

Cylchlythyr | Circular

The Key Information Set and the new Unistats web-site: overview and next steps

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Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
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This circular updates the information on KIS and the new Unistats site that was provided in [W11/27HE: Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps](#). The principles outlined in that circular have framed the work to develop the KIS and the new Unistats website.

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Introduction

1. This circular updates the information on Key Information Sets (KIS) and the new Unistats website that was provided in Circular [W11/27HE: Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps](#). The principles outlined in that circular have framed the work to develop the KIS and the new Unistats website.
2. The KIS is a set of standardised information about undergraduate courses, which enables them to be easily compared. It has been designed with the needs of prospective students in mind. The KIS will be available across the UK from September 2012 and will be published on the new Unistats website. It will also be accessed via a small advertisement or 'widget' on the course web pages of universities and colleges.

Background

3. Circular [W11/27HE: Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps](#), 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](#) 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.
4. Circular W11/27HE reported that a KIS would need to be produced for all undergraduate courses which would be offered in 2013/14 by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Further Education Institutions (FEIs) and private providers of higher education (HE) 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 continue to be made available as and when any new arrangements are clarified.
5. Circular [W11/33HE: Key Information Sets: further information and request for feedback on technical guidance](#) provided notification that the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) had published technical guidance on the production of the KIS to enable HEIs and directly funded FEIs to make progress towards meeting the KIS publication deadline of September 2012. It also provided an update on the further preparatory work undertaken on the development of the KIS.
6. Circular [W12/07HE: Key Information Sets: timetable and further information](#) provided:
 - an update on the development of the new website that will deliver the KIS in September 2012;
 - further detail about the KIS 'widget' and incorporating it into course websites;

- the timetable for uploading KIS data to the HEFCE extranet in order for it to be published on the KIS and the new official website;
 - a reminder of where the KIS technical guidance is published, and how the KIS links to quality assurance.
7. 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.
 8. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is coordinating the production of the KIS on behalf of HEFCW, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Department of Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland, Universities UK, GuildHE and the Association of Colleges (AoC).

Technical guidance

9. HESA has developed technical guidance in partnership with the funders to enable institutions consistently to collate data for publication in the KIS. The full guidance and related documentation, published by HESA in July 2012, should be used by institutions when collecting and uploading their data for September 2012. It can be accessed at: www.hesa.ac.uk/C12061.

The KIS

10. The KIS will be viewable on the new Unistats website. The principle behind the KIS is to present information about courses in a consistent form, to make it easy for prospective students and their advisers to compare them. A summary of the information contained in the KIS is available at **Annex A**.

How was it decided what to include in the KIS?

11. The requirements for inclusion of information in the KIS, as outlined in Circular W11/27HE, were based on the following research, consultation and pilot study:
 - the views of 2,000 prospective and current students (collected during [research in 2010 by Oakleigh Consulting and Staffordshire University](#));
 - responses to a HEFCE consultation ([Public information about higher education: Consultation on changes to information published by institutions , ref 2010/31](#))¹;
 - the outcomes of four expert working groups, which considered specific parts of the KIS;

¹ The HEFCW consultation focused on participation in the KIS, rather than on the requirements for inclusion of information in the KIS

- a pilot study with eight institutions;
- user testing in late 2011 and early 2012 across England, Scotland and Wales with more than 200 prospective HE students.

How KIS data are collated

12. Much of the information in the KIS is already available in a national and comparable form, such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey.
13. The following items of information do not currently exist in a comparable form and will be supplied by HEIs and FEIs:
 - accreditation of the course, for example by a professional body, where applicable;
 - tuition fees;
 - average annual cost of accommodation that is sponsored or owned by the institution;
 - likely annual cost of private rental accommodation in the area;
 - percentage of the course spent in various learning and teaching activities;
 - how the course is assessed, for example, the proportion of course work involved.
14. Data on tuition fees will be presented as an average of the maximum fee for each year of the course over the duration of the course. This figure will be explained, with the variations charged to students from other parts of the UK clearly shown.
15. The information on student satisfaction, and employment and salary data, will be provided via the NSS and the DLHE survey respectively.
16. Users of the new Unistats website will be able to compare all the KIS data for courses offered by different universities and colleges.
17. Every Unistats webpage with data will contain a link to 'create a PDF report'. This report will contain all KIS data about a course or about a comparison of courses. In addition to the data, the report will include contact details of the institutions (as seen on the institution's page), any notes (from the 'your Unistats' section) and some useful questions.
18. HEFCE is collating the information required to create the KIS in the first year (2012). It has been agreed that HESA will take over this role for HEIs and alternative providers of HE in subsequent years. We have been working with HEFCE and HESA to determine the best route for continuing collection of these data from directly funded FEIs.

