2017-18 HESA AP student data audit programme

Provider:

Date of audit:

Auditor:

Contents

Purpose

The purpose of the audit is to explore the processes in place to compile the 2017-18 HESA AP student data return and to seek to gain assurance over the quality of the return. The audit has two areas of particular interest:

- To understand the quality of data submitted, so that we can judge the extent to which the data can be used, and relied on, in onward analysis

- To identify errors in the data and weaknesses in systems and processes as well as examples of good practice, with a view to improving the data collected in future (in particular, through dissemination of the audit findings, training, and changes to the HESA coding manual).

Systems notes

Present at the opening meeting:

Talk through the systems and processes in place to compile and return HESA AP student data with the relevant staff at the provider. Establish the following:

1. Who is responsible for compiling and submitting the HESA return?	
2. What checking is carried out prior to submission of the return? What further checks are carried out as the return is finalised and before sign-off?	
3. What student record system (SRS) is used, or how is the student data recorded?	
4. Does all data for the HESA AP student data come straight from the SRS or from a variety of sources? If a variety of sources, how is it collated to ensure that it is complete and obtained in such a way as to be accurate?	
5. Are any issues encountered with the submission process recorded so these can be resolved in subsequent returns?	
6. Were the outputs produced via the HESA data collection hub (e.g. the IRIS outputs, quality rules outputs and credibility reports) used when reviewing your submission for correctness? Who was responsible for this?	
7. Is there a review of the return before sign-off by someone other than the individual with responsibility for compiling the return? What are the relative responsibilities of the compiler and reviewer(s) of the return?	
8. How are appropriate senior staff kept informed about the return and any issues with compilation? Does the provider have governance structures in place, such as a	

board and/or audit committee? If so is there reporting on the HESA return to these groups?	
9. Is there over-reliance on individual staff? If so have any steps been taken to reduce the risks resulting from this, such as documenting processes?	
10. Who is responsible for registering students / enrolment?	
11. How are the different categories of student (e.g. designated/non-designated, HE/non-HE, Home/overseas) treated on the SRS?	
12. How are a student's entry qualifications identified and recorded?	
13. When does the student become live on the SRS or equivalent?	
14. Are any checks made to confirm that students have arrived/are attending?	
15. What processes are in place to determine and record domicile?	
16. What is the process for re-enrolment for continuing students?	
17. When does a continuing student become live on the SRS or equivalent?	
18. Does the provider have any students that are subcontracted in or out from/to other providers? If so, how are these recorded on the SRS or equivalent and how does the provider ensure they are appropriately counted (or not) in their data returns?	
19. Has there been any recent internal audit or similar work in the area of student data? If so, please provide the report and any records of planned actions in response to any recommendations.	
20. How is the provider preparing for the changes required for 'data futures'?	

21. Data futures may require module data to be returned for the first time. How are you preparing your SRS or equivalent to be able to capture this information?	
22. Course sessions are required to be a year long in the data futures specification. How are you preparing to change your reporting of instance periods currently to reflect this requirement?	
23. How is the provider preparing to have to submit data at multiple points in the year?	

Test 1 – Pre-visit consideration of any known risks

Objective:
To ensure that any apparent anomalies in the data are considered and adequate tests designed and carried out in order to explore these.

Method:
Any concerns over data from review of Minerva queries and data verification work should be noted and considered.

In due course the outcomes of tests 3 and 4 should be reviewed and, if necessary additional testing carried out to ensure there is sufficient testing of risk areas.

Details of any individual students within the sample where comparisons with other data sources suggest discrepancies will be identified. These should be noted and considered when carrying out test 4 to ensure cases where the risk of error is high are subject to sufficient scrutiny. Please note that we will not be able to share data from other sources with providers.

Results:

Conclusion:

Test 2 – Systems and processes

Objective:
To ensure there are adequate procedures in place to produce an accurate return in a timely manner.

Method:
Establish the source(s) of data used in the HESA AP student data return and the processes and procedures in place to compile these.

- What SRS is used?

- Establish who is responsible for compiling the HESA AP student data return.

- Establish if the HESA AP student data return is generated from the SRS. If data from a variety of sources is used how is it collated to ensure that it is complete and obtained in such a way as to be accurate?

- Interview the individual to establish the procedures used both to compile the HESA AP student data and to ensure accurate student data is recorded and maintained on the SRS or equivalent.

- Document the procedures, obtaining copies of any formal documented procedure notes.

- Review procedure notes for comprehensiveness.

- Evaluate the processes and systems in comparison to those used in other APs to ensure best practice within the sector is conveyed to all parties as appropriate.

- Consider over-reliance on individual staff.

- What controls are in place to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the return?

- Are issues encountered with the submission process recorded so these can be resolved in subsequent returns?

- Consider whether the review and sign-off procedures are reasonable, e.g. is there segregation between the compiler and reviewer(s), and is there an independent reasonableness review of the return before sign-off?

