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Circular

Key Information Sets: further information and request for feedback on technical guidance

Date: 30 September 2011
Reference: W11/33HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in
Wales
Response by: Responses to HEFCE/HESA – no date specified
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This circular provides notification that HESA has published the technical guidance on the production of the Key Information Sets (KIS) that your institution requires to enable you to make progress towards meeting the publication deadline for KIS of September 2012. It also provides an update on the further preparatory work undertaken on the development of the KIS.

This document is available online, in large print, Braille, on CD and on audio CD and cassette. Should you or someone you know require this in an alternative format, please contact us on (029) 2068 2225 or email info@hefcw.ac.uk.



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Introduction

1. This circular provides notification that HESA has now published the [technical guidance](#) on the production of the Key Information Sets (KIS) that your institution requires to enable it to make progress towards meeting the publication deadline for KIS of September 2012.
2. It also provides an update on the further preparatory work undertaken on the development of the KIS, in particular that undertaken since the publication of the HEFCW circular [W11/27HE: Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps](#).
3. This update includes:
 - Key outcomes of discussions with representative bodies prior to, and informing, the publication of the KIS technical guidance, including a timetable for data collection;
 - An invitation to institutions to seek clarification on the clarity and completeness of this guidance where necessary. This should be directed to HESA;
 - Outcomes from the KIS technical Expert Working Group (EWG);
 - Plans for the publication of the KIS including a mock-up of the proposed 'widget'.

Background

4. Circular W11/27HE provided information on the policy context underpinning the introduction of the KIS in Wales, the outcomes of the consultation in [Circular W11/15HE: Key Information Sets \(KIS\)](#), and information on next steps for institutions. In addition it requested views on equality and diversity implications, to inform the ongoing development of the KIS, technical guidance and user guidance.
5. Circular W11/27HE notified institutions that they would need to produce a KIS for all undergraduate courses¹ which will be offered in 2013/14 by higher education institutions (HEIs), further education institutions (FEIs), and private providers of higher education programmes that subscribe to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Any exceptions to this general rule are noted in the technical guidance. Further information on how the KIS might apply to a wider group of institutions and organisations will be made available as and when any new arrangements are clarified.

¹ We recognise that many institutions will be using terminology such as 'programme' rather than course to describe their offer to students. We use the term 'course' in this circular to align with terminology used in other countries of the UK participating in the KIS.

6. The Higher Education Public Information Steering Group (HEPISG) is UK-wide and advises on issues relating to teaching quality information and public information, including the KIS. It includes Welsh representation and HEFCW, together with the other funders, UUK and GuildHE, is an observer to this group.

Technical guidance

7. Some of the KIS information items are sourced from national data sets, such as the NSS and the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. However, data on learning and teaching activities, assessment methods, financial support and accommodation costs, together with the information that allows linking to the HESA, Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) and UCAS course data will be collected from all institutions by HEFCE² for the first year (ie for KIS published in September 2012)³.
8. From the second year onwards (ie for KIS published from September 2013 onwards), HESA will collect these data for HEIs. We are working to determine the best route for continuing collection of these data from FEIs and others. Therefore we have worked closely with HEFCE and HESA to develop the technical guidance so that institutions can consistently collate data for publication in the KIS. This [guidance](#) has been published on the HESA web-site today.
9. It is not intended to substantially revise the technical guidance, as it has been agreed on the basis of the earlier research and subsequent consultation. However, we recognise that institutions will identify cases where the guidance is unclear or does not fully address some issues. Therefore, we invite institutions to raise queries relating to the clarity and completeness of the guidance in order to inform two further updates, in December 2011 and March 2012. The March 2012 release will constitute the final guidance for the collection of data for the September 2012 KIS.
10. There is no intention to revisit core content or specification of the 2012 KIS. The aim is, rather, to refine the guidance to ensure it is clear and enables institutions to provide the data on a consistent basis to best meets the needs and interests of prospective students.

Key Information Set Expert Working Groups

11. Four expert groups were established to inform the development of the KIS and their outcomes are available via [HEFCE's website](#). Following the work of these groups, a technical EWG was established to do further work on how data will be published on the KIS.

² Including on behalf of HEFCW.

³ To minimise the burden on institutions, HEFCE will collect information on financial support directly from UCAS, which is redeveloping its course search web-site and will be collecting fee information from institutions. For courses that do not recruit through UCAS HEFCE will collect financial support information directly from institutions as part of the KIS collection.