Development of the new official Unistats web-site

19. The Unistats website has been available since 2007. It provides the opportunity to search and compare subject-based course information at different institutions. A new website will be launched from September 2012 that will have a different look and feel, and will present data in a substantially different and more user-friendly way. Data from the NSS and DLHE survey will still form a major part of the site as a whole, in addition to the KIS. The site will contain data at course level including entry qualifications, continuation rates and class of degree. There will no longer be data on postgraduate courses.
20. Originally, the intention was that the full KIS data should sit on the course pages of HEIs and FEIs. This policy has been revised; now all KIS data will be available via the new Unistats web-site, and accessible via links from a widget on institutions' course pages and via links from UCAS Coursefinder.
21. The decision to hold all KIS data on a single web-site was made following user research and to reflect sector feedback that putting all 17 items on each course page would require significant redesign and was not practical. As a result it was agreed that each course page would include a KIS widget that would allow institutions broadly to maintain the integrity of their course pages while ensuring that students see some comparable statistics for that course, and are directed to the remainder on Unistats via the widget.
22. By putting the KIS on a separate website we intend that there should be:
 - a good user experience;
 - a consistent look and feel;
 - minimal duplication of effort for those providing data;
 - the potential for robust comparisons;
 - more data available to the public than before;
 - a central source of comparable statistics on HE courses.
23. The decision to continue to use the name Unistats for the site which is to hold the KIS data was made by HEPISG, following user testing.
24. The new Unistats website will be launched in the week commencing 24 September 2012 and will be accessible via the current Unistats web address <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>. The site can also be accessed directly via the KIS widget which will be embedded in the course web pages of universities and colleges. There will be links to the site from each course page within the UCAS Course Finder site (<http://coursefinder.ucas.com/CourseFinderWeb/search.htm>). A search on most search engines will also lead users to the site.

Accessing the full dataset on the site

25. Following the launch of the site in September 2012, anyone who wishes to use the full dataset for their own applications will be able to access the data in one of two ways:
 - a. Via an Application Programming Interface (API) allowing third party users to embed the data in their own sites or apps in real time (this means a direct connection to the Unistats site which will automatically update when Unistats updates);
 - b. As an Extensible Markup Language (XML) download which will be updated on the same rolling schedule as the main site (this means that a new XML download will be made available every time the Unistats site updates, but there will be no direct connection with the Unistats site).
26. We will provide an update on the use of data, including full technical details of both dissemination methods, once the plans are finalised. Those wishing to use the full dataset will be able to access this via the Unistats website after it goes live.

Institutions' web pages and the KIS widget

27. The KIS widget will present a small part of the full KIS data for a course. It will appear on HEI and FEI web-sites, on the relevant course web page. Guidance for institutions on how to embed the widget has now been published on the [HESA web-site](#).
28. The KIS widget provides up to 10 pieces of information from the KIS dataset on a rotating basis and will display at least three of these items at a time. Users can pause the information at any time. Some courses will only have a partial KIS and won't be able to display all 10 items. In this instance the rolling items will display the data available. The ten items are:
 - are staff good at explaining things?
 - have staff made the subject more interesting?
 - overall satisfaction;
 - percentage at work or study after six months;
 - professional accreditation;
 - satisfaction with the support and guidance students received;
 - percentage in professional and managerial roles after six months;
 - accommodation costs;
 - percentage of scheduled learning and teaching activities;
 - percentage of coursework.
29. An example of the KIS widget is given below. Both a horizontal and a vertical version of the widget will be available in two sizes.

Figure 1 Design of the horizontal KIS widget (size 1)



30. Institutions will be able to begin including widgets on their web-sites from September 2012, when the new Unistats site is launched. We expect all institutions to have completed embedding widgets on all relevant course pages by 31 October 2012.
31. To include the KIS widget on a course page, an institution takes a small amount of generic script, provided by HEFCE, and tailors it to include the course identifier (as submitted through the KIS collection), then adds it to the page. The widget design and dimensions must not be changed by institutions.
32. The widget will update automatically every time the page is viewed, to provide the most up to date information. Having embedded the widgets, institutions will not normally need to update them even when data are updated on the central database.

