

Review of efficiency and effectiveness of TRAC

Review outcomes

The review should seek to achieve the following outcomes:

- Understanding of the concerns that some stakeholders have about burden and identification of opportunities to reduce burden of TRAC without impacting disproportionately on value, credibility and utility of the data
- Establishing the context of developments to TRAC over the years and identification of opportunities to improve the utility and efficiency of TRAC including:
 - review and identification of how to reform TRAC(T) to provide better information on the costs of higher education teaching provision to inform the approach to teaching funding
 - reviewing the approach to and use of TRAC to accurately and efficiently capture the true costs of research and innovation to enable UKRI to act in a sustainable and informed manner
 - supporting the information needs of UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies in providing evidence on the sustainability of activities and provision of data to inform spending reviews and policy making
 - provision of information to support and encourage efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of publicly funded teaching and research activity.

Individual opportunities identified within this exercise will be prioritised according to their likely impact, effort to implement and broader context.

Scope of the review

The scope of this review is limited to the TRAC system and its requirements relating to the TRAC data returns submitted to Regulators and Funding bodies¹.

Research grants processes are out of scope for this review. However, opportunities for further work within these areas may be identified in the course of the review and will be noted within the outputs.

The review will:

¹ Office for Students, UK Research and Innovation, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the Department for the Economy Northern Ireland.

1. Identify the current uses of TRAC data and potential for enhancing the value and utility from the TRAC data by evaluating the information needs of stakeholders and identifying areas of concern regarding the proportionality of administrative burden within the TRAC system.
2. Review the efficiency and effectiveness of the TRAC data collection process, taking account of the information needs UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies for information, accountability for public funders and the need to balance these with proportionate administrative burden for higher education institutions.
 - a. Review the criteria for institutions to return all or some TRAC data. This should include a review of the current dispensation approach.
 - b. Review the efficiency and timeliness of TRAC data collection process and reporting cycle. This should include the oversight and governance requirements placed on institutions.
3. Evaluate the approaches used in providers for the allocation of academic time to activities. To include:
 - a. Evaluation of the current approaches used within providers and an assessment of the administrative burden and relative benefits of the approaches adopted.
 - b. Identification of opportunities for burden reduction, improving the efficiency of time allocation process whilst ensuring confidence in data outputs.
4. Review of TRAC(T) to better understand the cost of teaching different disciplines or subject areas to inform [differential] funding for different provision. This includes ensuring that TRAC(T) provides information that the funders and regulators may require.
5. Review the research elements of TRAC, specifically:
 - a. The approach to enable a better understanding of the cost of research activity, including the allocation of costs for supervision and training of Postgraduate Research students.
 - b. To advise on the potential for further improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of data provision aspects from the TRAC system and associated processes to support the sustainability of research.
6. Explore the potential to use TRAC to encourage and drive greater efficiency in delivering high quality teaching and research.
7. Where identified, provide advice to funders and regulators on aspects of the TRAC system where further reviews or improvements should be considered.

KPMG will be undertaking the review reporting to the Regulators and Funding bodies. It is aiming to report in early summer with recommendations for the Regulators and Funding bodies to consider.