

# HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR WALES

## DATA WORKSHOP

Notes of the Data Workshop held in NEWI on 6 June 2007

Present:

Frances Good	HEFCW
David Blaney	HEFCW
Hannah Falvey	HEFCW
Rachael Gray	HEFCW
Leanne Holborn	HEFCW
Elizabeth Heal	HEFCW
Thomas Sinnott	HEFCW
Rachel O'Gorman	HEFCW
Susan Full	WAG
Ms Denise Williams	University of Glamorgan
Mr Liam Bryson	University of Glamorgan
Dr Ian Salmon	University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Mr David McParlin	University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Mr Laurence Dupont	University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Ms Annette Davies	University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Mr Mike Wilson	University of Wales, Bangor
Dr Kevin Mundy	University of Wales, Bangor
Mr Simon Wallis	Cardiff University
Mr Matthew Williamson	Cardiff University
Mrs Janice Thomas	University of Wales, Lampeter
Ms Emma Williams	University of Wales, Lampeter
Mr Aled Phillips	University of Wales Swansea
Ms Julie Ferguson	University of Wales Swansea
Dr Neil Lucas	University of Wales Swansea
Mr Peter Dole	University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
Ms Jane Beckett	University of Wales, Newport
Dr Richard Dover	North East Wales Institute of HE
Mr Neil Cowan	North East Wales Institute of HE
Mr Kim Birkhead	North East Wales Institute of HE
Mr Chris Godsmark	Swansea Institute of HE
Mr Paul Davies	Trinity College Carmarthen
Dr Brian Clarke	Trinity College Carmarthen
Mr Nick Wood	The Open University
Ms Judith Dutton	The Open University

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The group was welcomed by the Head of Statistics and Information Services who outlined the agenda for the day and introduced colleagues who would be presenting information.

### 2. DATA REQUIREMENT

#### 2.1. NEW HESA STUDENT RECORD FOR 2007/08

2.1.1 The Senior Manager for Statistics and Funding informed the group that all but one institution had responded to the letter sent out by HEFCW requesting confirmation that HEIs can make a complete return for 2007/08. This confirmation stipulates that the expectation can be met, using the new structure, within normal timetables and without a significant reduction in quality. Institutions had some concerns about signing up to this,

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including their reliance on software providers and the current uncertainty about the data that will be requested for Welsh for Adults students.

### 2.2 HESA CODING ISSUES

2.2.1 The Senior Manager for Statistics and Funding outlined various coding issues to the sector.

### 2.3 WELSH MEDIUM MODULES

2.3.1 The Head of Funding and Research highlighted issues that remain within Welsh Medium. It was stated that guidance would be issued from HEFCW to allow institutions to make sensible judgements on the proportion of learning activity through the medium of Welsh. The institutions raised concerns regarding capturing the information. The Statistics team stipulated that a complex calculation was unnecessary, but for audit purposes, solid evidence to demonstrate that the calculation was made on a reasonable basis should be available.

### 2.4 LLWR CODING ISSUES

2.4.1 The Senior Funding Analyst informed the sector that extra guidance relating to HE specific codes and data validations have been added to the LLWR records for 2007/08 data collection onwards. It was also highlighted that there continue to be inconsistencies on how data is captured between FECs and therefore, further guidance will be issued as part of the HE Data Requirements Circular, to be issued in the autumn.

## 3. HESA DATA QUALITY ANALYSIS

3.1 The Statistical Analyst highlighted some observations. These included the level of valid postcodes being very high and an improvement in known ethnicity from 2004/05. The group was also informed that there continues to be some difficulty in analysing Welsh provision, due to institutions coding to Celtic studies instead of Welsh language or Welsh literature. Other areas analysed included reason for leaving, Welsh fluency, disability and Disabled Students' Allowance and the consistency of data when linking across student records using HUSID.

## 4. COMPARISONS BETWEEN HESA AND EYM DATA, AND LLWR AND EYM DATA

4.1 A number of updates were provided to the group regarding comparisons between HESA and EYM Data for the 2005/06 academic year. The Statistics team will no longer be collecting Table 5 in EYM and will substitute this with HESA data for analysis of franchised out provision and publications. A summary of the data extracted from HESA will be sent to institutions each year for information. The sector was made aware of inconsistencies still occurring in the franchised out data. The Senior Funding Analyst explained that, in some instances, data is coded to FE colleges that have ceased to exist as a result of mergers. The sector was advised that in terms of the main EYM/HESA table comparisons, the institutions should review some areas such as the generic subject coding and duplications of modules in a particular course. Individual observations on the comparisons would be emailed to institutions with the tables in the next few weeks.

4.2 A number of observations were made on the comparison between LLWR and EYM data. These included inconsistencies on FE colleges recording learning activities on the LLWR record and the HE level learning programmes not being coded using the HE specific codes. The sector was informed that comparisons of HESA/LLWR data against EYM returns will continue.

