done for next year's return will be done for the following years return
- A second release of the documentation will be released in March with minor changes such as around guidance and accrediting bodies



Actions points from the minutes

- CB, QAA and HEFCE to clarify the guidance over scheduled learning and teaching categories, in particular over placements and work based learning
- CB to consider adding a check box which tells students that there may be some additional hours to the ones stated during the programme
- CB to discuss with HEFCE whether travel time should be deducted from scheduled contact hours
- CB to discuss with HEFCE whether distance learning should be mainly recorded as guided independent study
- CB, QAA and HEFCE to clarify guidance of assessment types, in particular recording practical tests as coursework
- CB to discuss with HEFCW problems around Welsh language calculations
- ME to investigate why some fees are not appearing on the Unistats website
- CB to consider allowing institutions to enter fees information for all courses to avoid confusion over whether they or UCAS should be providing the data
- CB to consider KIS record including fees information from KISTYPE 2s
- CB to discuss with HEFCE issues raised with search function on Unistats website
- CB to consider adding an additional field to record number of years of a course, alongside course title and qualification type
- CB to consider with HEFCE whether institutions must sign off updated UCAS data
- CB to discuss with HEFCE whether course location is recorded by where the student is located for the first year of course or where they are for the majority of their course, for those whose location changes
- CB to consider putting a flag on the website to identify students may be able to do the course part time
- CB to consider whether part time courses can be recorded differently to the 120 credits per year system
- CB and HEFCE to consider whether the way ACCTYPE and ACCURL could be recorded differently and if so, how this should be done
- CB to work with HEFCE to consider whether adding the location entity will resolve the issue of FEC courses being listed under the main institution
- CB to refer to HEFCE issues over lack of clarity around where data is aggregated from on the website
- CB to consider allowing institutions to flag new courses on the website
- CB to work with colleagues to resolve issues over inconsistent guidance for assessment data for those on a year out

