Cylchlythyr | Circular

Unistats and Key Information Set (KIS): site updates and the data collection timetable for 2013

Date: 27 June 2013
Reference: W13/24HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
               Principals of directly-funded further education institutions in Wales
Response by: 22 August 2013
Contact: Name: Kimberley Meringolo
               Telephone: 029 2068 2258
               Email: kimberley.meringolo@hefcw.ac.uk

This circular sets out information on updates to the Unistats website as well as information for the data collection process for the 2013 Key Information Set (KIS).

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

Introduction

1.	This circular sets out information on updates to the bilingual Unistats website, as well as information for the data collection process for the 2013 Key Information Set (KIS). In particular, the circular outlines:

- Updates to the bilingual Unistats website, which will be re-launched in September 2013;
- Updates to the KIS 'widget', which will be made available from September 2013; and
- The processes and timetable for higher education institutions (HEIs), further education institutions (FEIs) to submit their 2013 KIS data, in order for it to be published on the updated bilingual Unistats website in September 2013.

Background

2.	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 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.

3.	Circular W11/27HE notified institutions that they would need to produce a KIS for all undergraduate courses[1] which would be offered in 2013/14 by HEIs, 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.

4.	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.

Development of the new bilingual Unistats/KIS website

5.	The bilingual Unistats website has been available since 2007, providing prospective students and others with the opportunity to search for and compare subject-based course information at different institutions. In 2012, Unistats became the foundation for the development of a new website,

---

[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.

which incorporated both the original Unistats data and the new KIS data. The site was developed for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on behalf of all the UK funding bodies' ie HEFCW, HEFCE, the Scottish Funding Council and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland.

6. The development was led by Eduserv, a not-for-profit web development and hosting company, in association with the user experience and web design agency Fluent Interaction. The official new bilingual Unistats website was launched in September 2012. It has been designed to be renewed each year with information for courses beginning in the following year. This means that from September 2013 the site will show new data for courses starting in 2014/15.

Unistats 2013: Site updates

7. Following the 2012 re-launch, HEFCE undertook an evaluation on behalf of all of the UK funding bodies, intended to get an early sense of the practical success of the 'new' Unistats and the KIS, both of which are bilingual. This evaluation comprised three strands:
    *   Strand A: the user experience
    *   Strand B: the institutional perspective
    *   Strand C: a data audit (see paragraph 30)

8. The Strand A evaluation was led on behalf of the funding bodies by the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS), to review the experiences of prospective students and other users. A report on the evaluation was published on 9 May 2013. Overall findings suggested that in general users responded positively to the site, and recognised its value as a tool for the comparison of higher education courses. The report also identified a number of issues reported by users, including around the accessibility and effectiveness of the search function, and the clarity of menu options.

9. Strand B was led by HESA, to review the experiences of institutions whose KIS data was published on the bilingual Unistats site. A report on the Strand B work was published in May 2013. The evaluation allowed institutions to identify a number of issues for them in the appearance of their KIS data on the Unistats website, for example, concern from some institutions that some part-time provision was not visible to students. In addition institutions indicated that it would be useful to capture, in a more structured way than just through course titles, elements of courses for which students might want to search.

10. Following on from the evaluation work and also the post-launch usability work, a number of key updates to the bilingual Unistats site have been commissioned, in order to improve the functionality and effectiveness of the site. Key updates to the Unistats website for September 2013 will include:

- Improvements to the search function, including the display of search results;
- Inclusion of a facility to filter by location;
- Improvement of the Course Assistant;
- Inclusion of social media access buttons; and
- The development of a mobile-accessible version of the site.

11. Other findings from the evaluation will take longer to be implemented, as further consideration is being given to see how they may be addressed.

