

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

Data Workshop

Notes for the meeting held on 10th June 2008

Present:

David Blaney	HEFCW
Celia Hunt	HEFCW
Bethan Owen	HEFCW
Hannah Falvey	HEFCW
Rachael Gray	HEFCW
Leanne Holborn	HEFCW
Tony Whiffen	HEFCW
Rachel Clark	HEFCW
Susan Full	WAG
Ben Hayes	WAG
Clare Davey	WAG
Andy Youell	HESA
Denise Williams	University of Glamorgan
Liam Bryson	University of Glamorgan
Thomas Bodley Scott	University of Glamorgan
David McParlin	Aberystwyth University
Mike Wilson	Bangor University
Dr Kevin Mundy	Bangor University
Simon Wallis	Cardiff University
Matt Williamson	Cardiff University
Janice Thomas	University of Wales, Lampeter
Aled Phillips	Swansea University
Dr Neil Lucas	Swansea University
Peter Dole	University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
Chris Morgan	University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
Chris Meese	University of Wales, Newport
Jane Beckett	University of Wales, Newport
Neil Cowan	North East Wales Institute of Higher Education
Paul Davies	Trinity College Carmarthen
Mark Stone	Trinity College Carmarthen
Judith Dutton	The Open University
Michelle Looker	The Open University

1. Introduction
 - 1.1. DB welcomed everyone to the annual data workshop. He explained that due to the new structure in HEFCW which was implemented on 1 April, more staff were attending this year to meet data contacts in their new roles. He explained that the areas for discussion at the workshop would be the new HESA student record, HESA data efficiency project, the data quality analysis, the audit, comparisons between HESA and EYM data, and HEIDI. Presentations from HESA, Bangor University and the Welsh Assembly Government would also form part of the day's proceedings.
2. Data Requirements
 - 2.1. HF presented on the HESA coding issues relating to the new 2007/08 record in which she included information on the new module outcome (MODOUT) field.
 - 2.2. DMP asked whether the MODOUT field was useable for both thick and thin modules. After some discussion it was stated that the assumption was that any thick modules taken in one semester would be either completed or not completed as it wasn't possible to have a partial completion in this way. The partial completion definition was meant to cover thin modules and it would be these that could be coded using the partial completion code in the MODOUT field.
 - 2.3. LB questioned what would happen if a student withdrew from a course but had completed several modules within it. HF replied that if a module has been completed then all of the credits should be counted as completed.
 - 2.4. HF stated the intentions of HEFCW regarding the future use of HESA data and its relationship with the EYM return.
 - 2.5. HF discussed the matters that members of the Student Return Group had raised regarding the new 2007/08 HESA Student Record. HF stated that she didn't envisage any major issues as the data to be used for 2009/10 funding would be extracted using the same criteria and fields as in previous years. It was noted that if institutions provide poor quality data, HEFCW would not be allowing changes to the data confirmations. If a major system failure occurred at HESA, HEFCW could use alternative data for funding purposes.
 - 2.6. DMP questioned what would happen if one of the institutions had a software problem making them unaccountable for the lack of data. AY requested to address this issue as part of his presentation.

3. AY presented the changes to the 2007/08 HESA record outlining the major issues that may affect institutions and how HESA have been preparing for the change.
 - 3.1. AY reassured the sector that HESA had regular contact with all software suppliers and no show stopping complications were foreseen for the coming year. He also confirmed that HESA had full back up systems in place and if for any reason HESA could not continue work from their office premises they could be up and running again within 48 hours.
 - 3.2. DMP asked AY if any major changes to the count records or change documentation was intended. AY confirmed that the check documentation was to remain the same as previous years but that HESA will be reviewing it internally which may result in a redesign in the future years. HIN will be staying the same.
 - 3.3. AY stressed that all institutions should endeavour to make use of the early system this year particularly if they are concerned about the transition to the new student record.
 - 3.4. DMP asked if ethnicity had been built into the check documentation for the 2007/08 HESA record. HF replied that while HEFCW had requested this, it was too late to build it in to the 2007/08 HESA record and would instead be brought in for 2008/09.
4. TW gave a presentation on HESA data quality analysis. There were no questions.
5. RG gave a presentation on the comparisons between HESA and EYM data for the 2006/07 academic year.
 - 5.1. KM questioned how the percentages had been calculated in the tables that had already been sent to institutions. RG said that she would check and get back to KM on this.
 - 5.2. MW stated that the coding of ITT phase ranges meant that they were unable to accurately map some students as some spanned shorter/longer periods than those specified. HF replied that the codes for the ITT phase field have changed in the 2007/2008 HESA record and that hopefully this will rectify the problem. MW confirmed that he would check the nature of the courses internally and feed back to HF and SF (as WAG use this level of detail in their analysis also).

6. MW gave a presentation on data and planning in Bangor University.
 - 6.1. MW briefly explained the nature of the work, their processes and the reasons for it. When asked about the level of detail MW explained that they went down to individual school level data in most cases. The data formed the basis for discussion with the schools on their budget and forward planning.
 - 6.2. DPM and MW had a discussion over loading and how it differed in their institutions and forward forecasting and its accuracy. They resolved that since Bangor had been using this system for five years now they would soon be in the position to go back and check their forward forecasting against actual recruitment.
 - 6.3. DPM questioned the prediction of Units of Funding, tuition fees etc and their affect on this system. MW replied that they took a conservative view and underestimated so that the departments can predict something sustainable.
 - 6.4. SF questioned whether the schools were given guidance on completion of the tables and what methods they used. MW explained that all of the schools belong to a college with a Senior Administrator so there is a high level of expertise in completing the tables. There is a good working relationship as their allegiance is to the centre as well as the schools.
7. HF gave a presentation on Audit Process outcomes.
 - 7.1. KM queried whether external audit would include HEBCIS. HF confirmed that the HEBCIS could trigger the need for an external audit.
 - 7.2. DPM queried whether or not the auditors had been appointed. HF confirmed that a three year contract had been agreed with KPMG.
 - 7.3. DPM questioned whether HF was willing to share with them who was being audited at this stage. HF replied that it was necessary to discuss plans with the auditors first and as all internal audits were not in yet it wasn't possible to say which institutions were going to be audited at this stage.
8. SF gave a presentation on the longitudinal DLHE data.
 - 8.1. DPM questioned the validity of the data given that the sample was so small. SF agreed that at an institutional level the data would not be of

much use but at UK/Wales level there is sufficient data to draw conclusions from.

9. DB opened the floor for any further questions or issues for discussion. After none were identified he thanked all contributors and attendees for their input during the day.