Responsibility for publishing the KIS

33. A KIS will be produced for most undergraduate courses planned for 2013/14 for which students will be registered at HEIs or alternative providers of HE who subscribe to the QAA. FEIs with directly funded HE provision should produce a KIS for each course taken by these directly funded students (see para 36 for information about franchise provision).
34. A KIS will not be produced for:
 - a. Short courses (one year full-time equivalent or less);
 - b. Courses delivered wholly overseas;
 - c. 'Closed' courses, defined as those which are not open to all suitably qualified applicants, eg courses provided solely for the employees of particular companies;
 - d. Postgraduate courses.
35. The KIS does not include postgraduate courses. Work is under way to establish the information needs of postgraduate taught students and the feasibility of a survey.
36. We expect the KIS for each course to be associated with the institution which recruits students to a HE course, regardless of whether or not the institution is funded directly by HEFCW. The principle is that students should be able to find information at the point of application. Take the

example of a HE course at College Y that is funded by HEFCW via University X (franchise provision):

- The college recruits the students onto the course and the students are registered at University X. Here the widget will be shown on the course page on College Y's web-site. In this case University X will supply the data for College Y to HEFCE.
 - If a course offered by College Y is directly funded by HEFCW, then College Y will be responsible for supplying the data and placing the widget on its course web page.
 - Where College Y has its own and University X's students on the same course two widgets will be required. Therefore registering institutions should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to the KIS (see paras 76-78 of Circular W11/27HE).
37. A KIS should be produced for full-time and part-time courses at undergraduate level, including foundation degrees. Where a course is available both full- and part-time, one KIS should be provided that covers both. Where courses are available on a part-time basis only, or where separate programmes of study are offered for part-time cohorts, we expect a KIS to be provided that includes part-time data only.
38. The final set of checked KIS data which institutions are supplying must be uploaded to the HEFCE extranet by 22 August 2012 and must be formally signed off by the head of the institution.

Updating the institution's data

39. Between 22 August 2012 and the new Unistats site launch date it will not be possible to make changes to an institution's data. However, after the launch it will once again be possible to make changes. We anticipate that the site will be updated weekly and we will issue guidance confirming this later in the year. There will be no charge for updating the data.

Publication thresholds and aggregation of data

40. Where NSS and DLHE survey data for a particular course fail to meet the publication thresholds², data will be aggregated in the following order until data that meet the thresholds are achieved:
- course level, most recent two years;

² The publication thresholds for the NSS are that 50 per cent of the eligible students must have responded and that these must represent at least 23 students. The publication thresholds for the DLHE differ in that the number of students covered by the indicator must be at least 22.5 full person equivalent (FPE) (a 50 per cent threshold is not applied). However, for salary information, at least 50 per cent of the relevant students (those who are employed full-time) must have given a salary. Thus, for salary data to be published, at least 22.5 students who are employed full-time must have given a salary, and these must represent at least 50 per cent of the students employed full-time. For data sourced from the HESA student record, a threshold of 22.5 students is applied.

- Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) subject level 3, most recent year;
 - JACS subject level 3, most recent two years;
 - JACS subject level 2, most recent year;
 - JACS subject level 2, most recent two years;
 - JACS subject level 1, most recent year;
 - JACS subject level 1, most recent two years.
41. The same publication thresholds are also applied to data shown on the widget. Publication thresholds will apply to the NSS, the DLHE survey, and student data sourced from the HESA student record. Where the data for a widget item do not meet these thresholds, even at JACS subject level 1 for the most recent two years, the items will not feature on the widget.
42. We do not expect the KIS to replace other information sources, or to be presented in isolation. The KIS is not intended to be definitive or to imply any contractual obligation on the part of the institution, but rather to be indicative, with some items, such as student satisfaction measures, based on retrospective data and some items, such as fees, being prospective. There will be links to more detailed information on an institution's web-site, and the user will be encouraged to contact the institution for further information.
43. The new Unistats website will explain how to use the KIS, listing sources of the information provided, guidance on how to interpret the information, and disclaimers. These guidelines will be subject to user testing, agreed with UUK and GuildHE, and discussed with the NUS before being published.

Employment and salary data and professional accreditation

44. KIS and Unistats for 2012 will report the proportion of employed graduates in professional or managerial positions, defined as those in the current Standard Occupational Codes (SOC 2000) major groups 1, 2 and 3: managers and senior officials, professional occupations, and associate professional and technical occupations. We will review this when the new version of the classification system (SOC 2010) is introduced in 2013.
45. Data users will still be able to request graduate employment data from HESA, which will continue to classify these according to the data user's preferred grouping of SOC codes, or any other job classification, such as the graduate and non-graduate job classification developed by the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick.
46. Following consultation in February 2010, the salary data to be presented in the KIS was agreed by HEPISG. Nine pieces of data derived from the Destination of Leavers from HE survey will appear:
- upper quartile, median and lower quartile for the course at the institution of interest;

- upper quartile, median and lower quartile for the subject across all institutions;
 - upper quartile, median and lower quartile for the subject across all institutions at 40 months (this figure derived from the Longitudinal DLHE survey).
47. These data are already available on the current Unistats website at subject level.
48. More information on professional accreditation and the KIS is available on the [HESA web-site](#).

Alternative providers of higher education

49. Alternative providers of HE who subscribe to the QAA will also need to provide a KIS for courses other than those detailed in para 34. They will need to participate in the NSS and the DLHE in order to produce a full KIS. However, they will still be able to produce some KIS data for September 2012. These data will be on: learning, teaching and assessment; professional body accreditation in place/planned for 2013/14; financial support and average fees planned for 2013/14; and accommodation.
50. Alternative providers will not be able to submit their own satisfaction or employment data if NSS or DLHE data are not available. Such data would not be comparable with those produced from the NSS or DLHE, and could therefore be confusing and subject to misinterpretation by prospective students.
51. Alternative providers that subscribe to the QAA are expected to move as quickly as possible towards taking part in the NSS and DLHE (which will involve their subscribing to HESA), with a view to publishing full KIS that will be comparable with those of other providers. These providers will have been contacted by QAA and HESA to discuss and agree timescales for providing a full KIS. They will also be able to provide data to ensure they are represented fully on the Unistats website. Information on the cost to these providers of participating in the NSS will be available in late summer 2012. This will be calculated on a cost-recovery basis.
52. Alternative providers who do not subscribe to QAA may also provide KIS and data for the Unistats website but it is not an essential requirement. They should discuss the approach to achieving this with HESA in the first instance and will need to participate in the DLHE and NSS in order to produce a full KIS.

Internal and external quality assurance and the KIS

53. Institutions will be responsible for assuring the quality of their KIS data. Due to the volume of data and the frequency with which it can change,

they will not undergo the same verification that is commonplace with other HESA data. Instead, HEFCE or HESA will supply institutions with summary reports of the data, and institutions will have the opportunity to preview the data that will appear on the KIS before sign-off. In all cases the final data set must be formally signed off by the head of the institution to assure its accuracy. A similar sign-off will be required for any subsequent updates.

54. The QAA's Institutional Review: Wales (IRW) method, reviews the institutional management of academic quality and standards of HEIs in Wales. Following the publication of Circular W11/18HE: [a Consultation on amendments to the Institutional Review: Wales](#), it was agreed that from 2012/13 a judgement will be introduced on the information that institutions publish, as reported in Circular [W11/42HE: Amendments to the Institutional Review: Wales method, and the developmental review of foundation degrees](#).
55. From 2012/13 the IRW will include the following judgement: 'The quality of the information produced by the institution about its learning opportunities is commended/meets national expectations/requires improvement to meet national expectations/does not meet national expectations.' The [revised QAA Institutional Review: Wales handbook](#), published in April 2012, clarifies how each of the judgement grades will be determined.
56. Our expectation is that the review of directly funded HE in FE provision will continue to operate along the same lines as the IRW.
57. The Expectation that UK higher education providers are required to meet concerning information about higher education provision is set out in [Part C of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#). It also sets out Indicators of sound practice, with accompanying explanations, which suggest ways in which HE providers might demonstrate that they are meeting the Expectation.
58. The focus of the new judgement will therefore be whether HE providers meet the Expectation set out in Part C; whether they 'produce information for their intended audiences about the learning opportunities they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy'. Part C is not primarily concerned with the mechanisms used to produce information, nor the media chosen to communicate it. It also recognises that providers need to take responsibility for meeting legislative and other regulatory requirements, including those set by the funding councils. It recognises that differences in mission, size, organisational structure, range of provision and the nature of the student body will determine a provider's intended audiences and the preferred means of communicating information. The information considered by QAA reviewers will therefore be much broader than the KIS (although this will be an important factor as detailed in the IRW Handbook). Reviewers are not expected to make a judgment on the statistical accuracy of the detailed information in the KIS (much of which is subject to other data audit methods). Consideration of

the KIS will therefore be in the context of whether the institution's information is produced in line with this Quality Code Expectation.