KIS 'Widget': 2013 updates

12. The KIS 'widget' is a small application which is embedded into relevant external web-pages, showing users key KIS data for specific courses. A new, updated version of the KIS widget will be launched in September 2013, alongside the updated bilingual Unistats site. **Annex A** shows a 'mock up' indicating what the new KIS widget for 2013 will look like, in comparison to the current 2012 widget. Key changes to the 2013 widget will include:
- Only one item of KIS information (rather than three) will be displayed at a time. The KIS information items will still scroll as before;
- The widget contains headline data in a larger font size;
- Information about mode of study and course characteristics, such as a year abroad/sandwich year or foundation year, will be displayed under the course title; and
- Only the smaller size widget (185 x 444 vertical, or 612 x 144 horizontal forms) will be available.

13. Institutions will be able to include the new version of the widget on their sites following the September 2013 re-launch. <u>Institutions will be expected to have the updated widgets embedded on their relevant course pages by the end of October.</u> Guidance on how to embed the widget will be made available by Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) at a later date.

14. The widget should be displayed prominently on main course pages (for those courses where a KIS is required). Guidance on how to embed the widget into course pages will be provided before the September launch.

KIS 2013: Process and timetable for data collection

15. KIS information was sourced in 2012 from data sets including the National Student Survey (NSS) and the HESA Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. Other data - on learning and teaching activities, assessment methods, course accreditation, student financial support and accommodation costs, and the information that allows linking to the HESA and individualised learner records and UCAS course data - was collected from all institutions by HEFCE. For the collection of KIS data for publication

in 2013, HESA will collect these data from HEIs, whilst HEFCE will collect KIS data for FEIs.

16. HEFCW is currently working with FEIs in Wales and HEFCE to ensure that data on entry qualifications, continuation rates, class of degree and destination of leavers for HEFCW directly funded HE in FE courses is available for inclusion in Unistats for the first time in 2013.

17. All institutions are expected to provide KIS data, which will be published <u>according to the institution at which a course is recruited to, regardless of funding arrangements</u>. The principle is that each student is recorded, for the purposes of Unistats, against the institution at which they studied in their first year. Therefore registering institutions should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to the KIS. This is not to be confused with our policy on fee grants where we want the franchised provision to be registered with the HEI.

Table 1: Timetable for the collection of KIS data

Date	Activity
29 May 2013	• Data collection opens[2]
July 2013	• NSS and DLHE data added to KIS data
22 August	• Last submission and sign-off
September 2013	• System re-opens for updates • Longitudinal DLHE data added • Preview week (site accessible to key staff that have provided KIS data – 12 September 2013)
19 September 2013	• Unistats site is re-launched

18. For more information on HESA data collection requirements for KIS, see the [HESA website](#).

19. HEIs and FEIs will be able to preview their KIS data on the bi-lingual Unistats for one week before the site updates go live. Access arrangements for this preview period will be communicated in due course.

---

[2] The C13061 collection database opens on the HESA data collection system for HEIs and on the HEFCE extranet for FEIs, for institutions to test files against the full range of validation and exception checks, ahead of the last submission and sign-off date deadline.

KIS data collection: HEIs

20.   A user guide for the submission of KIS record data for HEIs will become available on the HESA website once the data collection system opens. Access and PIN codes for this will be distributed to HESA KIS record contacts once the system opens.

21.   HESA[3] monitors the data collection system to ensure institutions are progressing well and not encountering difficulties. However if you need assistance with the submission process, contact HESA's Institutional Liaison on 01242 211144.

22.   HEIs are required to send complete data, that has passed all stages of validation, to HESA by **22 August 2013**. Institutions will not be able to upload data between 22 August and 19 September 2013. Thereafter, they will be able to upload data (provided it is signed off by the Head of Institution) on a weekly basis, as they do currently.

23.   A single validation failure will result in no data being imported into the system. Data which fails validation will not be considered to have been returned to HESA.

KIS data collection – FEIs:

24.   Further education institutions will need to collect the data outlined in guidance on the HESA website and upload it to the HEFCE extranet. They will be able to upload this data from Wednesday 29 May 2013. Further details on how to access the extranet will be sent to institutions shortly in a separate letter. If you need assistance with the submission process, contact HEFCE at kis@hefce.ac.uk.

