

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Changes to the funding of the National Student Survey and Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey in directly funded further education institutions from 2014/15

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To: Principals of directly-funded further education institutions in Wales
Response by: No response required
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This circular sets out important changes about the way the National Student Survey and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey for directly funded further education institutions will be funded from 2014/15.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please telephone us on (029) 2068 2225 or email info@hefcw.ac.uk.



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Introduction

1. This circular sets out important changes about the way the National Student Survey (NSS) and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey for directly funded further education institutions will be funded from 2014/15.
2. The DLHE survey provides important information for higher education (HE) providers about their graduates' progress after qualification, information that is also important to prospective students deciding where to study. The NSS provides information on student satisfaction with their course. The Key Information Set (KIS) uses DLHE and NSS data, which in turn is part of the information that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) considers when it carries out reviews.

The NSS

3. The NSS is an independent survey of final year students. It asks students to rate their satisfaction of their HE experience. Its purpose is to help prospective students, their families and advisors to make study choices. Participating institutions and student unions also use the data. HEFCW currently funds the participation of all higher education institutions (HEIs) and directly funded further education institutions (FEIs) in the NSS.
4. Due to the changes to HE fees and funding from 2012/13, a large proportion of HEFCW's funding is being paid out as fee grants. We are therefore in discussion with Higher Education Wales about HEIs taking on the cost of their participation in the NSS from 2014/15.
5. From 2014/15 FEIs will also need to take on the cost of their participation in the NSS for their directly funded HE in further education (FE) provision. The NSS for franchise provision will continue to be coordinated by the franchising HEI.

The DLHE

6. The DLHE is a survey of leavers from HE. It is conducted in two stages: the first stage (the Early Survey) aims to find out what leavers are doing six months after qualifying. The second stage (the Longitudinal Survey), is a follow-up survey to find out what leavers are doing after a further three years.
7. The first stage of the survey is undertaken by HEIs using standard documentation provided by Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and with a target population of those who left HEIs with certain qualifications during a specific period. Institutions collect this data and return it to HESA. HESA's institutional performance indicators are produced using data from this stage. The second stage of the survey is

undertaken by a contractor on behalf of HESA and the UK funding councils every two years. It surveys a sample of those leavers who took part in the first stage of the survey.

8. The DLHE survey collects information about graduates' employment and further study or training. This can be broken down by destination type, subject, student characteristics and institution. The results for individual institutions are available on the Unistats web-site (<http://unistats.ac.uk>) and, for individual courses, where data protection allows publication, as part of the key information sets. The first survey of leavers from FEIs in Wales covered those completing their courses in 2011/12.
9. HEIs manage the collection of the DLHE survey themselves and collate all the data. Through their annual subscription to HESA, they are provided with the reference materials, a web portal for collecting web returns and paper copies of the questionnaire.
10. Given the often small numbers of directly funded HE students in individual FE institutions, the DLHE survey for these students has so far been centrally funded by HEFCW, using the arrangements in place for FEIs in England in order to secure benefit from economies of scale.
11. Given the changes to HE fees and funding, and the fact that arrangements in England are changing, we will be transferring the costs of the DLHE to directly funded FEIs from 2014/15. Therefore from 2014/15, FEIs will be expected to fund and complete the DLHE survey themselves. In England some of the costs for the DLHE survey will be passed on to FEIs from March 2013, with all of the costs to be transferred by March 2014. In 2013/14 HEFCW will cover the costs of the survey for Welsh FEIs, and FEIs will not be required to contribute.
12. HEFCE is working to establish a 'framework' which will consist of a maximum of two preferred contractors. FEIs in Wales will also be able to use this framework from 2014/15. The contractor(s) will have good knowledge of higher education (HE) in further education institutions and can ensure high response rates, good-quality data and value for money. It is expected that FEIs in Wales will use one of these contractors, both because this will be more economical and because it will largely relieve FEIs of the responsibility for optimal data quality and response rates. The current costs per student surveyed have been estimated at around £10. HEFCE will work with the contractor(s) to establish a pricing model that will take into account the different sizes of institutions and levels of service required.

Further information / responses to

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

Equality and diversity implications

We have carried out an equality impact assessment (EIA) screening to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We also considered the impact of policies on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision within the HE sector in Wales. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about EIAs.

Institutions have a statutory responsibility to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We expect directly funded further education institutions to continue participating in these surveys, to ensure that the views of the diverse student body are represented.