- Consider whether there is appropriate oversight by senior staff and, where appropriate for the provider, the audit committee, governors or similar.

- Has there been any recent internal audit or similar work in the area of student data? If so, obtain the report and consider any issues identified that may be relevant to the audit. Ensure an update is obtained on these during the audit.

- What consideration has been given to data futures? How is the provider preparing for the requirement changes?

Results:

Conclusion:

Test 3 – Completeness of the return

Objective:
To ensure completeness of the information within the HESA AP student data return.

Method:
Consider the results of the discussions had while conducting test 2 concerning this area.

Discuss and consider how the following classes of student are identified and ensure they are treated appropriately in preparation of the return:

- Non EU students – risk of incorrect exclusion.

- Students who do not receive student support – risk of incorrect exclusion.

- Students who drop out (must include all students where attendance has been confirmed to SLC; for others, if left within the first two weeks need not return records for students) – risk of incorrect exclusion.

- Continuing students who only have a small amount activity in the reporting year – risk of incorrect exclusion.

- Students studying wholly outside of the UK for the duration of their programme – risk of incorrect inclusion.

- Students expected to spend less than eight consecutive course weeks in the UK during their entire programme – risk of incorrect inclusion.

- Students studying on postgraduate courses for providers – risk of incorrect exclusion.

- Students on non-designated undergraduate courses that are within the coverage – risk of incorrect exclusion.

- Dormant students with an outcome (e.g. a qualification or a withdrawal) during the reporting period – risk of incorrect exclusion.

- Students subcontracted in from other institutions – risk of incorrect inclusion.

- Students subcontracted out to other institutions (NOTE: subcontracted out activity is only allowed where the DfE has exceptionally permitted such activity) – risk of incorrect exclusion.

Where considered necessary, review a few students in detail in the SRS or equivalent during the on-site visit to seek to gain assurance over their treatment.

Results:

Conclusion:

Test 4 – Detailed sample testing

Objective:
Verification of data submitted by checking a sample of data back to the SRS or equivalent and primary documentation.

Method:
A sample of students will be selected. The provider should be asked to make available information on the SRS or equivalent and supporting paper files where these are held for review during the visit. This should include, where held:

- Application forms or equivalent.

- Registration/enrolment forms or equivalent for each year of attendance.

- Evidence of engagement such as class registers, evidence of submission of coursework and/or attendance at exams.

- Evidence of withdrawal.

- Evidence of qualifications and class awarded, and the date of the award.

For each of the student records selected assess the following:

1. <u>HESA population</u>

   a. Are the right students included and excluded?

2. <u>Student activity during the year</u>

   Key fields – NOTACT / ENDDATE / RSNEND / COURSEAIM / SPLENGTH / MODE / STULOAD

   a. Confirm the fields returned to HESA correspond to the SRS or equivalent and are consistent with evidence provided.
   b. Obtain evidence of ongoing activity throughout the period from the commencement of the instance to the end of the instance (registers, coursework submissions, etc.). When students are recorded as active throughout the year, is there evidence of their activity?
   c. Where the student ceased studying, obtain evidence to show when the student ceased studying and the reason.
   d. When students are recorded as withdrawn, is their ENDDATE and their RSNEND recorded correctly?
   e. Review COURSEAIM, SPLENGTH, MODE and STULOAD and confirm to evidence.

3. <u>Outcome including qualifications awarded</u>

   Key fields – CLASS / QUAL / RSNEND

      a. Confirm the fields returned to HESA correspond to the SRS or equivalent and are consistent with evidence provided.

      b. Obtain evidence of the qualification and class that the student obtained in the instance from the awarding body including the date of the award.

4. Personal details

Key fields – DOMICILE / BIRTHDTE / FNAMES / SURNAME / SSN

      a. Confirm the fields returned to HESA correspond to the SRS or equivalent and are consistent with evidence provided.

      b. Obtain the course enrolment / re-enrolment information and review.

      c. Obtain the underlying evidence to support the domicile, names and dates of birth recorded.

5. Qualifications on entry

Key field – QUALENT3 / Qualification on entry entity

      a. Confirm the fields returned to HESA correspond to the SRS or equivalent and are consistent with evidence provided.

      b. Obtain the course enrolment / re-enrolment information and review.

      c. Obtain the underlying evidence to support the previous qualification recorded.

      d. Review use of J* (from UCAS) when determining qualification on entry.

      e. Consider how QUALENT3 and the overall qualification on entry entity is populated given systems used to collect, store and verify personal information.

For all data quality matters identified, follow these up to understand how the value submitted was derived. Consider the SRS data source, the processes in capturing and maintaining the information, the processes in compiling and submitting the HESA data, and assess risks to the integrity of the HESA return, and the suitability of the design of controls to mitigate the risks. Make recommendations where appropriate.

Results:

Conclusion: