

A geography of English higher education: Technical document

Summary

1. This document describes the population used in the geography of English higher education¹ and provides some context on how the geographical information is derived.

Overall population

2. The data shown in this output is derived from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) 2019-20 student return and student alternative return, and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) 2019-20 individualised learner record (ILR) return.
3. The data includes students who are registered at a higher education provider in England and are studying for a higher education qualification. Only students registered with an Office for Students (OfS) registered provider have been included. The population is restricted to those students taught in England.
4. The population includes students aiming for a recognised higher education qualification, such as a degree (of any level), a PGCE, a HND or an HNC. Students who are studying for further education qualifications, or who are not aiming for a recognised qualification, are excluded.²

Description	Definition
Included within this data	OFSQAIM = 'CERTED', 'CET', 'DET', 'DIPHE', 'DTLLS_PG', 'ENHANCED', 'FDBC', 'FIRST', 'FOUDEG', 'HIGHCERT', 'HNC', 'HND', 'MASTER', 'MEDVETDENT', 'PGCE', 'PGCERT', 'PGDIP', 'PGUNSPEC', 'PHD', 'PROCONGRAD', 'PTLLS', 'UGUNSPEC'
Not included within this data	Otherwise

5. Duplicated records have been removed from the populations. A record is removed if two courses studied by the same student are taught at the same provider, at the same level of study, same subject area, same mode and at the same time (overlapping by a month).
6. Any non-UK based distance learners are also removed from the population.

¹ This technical document accompanies our data dashboards for a geography of English higher education, at: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/a-geography-of-english-higher-education/.

² For a full specification of the values of OFSQAIM, see the definition for IPOFSQAIM available at: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation.

7. The population is further restricted to the standard registration population. This restricts the session population to only count students once for each year of a course, with students counted as they start the year. Students who leave within two weeks of their start date, or anniversary of their start date, and are on a course of more than two weeks duration, are excluded from the population.
8. For more information on the standard registering population see:
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/students>.
9. Finally, for the provider locations map and table, distance learners have been removed.

Provider locations

10. Provider location has been set based on the teaching provider. For students taught at a provider that returns to the HESA record and the HESA alternative record, we take the postcode of the campus.
11. For students taught at a further education college, we take the postcode with the highest number of students and call this 'Campus A'. We then look for any postcodes that have at least 50 students and are at least 20 miles apart. We continue this process until all such postcodes have been found.
12. Distance learners have their teaching location set to be the same as their home location.

ONS geographies

13. To show the different geographical areas that providers are in we use the Office for National Statistics (ONS) postcode lookup (NSPL). We also attach other ONS geographies onto the NSPL.
14. Among the geographies that we use are the International Territorial Levels (ITL) that were introduced on 1 January 2021, replacing the former NUTS classifications. ITL level 1 shows the nine statistical regions of the UK. ITL level 2 generally shows groups of counties together and ITL level 3 shows a mixture of counties, unitary authorities and districts.

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