

# Cylchlythyr | Circular

## Unistats: Data collection timetable and changes for 2017

**Date:** 07 March 2017  
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**To:** Heads of regulated and/or funded higher and further education institutions in Wales  
**Response by:** No response required  
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This circular sets out information on:

- the changes to the Unistats website and associated data collection for 2017;
- the approach to publication of the results of the new National Student Survey and Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey data on Unistats for 2017;
- the processes and timetable for providers to submit their Unistats data for 2017.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please email [info@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk).



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## Introduction

1. This circular sets out information on:
  - the changes to the Unistats website and associated data collection for 2017;
  - the approach to publication of the results of the new National Student Survey and Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey data on Unistats for 2017;
  - the processes and timetable for providers to submit their Unistats data for 2017.
2. Thank you for your ongoing support and engagement with Unistats and the provision of information for prospective students.

## Key points to note

3. As a result of the Review of Unistats overseen by the UK Higher Education Public Information Steering Group ([www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/roiconsult/about/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/roiconsult/about/)), we are making changes to the Unistats website and data return.
4. The Key Information Set (KIS) data collection has been renamed and is now known as the Unistats data collection.
5. The Unistats data collection will now require providers to return a reduced dataset, which includes links to detailed information about course delivery and costs on their own websites. The timetable for the collection of 2017 Unistats data is shown in **Table 1**.
6. We require all providers to have signed off data for publication by **noon on Thursday 3 August 2017**. This will allow them to preview the information on the Unistats site, and thus help to ensure data quality. Where providers identify data errors, or their course details change during preview, they will need to resubmit and sign off updated data by **noon on Thursday 24 August 2017**. This data will then be included on the live site when it is updated **on 4 September 2017**. The dataset for publication should initially be signed off by the accountable officer, but formal responsibility for signing off any subsequent updates may be delegated to another member of the senior management team.

## Changes to the Unistats website and data collection for 2017

7. Research with prospective and current students, carried out as part of the Review of Unistats<sup>1</sup>, found that detailed information about course structure and delivery was most important to prospective students, and that the summary metrics presented on Unistats were not the best way to provide this type of information.
8. Circular [W16/22HE: Consultation on detailed changes to the Key Information Set data collection for 2017 and approaches to presenting data on the successor to the Unistats website](#), published as part of the 'Review of information about learning and teaching, and the student experience', therefore included proposals for changes to the KIS data collection. In view of the broad support for these proposals<sup>2</sup>, the following data has been removed:
  - proportion of time spent in scheduled learning and teaching and independent study;
  - proportion of assessment by method;
  - tuition fee information;
  - accommodation costs.
9. Providers are now expected to publish detailed information about course delivery and costs on their own websites in line with the Competition and Market Authority advice ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers)). The UK higher education funding bodies have developed good practice guidance to assist with this ([www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/provinfo/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/provinfo/)). Further details are available in [circular W17/05HE Good practice guide on publishing information for prospective undergraduate students](#), which we are issuing concurrently with this circular. Unistats course pages will link directly to this information for the relevant course on the provider's website, giving prospective students access to it as part of their course search.
10. The data collection has been renamed to reflect this new approach and to respond to feedback received through the consultation about the desirability of a single recognisable brand in promoting use of Unistats (circular [W16/31HE](#) refers).
11. The validation for course titles has been relaxed in response to feedback, to enable course titles on Unistats more closely to reflect those on provider websites. There is also now an option to reflect whether a part-time course is optionally available by distance learning.

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<sup>1</sup> see the 'Report on the Review of the Key Information Set and Unistats', [www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/roiconsult/ra/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/roiconsult/ra/)

<sup>2</sup> Circular [W16/31HE: Summary of the outcomes of the consultation on detailed changes to the Key Information Set data collection for 2017 and approaches to presenting data on the successor to the Unistats website](#)

12. In addition to reflecting these changes, the Unistats website will be updated in 2017 to include the new National Student Survey and Teaching Excellence Framework Year 2 outcomes.
13. Further detail of the changes to the data collection for 2017 can be found on the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) website (<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/records/reviews/c17061>).
14. Discussions are ongoing on further potential changes, including improvements to the website and the potential use of data from the Longitudinal Educational Outcomes dataset.

### **Approach to the publication of the National Student Survey (NSS) and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey (DLHE)**

15. Previously, where we have not initially had sufficient NSS or DLHE responses to meet publication thresholds, we have attempted to meet thresholds by aggregating responses with those from the previous year, and then at subject level. Because of the changes this year to the NSS (new questions and changes in the wording and order of existing questions), we will not aggregate 2017 NSS responses with 2016 responses. Where there is not sufficient NSS data to publish, we will attempt to meet thresholds by aggregating it at subject level.
16. We believe that this approach is the most methodologically robust, and it was supported by more respondents than approaches involving aggregation of some responses over two years, when we consulted on this in summer 2016<sup>3</sup>. It was considered to be the most straightforward for students to understand and the least open to misinterpretation.
17. We will continue to aggregate DLHE responses over two years initially, where one year's data does not meet publication thresholds.
18. As advised in the 2016 circular<sup>4</sup>, in 2017 we are implementing publication thresholds for responses to the DLHE survey in line with institutional performance indicator thresholds, ie a response rate of 68 per cent for UK full-time students and 59.5 per cent for UK part-time students. Responses from students on the course will need to meet the threshold for data to be published at course level, and responses at subject level will need to meet the threshold for the data to be published at that level.