Next steps

59. As specified in Circular W12/07HE, universities and colleges must upload all requested data onto the HEFCE extranet by 22 August 2012. A site preview will be made available to universities and colleges, as well as some private companies wishing to use the dataset under embargo in the week commencing 17 September 2012.
60. The new Unistats website will go live in the week commencing 24 September 2012. Widgets must be made available on institutions' websites by 31 October 2012.

Evaluation and review

61. An evaluation will commence in autumn 2012. It will seek to determine the practical success of Unistats and the KIS in their early stages. It will cover:
 - the user experience of the KIS widget, the KIS and the new Unistats website;
 - whether the process from HE providers' perspectives can be improved upon;
 - an audit of the data provided by institutions.

Further information

62. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

63. We have carried out an equality impact assessment (EIA) screening on the introduction of the KIS in Wales to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We also considered the impact of the KIS on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision within the HE sector in Wales. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about EIAs.
64. A similar responsibility rests on HEI partners to assess the impact of your proposals to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality.

Annex A Information for publication in the KIS

Information	Source	Level	For the September 2012 KIS, information will relate to:
Study			
Results from the National Student Survey (NSS) : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are good at explaining things • Staff have made the subject interesting • Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my course • I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies • Feedback on my work has been prompt • Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand • The library resources are good enough for my needs • I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to 	HEFCE to draw from the NSS	Course level or aggregated	2012 NSS results
Proportion of time spent in various learning and teaching activities – by year/stage of study, with a link to further detail	Institution to provide to HEFCE	Course level	The experience a typical student may have
Proportion of summative assessment by method – by year/stage of study			Accreditation in place/planned for 2013/14
Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies that recognise this course, details of the type of recognition with a link to further detail			

Information	Source	Level	For the September 2012 KIS, information will relate to:
Costs and financial support			
Institution-owned/sponsored accommodation: average annual costs – upper and lower quartiles, and number of units (to which students can reasonably expect to have access) Private rental accommodation: average annual costs – upper and lower quartiles	Institution to provide to HEFCE	Institutional level	2012/13
Financial support available from the institution: whether it offers a fee waiver; means-tested support; non means-tested support; and a link to more detailed information	Institution to provide to HEFCE, for courses that do not recruit through UCAS. For courses recruiting through UCAS data will be sourced from UCAS	Course level	Financial support etc/average fees planned for 2013/14
Average fees (excluding fee waivers) per year by country of UK domicile			
Employment and salary information			
The destinations of graduates six months after completing their course – comprising working, studying, working and studying, unemployed, not available for work	HEFCE to draw six-month figures from the Destinations of Leavers from HE (DLHE) survey and 40-month figures from the	Course level or aggregated	2010/11 DLHE and 2010 Longitudinal DLHE results
Of those in employment, the proportion in managerial/professional jobs six months after graduation.			

Information	Source	Level	For the September 2012 KIS, information will relate to:
Salary data for those in full-time employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upper quartile, median and lower quartile six months after graduation from the course at the institution displaying the KIS • regionally adjusted upper quartile, median and lower quartile for the subject across all institutions six months after graduation • regionally adjusted upper quartile, median and lower quartile for the subject across all institutions at 40 months after graduation 	Longitudinal DLHE survey		
Students' union			
Satisfaction with the students' union	HEFCE to draw from the NSS (a question was added to the 2012 NSS about the students' union)	Institutional level	2012 NSS results

List of abbreviations

DLHE	Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education
FEI	Further education institution
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HEI	Higher education institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HEPISG	Higher Education Public Information Steering Group
JACS	Joint Academic Coding System
KIS	Key Information Set(s)
NSS	National Student Survey
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SOC	Standard Occupational Codes
UUK	Universities UK
XML	Extensible Markup Language