

Summarised responses to the consultation on the collection of data for the 'basket of goods'

Number of respondents: 8

The respondents are listed at **Annex B**

General (1 respondent)

Points raised

- Welcomed the opportunity to comment on the collection of data for the 'basket of goods', recognising the speed at which the 'basket' could be implemented as a result of the Diamond Review recommendations.

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed principles? Please explain your response (8 respondents)

Agree (including with caveats): 7

Disagree: 0

Inconclusive: 1

Points raised

- The data should not be used as a comparator tool between institutions, but rather to monitor unusual increases in costs;
- The 'goods' should be taken from quality-assured, publicly available data;
- The contents of the 'basket of goods' should be reviewed and updated annually to reflect changing consumer behaviours over time, with reference to UK consumer price inflation indices;
- Some goods and services used by students might be outside of the institution's control and should therefore be excluded from the 'basket';
- The items included in the 'basket' should be clearly defined and contextualised as some goods are aimed exclusively at a target group of students;
- Costs should be reviewed on an annual basis;
- The 'basket of goods' should be reviewed at institution level rather than at programme level in order to provide an appropriate and reasonable balance between transparency and bureaucracy
- The 'basket of goods' could aid students in managing their finances but care should be taken to avoid marketisation;
- Institutions should work with their respective students' unions in preparing the 'basket'.
- If published, clarity would be needed over where the information would be held.

Question 2: Do you agree with the contents of the proposed 'basket of goods'? Please explain your response (8 respondents)

Agree (including with caveats): 6

Disagree: 0

Inconclusive: 2

Points raised

- Any fees in respect of Students' Union services should not be included or should be monitored separately via the Students' Unions themselves;
- Costs incurred may vary according to the activity and local provision (such as access to sports facilities) which may impact on the costs of services or goods available;
- Care should be taken to ensure the 'goods' were relevant to the 'average student';
- The 'goods' could include costs which might of interest to students, whether or not they were explicitly relevant to all students;
- If the 'basket' will only include costs within an institution's control then Students' Union related costs would not be eligible;
- The 'basket of goods' should be reviewed regularly to ensure it is representative of the goods purchased by students;
- The costs of programme-level purchases (such as textbooks) should not be included.

Question 3: Do you think part-time and postgraduate fees should be collected and monitored separately from the 'basket of goods'? How should this information be collected? Should it be published? (8 respondents)

Agree (including with caveats): 7

Disagree: 1

Inconclusive: 0

Points raised

- Providing institutional level information on part-time and postgraduate fees in the 'basket of goods' would not be practical;
- If collected, the data should be verified by the institution to ensure it is reported correctly; the process for verification should not be burdensome;
- The data should be taken from publicly available sources;
- Fee information, if published, should be made available in compliance with guidance from the Consumer and Markets Authority (CMA) and Competition Law;
- Institutions should have the opportunity to provide contextual information to the fee data, particularly in instances where scholarships and bursaries could have an impact on fee amounts;
- At present the data is sufficiently available on the majority of the institution's websites and should not be formally re-published;
- Due diligence should take place to ensure the data could not be used as a comparator between institutions;
- The complexity of the data could lead to difficulties in publishing the data in a format which was accessible to the general public, including students;
- There was no perceived value in collecting this data.

Question 4: Do you agree with the proposed arrangements for data capture and subsequent monitoring for the 'basket of goods'? (8 respondents)

Agree (including with caveats): 7

Disagree: 0

Inconclusive: 1

Points raised

- The data captured should be kept separate to the HESES exercise as the 'basket of goods' does not relate to student statistics;
- Verification of data could be optional in order to reduce burden;
- The collection of data by institutions was not considered a burden and would ensure data could be comparable if collected in the same way each year, rather than through a third party;
- The proposal to minimise institutional burden was welcomed;
- Data should be requested from institutions and not from websites (which could be out of date).

Question 5: Are there any other issues or unintended consequences (such as technical issues of data collection), regarding the 'basket of goods' which you would like to bring to our attention? If so, please provide details. (7 respondents)

Yes (including with caveats): 0

No: 6

Inconclusive: 1

Points raised

- If the data is collected directly from the named institution's contact there should be no other issues or unintended consequences;
- If the data were to be collected from institutional websites then there could be inconsistencies of data, particularly where webpages were out of date;
- The 'basket of goods' exercise must avoid indirect consequences on institutions, e.g. where costs are capped despite above-inflation increases in item costs;
- Developing a specific calculator, or other 'formal' mechanism, in order for students to calculate their likely costs would require resources and, should this be introduced, it would seem appropriate for there to be a recognised 'calculation process' to ensure students are receiving consistent information across institutions.

Question 6: Do the proposals have any positive or negative impacts or unintended consequences in terms of equality and diversity (including protected characteristics), the Welsh language, sustainability or the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015? (7 respondents)

Yes (including with caveats): 1

No: 3

Inconclusive: 3

Points raised

- The exercise needs to be compliant with competition law;
- The exercise must also avoid dis-incentivising changes to cost that have sustainability benefits such as reducing the use of paper and consumables, or promoting sustainable travel;
- The 'basket of goods' must provide the opportunity for an institution to provide a mix of goods that support equality, diversity, inclusion and the Welsh language;
- The 'basket of goods' will likely have a neutral impact in respect of equality and diversity;
- Publication of the 'basket of goods' will ensure students will be in a position to manage their finances more effectively, including students with protected characteristics.

Respondents

Aberystwyth University

Bangor University

Cardiff University

Cardiff Metropolitan University

NUS Wales

Swansea University

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Wrexham Glyndŵr University