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### 5. NON-COMPLETIONS, PARTIAL COMPLETIONS AND TRANSFERS

- 5.1 The Senior Manager for Statistics and Funding explained the criteria for non completions, partial completions and transfers and presented an analysis of the part-time partial completion data submitted by institutions on Table 7 of HESES.

### 6. ITT RECONFIGURATION – UPDATE

- 6.1 The sector was informed, as already stated in the recurrent grant circular, that the numbers lost through ITT reconfiguration have been moved to ASC 11b and ring-fenced. The credits are not included in the redistribution exercise and will continue to be monitored through HESES.

It was also noted that in reference to the Widening Access premium, a technical group as a sub-group of the Performance Indicators Steering Group has been formed to consider widening participation and access performance indicators, the results of which will inform any changes to the way the low-affluence element of the premium is allocated. This group is expected to report back later in the year.

### 7. TIMETABLE FOR 2007/08

- 7.1 The sector was made aware of the important dates in the 2007/08 timetable.

### 8. POSSIBLE USE OF HESA DATA FOR FUNDING IN FUTURE

- 8.1 The Head of Statistics and Information Services informed the group that as the present data requirements are onerous, and the current model is not as effective in a period of no growth, the Funding Group has started to question whether such a complex model is required to drive the core funding. It has therefore been suggested that funding by cost centre, using HESA data, should be investigated. It was stated that a cost centre exercise would be undertaken this year as HEFCW are aware that the department to cost centre mapping is currently out of date. The sector raised a few concerns, including the OU noting their inability to report non-completions. It was explained that the process is in the initial phase and the group will be alert to areas which could potentially be problematic. It was also noted that currently this is only a review and there will ongoing investigation into the possibilities of the new model.

- 8.2 A discussion focused on the validity of the redistribution process. The Senior Funding Manager confirmed that although this process is not essential, it is considered a useful exercise in terms of informing the funding group and the strategic planning process. It was stated that this would remain in place until a review of the funding model had taken place.

- 8.3 The quality of UCAS data was also highlighted by the sector. The discussion focussed on the lack of confidence the sector had in the quality and effectiveness of communication between HESA and UCAS. The group was informed that HEFCW's relationship is solely with HESA and therefore the Head of Statistics and Information Services informed the group that this concern would be expressed at a HESA meeting scheduled at HEFCW on 7 June 2007. However, it was clarified that it is HEW's responsibility to apply pressure on this issue as they pay for the service provided by UCAS.

### 9. UNIVERSITY OF WALES SWANSEA – EXPERIENCE OF USING SAS DATA ANALYSIS

- 9.1 Dr Neil Lucas, Student Statistics Analyst for University of Wales Swansea, presented the department's experience of using SAS for data analysis to the group. He explained that there is a need for business intelligence so that it is possible to:

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- Access/receive information in a timely manner in order to make informed business decisions in a competitive HE market.
- Produce reports of varying complexity to meet a wide set of information needs for stakeholders across campus, and then informed the group that;
- Complex computations, business processes and algorithms can be stored as standardised processes.

He also stated that methods for disseminating information in Higher Education include

- Standard documents such as word or excel
- Static HTML documents
- Dynamic web based approaches.

9.2 The group was informed that University of Wales Swansea use SAS to calculate statistics whilst also utilising its reporting tools for general business. It was explained that SAS is a modular product, of which purchasing the base product is essential, and additional modules can be purchased as and when necessary. It was noted that the department use SAS for a variety of reports. A demonstration of the various reporting searches was performed.

9.4 It was noted that the benefits of using SAS include a well supported fourth generation suite of software, its ability to read and write data, the variety of reports, graphs and tables it produces and the fact that HEFCW uses SAS. The constraints were noted as its expense.

9.5 The Head of Statistics and Information Services thanked Dr Lucas for his presentation.

### 10 NEW AUDIT PROCESS

10.1 The group was informed that proposals had been sent to Heads of Institutions in July 2006, with responses received in October and subsequently analysed. Institutions were notified of the new process in April 2007. This new process relies on the institutions internal audit reports in respect of systems and processes, with reports to be submitted in May each year. It was noted that an external audit is to be carried out at each institution at least once every five years with additional audits being carried out where there was an increased risk of error. The significant dates in the new process were conveyed to the group.

### 11. WAG – UPDATE ON DATA USAGE

11.1 Susan Full of the Higher and Lifelong Learning Statistics Statistical Directorate of the Welsh Assembly Government, provided a brief overview of the responsibilities of the department. It was explained that the department is a statutory Customer of HESA and is represented on the majority of HESA groups to express the Assembly's views and requirements. It was noted that the department use HESA data for National Statistics publications, policy development and monitoring, and internal briefing.

### 12. WAG – WELSH FOR ADULTS

12.1 Susan outlined the data requirements for Welsh for Adults students, and the possibility of a reduced return for FE students at HEIs on the HESA student record.