25.   We encourage institutions to upload their data as early as possible after 29 May, so that any issues of data quality can be resolved as soon as possible.

26.   FEIs are required to send complete data to HEFCE by **22 August 2013**. Institutions will not be able to upload data between 22 August and 19 September 2013. Thereafter, they will be able to upload data (provided it is signed off by the Head of Institution) on a weekly basis, as they do currently.

27.   A single validation failure will result in no data being imported into the system. Data which fails validation will not be considered to have been returned to HEFCE.

---

[3] http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=466&Itemid=300

Internal and external quality assurance and the KIS

28. Institutions will be responsible for the quality assurance of their KIS data. Due to the volume of the data, they will not undergo the same scrutiny as other HESA data streams. HESA (for HEIs), or HEFCE (for FEIs) will supply institutions with a summary report of their own data, and they will have the opportunity to preview the data that will appear on the KIS before sign-off, so they can confirm that it is accurate.

29. Please note that institutional KIS data **must** be signed off by the Head of Institution before it is used on the Unistats website.

Audit

30. HEFCW reserves the right to audit any of the information and data contributing to the KIS.

31. A pilot audit exercise was carried out in England on the KIS 2012/13 between November 2012 and February 2013, in which 10 HEIs and 2 FEIs were selected for audit. Key findings showed that overall institutions appear to have good quality systems and processes for the KIS (especially given that it was then in its first year), but that there were some issues around the interpretation of guidance, and the maintenance of an adequate audit trail to the KIS data. Where appropriate, guidance has therefore been updated to ensure consistent interpretation. The outcomes of this report are available on the HEFCE website.
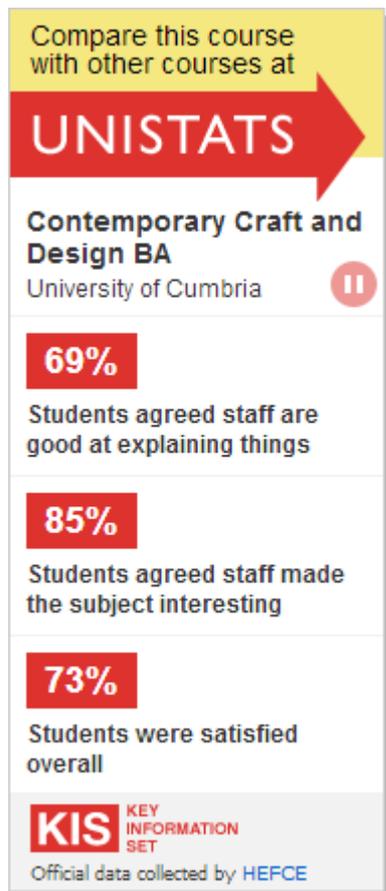
Next steps

32. All eligible higher education providers should have the arrangements in place to provide the required information, within the timetable indicated in **Table 1**.

33. Last year, all eligible HEIs and FEIs were asked to provide a contact with whom HEFCE can liaise with on the provision of KIS data and communication (Circular letter W11/33 refers). It is essential that you ensure your institutional KIS contact is up to date. If you need to amend your contact, please e-mail these details to kis@hefce.ac.uk by 16 June 2013. Please note that these contact details will be passed to whichever organisation administers the KIS data collection for your institution.

Further information / responses to

34. For further information, contact HESA's Institutional Liaison (tel 01242 211144; email liaison@hesa.ac.uk

Annex A: 'Mock up' of the 2013 Kis Widget, compared with the 2012 KIS widget

2012/Current KIS Widget   **2013 KIS Widget - 'mock up'[4]**

---

[4] Please note that this 'mock up' is provided for reference only, to give a general idea of how the updated widget will look. The final design, which will be made available in September 2013, may include further updates/changes not present in the 'mock up'. In addition, the widget may appear differently for different courses.