12. When making decisions regarding the categories of data and how they should be presented on the KIS, the KIS technical EWG had three guiding principles:
 - Simplicity;
 - Consistency between different institutions and between different models or types of provision;
 - The ability to verify the data.
13. The technical EWG considered:
 - Calculation of learning and teaching and assessment methods;
 - Categorisation of learning and teaching and assessment methods;
 - Presentation of joint honours courses;
 - The draft technical guidance.
14. The outcomes of this work informed the definitions set out in the technical guidance.
15. **Annex A** provides the membership of the technical EWG.

Plans for the publication of the KIS

16. Providing information to students in a way that is useful to them, and in places that they want it, is at the heart of the KIS developments. Research undertaken by Oakleigh Consulting and Staffordshire University⁴ confirmed that potential students look at institutions' web-sites and the UCAS web-site when looking for information about what and where to study.
17. The KIS therefore will be available to potential students in the following ways:
 - a. Published 'in context' on the web-sites of universities and colleges via a KIS 'widget'. This is a small graphic with three pieces of information from the KIS, specifically about the course the user is viewing (see **Annex B** for a mock-up of what the widget might look like). We will publish details of the data to be included in the widget and the approach to be adopted where initial information is not available in due course. When a user clicks on the widget they are presented with the full KIS information for that course. Institutions will need to incorporate this widget into their plans for the development of their web-sites. HEFCE is discussing plans with IT providers, and we will publish further details on the outcomes of these discussions in early 2012.
 - b. On a new official web-site that enables users to search and compare both KIS and Unistats data. The [Unistats web-site](#) has been available to potential students since 2007, providing the opportunity to compare and search for subjects. The information in which students are specifically

⁴ 'Understanding the information needs of users of public information about higher education: Report to HEFCE by Oakleigh Consulting and Staffordshire University', August 2010, available at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/2010/rd12_10/.

interested, as identified in the report from Oakleigh Consulting and Staffordshire University, will be used as a basis to develop a new web-site that incorporates the KIS data and Unistats data. This will ensure that potential students can view the KIS data and other information that is currently available on Unistats about the courses in which they are interested. The Unistats site will close, and a new official web-site will be launched, in September 2012. HEPISG is overseeing this work and we will publish further details early next year.

- c. On the redeveloped UCAS course search tool (Course Finder). This will incorporate the KIS data so users can view it and courses in which they are interested at the same time. Further information on the changes that UCAS is planning to its course search tool is available from coursefinderfeedback@ucas.ac.uk.
 - d. Through comparison web-sites and facilities provided by other organisations. The KIS data set will be freely available to other organisations to use within their own products.
18. We expect KIS to be published according to where a course is delivered, regardless of funding arrangements. This follows the principle used for the purposes of Unistats, that each student is recorded against the institution in which they studied in their first year. Therefore registering institutions should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to the KIS⁵.
 19. For Welsh institutions, the KIS will include information on the proportion of scheduled learning and teaching activities available through the medium of Welsh. Institutions will also need to link from the KIS to information on the cost of study, as described in Circular W11/27HE.
 20. Further guidance for prospective students and explanatory notes on use of the KIS are being developed. This work is also being overseen by HEPISG.

Quality assurance

21. Quality assurance of the KIS data will be the responsibility of institutions. Due to the scale of the data neither HEFCE in the first year, nor HESA in subsequent years, will undertake the scrutiny of the data that is commonplace with other HESA data streams. However, HEFCE/HESA will supply institutions with summary reports from the data, and they will have the opportunity to preview the KIS and undertake quality assurance before sign-off.
22. The QAA is developing a UK Quality Code for higher education, which will include a section on public information. This will refer to the KIS, and will go beyond this, taking a 'student lifecycle' approach to the provision of information. The QAA

⁵ see paragraphs 76-78 of Circular W11/27HE

expects to consult on this section of the Quality Code in November-December 2011, before publishing it in March 2012.

23. We reserve the right to audit any of the information and data used to support the KIS, and will work with HEFCE following the publication of the KIS in September 2012 to agree a process for carrying out audits at a selection of institutions to assess the accuracy of the information included in the KIS.

Timetable

24. The timetable for the creation of KIS for courses running in 2013/14 is provided below. A KIS for each course must be published by September 2012 at the latest.

Date	Action
June 2011	Publication of HEFCW Circular W11/27HE: Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps .
September 2011	Publication of technical guidance available on HESA web-site (see www.hesa.ac.uk/C12061).
December 2011	Publication of updated technical guidance available on HESA web-site.
22 February/1 March	HESA training seminars (see www.hesa.ac.uk/seminars).
February/March 2012	Submission system opens and validation kits issued for KISs to be published in September 2012. Institutions will have until August 2012 to finalise their data. The system will remain open throughout this period to allow institutions to manage their workloads and undertake quality assurance work.
March 2012	Publication of final update to technical guidance available HESA web-site.
July 2012	NSS and DLHE 2012 data added by HEFCE to KIS submissions.
August 2012	Final deadline for submission of KIS data and sign off by head of institution. Institutions will be able to preview their full KIS data at this point.