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<sup>3</sup> [W16/22HE: Consultation on detailed changes to the Key Information Set data collection for 2017 and approaches to presenting data on the successor to the Unistats website](#), and reported in [W16/31HE: Summary of the outcomes of the consultation on detailed changes to the Key Information Set data collection for 2017 and approaches to presenting data on the successor to the Unistats website](#).

<sup>4</sup> [W16/15HE: Unistats and the Key Information Set: Data collection timetable and changes for 2016](#)

## Internal and external data quality assurance and process for responding to concern

19. Providers are responsible for the quality of their Unistats data. As Unistats data is not static and can be updated weekly, it does not undergo the same additional checks by HEFCE or HESA as other data streams. We strongly encourage providers to use the reports made available by HEFCE and HESA to confirm that the data is accurate, and to make use of the preview period.
20. Initially, the accountable officer must sign off the data to confirm its accuracy. Any subsequent updates must be signed off either by the accountable officer or by an individual they have nominated to act on their behalf.
21. We reserve the right to audit any of the information and data contributed to Unistats by Welsh providers. The purpose of the audit is to gain assurance of the systems and protocols used in deriving the data, and hence of the reliability of the data.
22. The process that the funding bodies will follow in response to concerns about the quality of data on Unistats is available on the HEFCE website<sup>5</sup>. This provides further clarification about the process we will follow and the action we may take where we are not satisfied data is fit for purpose.
23. **Table 1** shows the timetable for the collection of data.

Date	Activity	Notes
25 May 2017	Data collection systems open.	
Early July 2017	NSS and DLHE survey data added.	
13 July 2017	Valid data submission required.	By this date, providers are required to have submitted a dataset which passes validation and contains the majority of their courses.
3 August 2017 (noon)	Deadline for sign-off of data.	Providers are required to have signed off as accurate a dataset which has passed system validation and is suitable for publication.

<sup>5</sup> [www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Learning,and,teaching/Unistats-data-concerns-process.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Learning,and,teaching/Unistats-data-concerns-process.pdf)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Notes</b>
9 to 23 August 2017	Data available for preview on Unistats website.	
24 August 2017 (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.
4 September 2017	Update of Unistats website with the 2017 dataset.	
Early September 2017	Collection systems reopen for updates.	The Unistats dataset is dynamic and it will be possible to make amendments on a weekly basis from September, as it is currently.
29 September 2017	Deadline for update of widgets to reflect new course data.	There are no changes to the coding of the Unistats widget this year, but providers should update these for new courses or changes to KISCOURSEID codes.

#### **Further information / responses to**

24. Further information on the data submission process and where to find guidance and support can be found in **Annex A**.
25. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2085 9731; email [cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk)).

## **Annex A: Further information for regulated higher education institutions, regulated Welsh further education institutions with directly funded provision, and alternative providers of higher education**

1. Higher education institutions, HEFCW directly funded Welsh further education institutions and alternative providers should submit Unistats data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).
2. Detailed guidance on submitting Unistats data is available on the HESA website (<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c17061/>). 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 providers 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](mailto:liaison@hesa.ac.uk), website [www.hesa.ac.uk/liaison](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/liaison).
4. Published Unistats data is based on the provider 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 provider at which they studied in their first year. This means that where providers receive funding through a variety of routes they must submit a Unistats return even if they do not directly receive HEFCW funding. Therefore, registering providers should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to Unistats. For further guidance, see the 'Collaborative provision' document on the HESA website (<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c17061/>) which will be published in March.
5. HESA and HEFCE will liaise with providers' Unistats contacts about the provision of Unistats data, and will direct further communications to them. It is essential that providers ensure their Unistats contact details are up to date. Please note that HEFCE and HESA hold separate lists of Unistats contacts as these have slightly different purposes for each organisation. Providers are responsible for ensuring that their Unistats contact details are up to date on both HEFCE's and HESA's records. HESA has an online contact management system through which providers can update the details of their nominated HESA Unistats contact. Providers should communicate any change in staff to the institutional liaison by email at the address in paragraph 3 above, and will then be given access to HESA's online system so that they can make the necessary changes. Providers can amend their HEFCE Unistats contacts by emailing [unistats@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:unistats@hefce.ac.uk).

## **Annex B: Further information for further education institutions with franchise provision**

1. Further education institutions with franchise provision should return Unistats data to HEFCE.
2. They will need to collect the data outlined in the Unistats data technical guidance (<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c17061/>) and upload it to the HEFCE extranet. Details of how to access the extranet will be sent to Unistats contacts when the data collection opens.
3. HEFCE is offering training in the Unistats data collection process for further education institutions. This is planned for late spring. The dates will be sent to Unistats contacts once confirmed.
4. Published Unistats data is based on the provider 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 provider at which they studied in their first year. This means that where providers receive funding through a variety of routes they must submit a Unistats return, even if they do not directly receive HEFCW funding. Therefore, registering providers should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to the Unistats data return. For further guidance, see the 'Collaborative provision' document on the HESA website (<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c17061/>) which will be published in March.
5. We encourage institutions to upload their data as early as possible after Thursday 25 May, so that any issues of data quality can be resolved as soon as possible. For assistance with the submission process, contact [unistats@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:unistats@hefce.ac.uk).
6. HEFCE will liaise with Unistats contacts in further education institutions about the provision of Unistats data and will direct further communications to them. It is essential that providers ensure their Unistats contact is up to date. Email [unistats@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:unistats@hefce.ac.uk) to amend Unistats contact details.
7. Note that the data should not be signed off by the individual compiling and submitting the Unistats return, but by the accountable officer. This is normally the head of the institution.