

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Unistats and the Key Information Set: Data collection timetable and website updates for 2014

Date: 13 June 2014
Reference: W14/22HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education institutions
in Wales
Response by: In accordance with the timetable
**Contact for
other queries:** Name: Dr Cliona O'Neill
Telephone: 029 2068 2283
Email: cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk

This circular sets out information on:

- the processes and timetable for higher education institutions and further education institutions to submit their 2014 Key Information Set (KIS) data, so they can be published on the Unistats website in August 2014;
- implementation of the KIS widget for 2014;
- accreditation information in the KIS; and
- ongoing updates to the Unistats website.

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



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government

Introduction

1. This circular sets out information on:
 - a. The processes and timetable for higher education institutions, further education institutions and alternative providers to submit their 2014 Key Information Set (KIS) data, so they can be published on the Unistats website in August 2014.
 - b. Implementation of the KIS widget for 2014.
 - c. Accreditation information in the KIS.
 - d. Ongoing updates to the Unistats website.
2. The changes and updates that we outline have been made in response to feedback from institutions, with a view to making the exercise more satisfactory.

Background

3. The KIS is a set of standardised information about undergraduate courses, which enables easy comparison between them. The KIS is published on the Unistats website, and updates to the information are made annually. Further information on the development of KIS and Unistats can be found on the [HEFCE](#) website under 'Unistats and Key Information Sets'.

Key points to note

4. Welsh Higher Education institutions and Further Education Institutions with higher education provision provide KIS data, as detailed in circular [W11/27HE](#): Key Information Sets: Outcomes of consultation and next steps.
5. The timetable for the collection of 2014 KIS data is shown in Table 1. This differs from the timetable in previous years in that the submission process has been staggered.

Table 1: Timetable for the collection of KIS data

| Date | Activity |
|----------------------|--|
| 29 May 2014 | Data collection opens |
| Early July 2014 | 2014 National Student Survey and 2012/13 Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey data added to KIS data |
| 15 July 2014 | Valid data submission required |
| 5 August 2014 (noon) | Deadline for sign-off of data for preview |
| 11 - 22 August 2014 | Data available for preview on Unistats |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 26 August 2014 (noon) | Deadline for submission and sign-off of amendments prior to publication of new dataset on Unistats |
| 28 August 2014 | The 2014 KIS dataset is published on Unistats |
| September 2014 | System re-opens for updates |

6. The initial sign-off for publication should be carried out by the head of institution, but formal responsibility for signing off any subsequent updates may be delegated to another member of the senior management team.

Implementation of the KIS widget for 2014

7. We do not anticipate making any changes to the KIS widget for 2014 that will require configuration changes by institutions.
8. HEFCE has recently carried out an audit of KIS widgets for English institutions and identified a number of issues with their implementation. They will be writing to their KIS contacts in institutions shortly to outline these and the corrective action that needs to be taken prior to publication of the 2014 dataset. HEFCW plans to undertake similar activity over the summer 2014.
9. The funders will also be issuing revised guidance in summer 2014 to clarify our expectations about the placement and display of the widget.

Accreditation information in the KIS

10. The funding bodies are reviewing the criteria and processes for the inclusion of accreditation information in the KIS, and plan to introduce some minor changes to these from next year, following consultation with the sector.
11. In order to ensure the accuracy of the accreditation information that is published, from September HESA will be publishing on its website a list of courses for which accreditation has been claimed in the KIS. We will be asking accrediting bodies to check that the accreditation statements selected are appropriate. Where multiple accreditation types exist for an accrediting body, institutions should seek advice from the appropriate body to ensure that the correct accreditation type is selected.

Unistats 2014: Site updates

12. Since the update to the site in September 2013, there have been minor changes such as the introduction of a Twitter panel on the homepage. Before September 2014 we will be implementing an introductory video tutorial explaining to users how to make best use of the site, publishing a set of frequently asked questions and re-designing the course assistant tool to make it more user-friendly. These will be available bilingually. We are also working on direct links at course level between the UCAS and Unistats websites.

Next steps

13. All eligible higher education providers should have arrangements in place to provide the required information, within the timetable indicated in Table 1.
14. The availability of robust, comparable data to assist in decision-making is valued by prospective students and those who advise them. We would therefore like to thank institutions for their efforts in providing good quality KIS data, as well as for the feedback that has been provided to enhance the collection process and the Unistats website.

Further information

15. Further detail on the timetable and process for the 2014 KIS can be found at **Annex A** for higher education institutions, and **Annex B** for further education institutions. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk), or HESA's institutional liaison (tel 012 4221 1144, e-mail liaison@hesa.ac.uk).

Further information for higher education institutions

KIS 2014: Processes and timetable for data collection

1. As a result of feedback we have received from institutions, we have made some changes to the data collection timetable and processes for the 2014 Key Information Sets (KIS). The main points to note are as follows.
 - a. The use of the UCAS fees feed has been discontinued for 2014, as the use of the UCAS Course collect interface to collect tuition fee data has proved burdensome for institutions. We explored various options to address this issue, in discussion with representatives from the sector, and concluded that the best option was for institutions to include all fee data in their KIS submissions for the 2014-15 KIS record¹.
 - b. To assist institutions in planning their submissions, we have staggered the submission process as set out in Table 1 of the circular.
 - c. We have introduced an interim deadline of **Tuesday July 15**, at which point institutions should have submitted a valid dataset. Data should then be signed off by the head of institution by **noon on Tuesday 5 August**. Achieving a valid submission is only the first step in ensuring that the data are correct, and institutions typically need to make several re-submissions between passing validation and having data that are ready to be signed off for publication; the staggering of these two deadlines introduces a clear period for data quality validation activities to occur. The sign-off deadline has been set earlier than in previous years, based on feedback from institutions that the deadline has coincided with other peaks in activity.
 - d. To ensure clear accountability for the data, the initial sign-off for publication **must** be carried out by the head of institution. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) will, however, incorporate a mechanism within the sign-off process to allow the head of institution to delegate formal responsibility for signing off any subsequent updates to one individual within the institution. We expect this individual to be a member of the institution's senior management team. Further details about access to submission systems have been provided in correspondence.
 - e. Data signed off by the 5 August deadline will be available for preview on the Unistats website from **Monday 11 August**. In previous years it was not possible to amend data to address any issues identified during the preview period until after they were made publicly available, but this year submission systems will remain open and institutions will be able to submit updates until **noon on Tuesday 26 August**. In addition to making the institutional preview period more effective, this will allow any institutions that experience difficulty in meeting the initial deadline additional time to

¹ Input was provided by the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group, a UK-wide group that oversees the provision of information about higher education.

complete their submissions.

2. Please note that:
 - a. Any data signed off between 5 August and noon on 26 August will be published on the Unistats site on **Thursday 28 August**, but will not be available for preview.
 - b. If data are signed off by 5 August and no further amendments are made, they do not need to be signed off again prior to publication.
 - c. Bringing the initial sign-off deadline and the institutional preview forward has also made it possible to move the publication date for Unistats, meaning the 2014 data will be available to prospective students earlier than in previous years. We expect that the 2014 data will be published on 28 August.
 - d. The KIS dataset is dynamic and it will be possible to make amendments on a weekly basis from September, as currently.
3. As for last year's collection of KIS data, HESA will collect KIS data from higher education institutions and alternative providers.
4. KIS data are published based on the institution at which a course is taught, regardless of funding arrangements. The principle is that each student is recorded, for the purposes of Unistats, against the institution at which they studied in their first year. This approach means that where institutions receive funding through a variety of routes they must submit a KIS even if they do not directly receive HEFCW funding. Therefore, registering institutions should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to the KIS. For further guidance, see 'Collaborative provision' under 'Further guidance' on the 'KIS collection 2014-15' page (www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&Itemid=232&mnl=14061#further) on the HESA website.
5. A single validation failure will result in no data being imported into the system. Data which fail validation will not be considered to have been returned to HESA.
6. Further information on submitting KIS record data from higher education institutions and alternative providers is available under 'KIS collection 2014-15' (www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&Itemid=232&mnl=14061) on the HESA website. Access and PIN codes will be distributed to HESA's KIS record contacts before data collection opens.
7. HESA monitors the data collection system to ensure institutions are progressing well and not encountering difficulties. For assistance with the submission process, contact HESA's institutional liaison, tel 01242 211144, e-mail liaison@hesa.ac.uk, website www.hesa.ac.uk/liaison.

8. HESA and HEFCE² will liaise with institutional KIS contacts about the provision of KIS data and will direct further communications to them. It is essential that institutions ensure their institutional KIS contact details are up to date. Please note that HEFCE and HESA hold separate lists of KIS contacts as these have slightly different purposes for each organisation. It is the responsibility of institutions to ensure that their KIS contact details are up to date on both HEFCE's and HESA's records. HESA has an online contact management system through which institutions can update the details of their nominated HESA KIS contact: institutions should communicate any change in staff to the institutional liaison by e-mail at the address in the paragraph above, and will then be given access to HESA's online system so that they can make the necessary changes. Institutions can amend their HEFCE KIS contacts by emailing kis@hefce.ac.uk.

Internal and external quality assurance relating to the KIS

9. Institutions are responsible for the quality assurance of their KIS data. As KIS data are not static and can be updated weekly, they do not undergo the same additional manual checks as other HESA data streams. We strongly encourage institutions to use the reports made available by HESA to confirm that the data are accurate, and to make use of the institutional preview period.
10. The head of institution must provide the initial sign-off to confirm the accuracy of the data. Any subsequent updates must be signed off either by the head of institution or by an individual they have nominated to act on their behalf.
11. HEFCW reserves the right to audit any of the information and data contributing to the KIS for Welsh institutions. The purpose of the audit is to gain assurance of the systems and protocols used in deriving the KIS data, and hence of the reliability of the data.

² On behalf of all the funders

Further information for further education colleges

KIS 2014: Processes and timetable for data collection

1. As a result of feedback we have received from institutions, we have made some changes to the data collection timetable and processes for the 2014 Key Information Sets (KIS). The main points to note are as follows.
 - a. We have discontinued the UCAS fees feed for 2014, as the use of UCAS's Course collect interface to collect tuition fee data has proved burdensome for institutions. We explored various options to address this issue, in discussion with representatives from the sector, and concluded that the best option was for institutions to include all fee data in their KIS submissions for the 2014-15 KIS record¹.
 - b. To assist institutions in planning their submissions, we have staggered the submission process as set out in Table 1 of the circular.
 - c. We have introduced an interim deadline of **Tuesday July 15**, at which point institutions should have submitted a valid dataset. Data should then be signed off by the head of institution by **noon on Tuesday 5 August**. Achieving a valid submission is only the first step in ensuring that the data are correct, and institutions typically need to make several re-submissions between passing validation and having data that are ready to be signed off for publication; the staggering of these two deadlines introduces a clear period for data quality validation activities to occur. The sign-off deadline has been set earlier than in previous years based on feedback from institutions that the deadline has coincided with other peaks in activity.
 - d. To ensure clear accountability for the data, the initial sign-off for publication **must** be carried out by the head of institution. HEFCE will, however, incorporate a mechanism within the sign-off process to allow the head of institution to delegate formal responsibility for signing off any subsequent updates to one individual within the institution. We expect this individual to be a member of the institution's senior management team. Further details about access to submission systems will be provided in correspondence.
 - e. Data signed off by the 5 August deadline will be available for preview on the Unistats website from **Monday 11 August**. In previous years, it was not possible to amend data to address any issues identified during the preview period until after they were made publicly available, but this year submission systems will remain open and institutions will be able to submit updates until **noon on Tuesday 26 August**. In addition to making the institutional preview period more effective, this will allow any

¹ Input was provided by the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group, a UK-wide group that oversees the provision of information about higher education.

institutions that experience difficulty in meeting the initial deadline additional time to complete their submissions.

2. Please note that:
 - a. Any data signed off between 5 August and noon on 26 August will be published on the Unistats site on **Thursday 28 August**, but will not be available for preview.
 - b. If data are signed off by 5 August and no further amendments are made, they do not need to be signed off again prior to publication.
 - c. Bringing the initial sign-off deadline and the institutional preview forward has also made it possible to move the publication date for Unistats, meaning the 2014 data will be available to prospective students earlier than in previous years. We expect that the 2014 data will be published on 28 August.
 - d. The KIS dataset is dynamic and it will be possible to make amendments on a weekly basis from September, as currently.
3. As for last year's collection of KIS data, HEFCE will collect KIS data from further education colleges, on behalf of HEFCW.
4. KIS data are published based on the institution at which a course is taught, regardless of funding arrangements. The principle is that each student is recorded, for the purposes of Unistats, against the institution at which they studied in their first year. This approach means that where institutions receive funding through a variety of routes they must submit a KIS even if they do not directly receive HEFCE funding. Therefore, registering institutions should make their partners aware of their responsibilities in relation to the KIS. For further guidance, see 'Collaborative provision' under 'Further guidance' on the 'KIS collection 2014-15' page (www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&Itemid=232&mnl=14061#further) on the HESA website.
5. A single validation failure will result in no data being imported into the system. Data which fail validation will not be considered to have been returned to HEFCE.
6. Further education colleges will need to collect the data outlined in the KIS technical guidance, which is available under 'KIS collection 2014-15' (www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&Itemid=232&mnl=14061) on the HESA website, and upload them to the HEFCE_extranet according to the timescales indicated in Table B1. Details of how to access the extranet were sent to KIS contacts in a separate letter by Gemma Bowers (HEFCE) on 29 May 2014.

7. We encourage institutions to upload their data as early as possible after 29th May, so that any issues of data quality can be resolved as soon as possible. For assistance with the submission process, contact kis@hefce.ac.uk.
8. HEFCE² will liaise with KIS contacts in FECs about the provision of KIS data and will direct further communications to them. It is essential that institutions ensure their institutional KIS contact is up to date: e-mail kis@hefce.ac.uk to amend KIS contact details.

Internal and external quality assurance relating to the KIS

9. Institutions are responsible for the quality assurance of their KIS data. As KIS data are not static and can be updated weekly, they do not undergo the same additional manual checks as other data streams. We strongly encourage institutions to use the reports made available by HEFCE to confirm that the data are accurate and to make use of the institutional preview period.
10. The head of institution **must** provide the initial sign off to confirm the accuracy of the data. Any subsequent updates must be signed off either by the head of institution or by an individual they have nominated to act on their behalf.
11. HEFCW reserves the right to audit any of the information and data contributing to the KIS for Welsh institutions. The purpose of the audit is to gain assurance of the systems and protocols used in deriving the KIS data, and hence of the reliability of the data.

² On behalf of all the funders