September 2012	<p>Institutions preview new official web-site with KIS and associated widgets.</p> <p>New official web-site goes live; Unistats web-site closes.</p> <p>KIS widgets to be embedded and visible on all institutional web-sites.</p> <p>UCAS to include KIS data into course search web-site.</p>
October 2012	<p>KIS system re-opens for updates to September 2012 KISs, where necessary, for example to confirm fee information. Updates will be routinely published via the KIS widgets and official web-site.</p>

Next steps

25. Institutions are invited to review the technical guidance and put arrangements in place for the provision of the required information within the timescales indicated. Any comments on the technical guidance or areas where further guidance is needed should be provided/sought as outlined below.
26. All eligible institutions should provide a contact with whom HEFCE can liaise on the provision of KIS data. Please e-mail these details to kis@hefce.ac.uk. Please note that these contact details will be passed to the organisation that administers the KIS collection for 2013.
27. We will publish further details of the plans for publication of the KIS widget and the development of the new KIS/Unistats web-site in early 2012.

Further information / responses to

28. If you wish to provide comments on the guidance or if you have any queries please contact HESA's institutional liaison in the first instance on 01242 211144, e-mail liaison@hesa.ac.uk.
29. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Annex A

Membership of the Technical Expert Working Group

Anna Matthews, UCISA
Barbara Shore, The Open University
Catherine Benfield, HESA
Clive Robertson, Oxford Brookes University
David Gibson, University of Exeter
Fiona Hoban, Universities UK
Helen Bowles, GuildHE
Helen Carasso, University of Oxford
Jon Brown, Loughborough college
Kate Wicklow, National Union of Students
Cathy Lean, QAA
Liz Reynolds, Sheffield Hallam University
Louisa Baker, HEFCE
Paul Travill, University of Wolverhampton
Pauline Aldous, York St John University
Richard Puttock, HEFCE
Robin Dutton, University College Birmingham
Ros Boyne, Birmingham City University
Ruth Drysdale, Joint Information Systems Committee
Shaghayegh Acanthe, Canterbury Christ Church University
Sue Grant, University of Hertfordshire
Cathy Kerfoot, QAA

Annex B

Mock-up of how the KIS widget might appear on an institution's course web-page

The mock-up shows a course page for 'Health Studies BSc(Hons)' at Newtown University. The page includes a navigation menu with 'Undergraduate Study' selected. A sidebar on the left contains links for 'Undergraduate home page', 'View all undergraduate entry 2011 courses', and 'Cell and Molecular Biology' with sub-links for 'Entry requirements', 'What our students say', 'Course features', 'Facilities', 'Learning support', 'After you graduate', 'Postgraduate opportunities', 'Fees and funding', 'Living costs', and 'Applying for funding'. Below this is a 'Location' section with a Google Map and a 'VIRTUAL TOUR' button. The main content area has a 'Facts' table, an 'About this course' section, and a 'Why choose this course?' section. A 'KIS' widget is embedded in the 'About this course' section, displaying statistics for 'BSc Health Studies (b900)': 69% Student Satisfaction, 99% In work or study after 6 months, and £21k Average Graduate Salary. A 'Related courses' section lists 'Biology BSc(Hons)', 'Forensic Biology BSc(Hons)', 'Human Biology BSc(Hons)', and 'Science foundation year'. A 'DRAFT' watermark is visible in the bottom left.

Facts	
Year of entry	2011
Qualification	BSc(Hons)
Application route	3 years full-time: apply through UCAS (code CC17) 4 years sandwich: apply through UCAS (code CC1R) 4 years full-time including foundation year: apply through UCAS (code CC1T) 6 years part-time: apply direct to the University
Modules	Module Listing

About this course	
Why choose this course?	Cell and molecular biology has formed the basis of many advances in our understanding of subjects such as agriculture, animal and plant development, ecology, genetics, medicine and drug development. If you would like to learn about the theory, techniques and applications relating to cell and molecular biology, this course is ideal.
What will you study?	You will gain a firm foundation in molecular biology, biochemistry, genetics and physiology in Year 1, when you will also be introduced to laboratory techniques and procedures. You will then study research methods and develop your knowledge of genetics, biochemistry, immunology, microbiology, analytical

KIS	
69%	Student Satisfaction
99%	In work or study after 6 months
£21k	Average Graduate Salary
More course stats	

The widget will appear on the course web-page as a box containing three 'headline' items of information from the KIS.