

Data collection to inform funding for 2020-21

Notification of changes

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Summary

1. This document provides notification of changes that we intend to make to the collection of data to inform funding for 2020-21. It also invites comment on one element of these changes: the assignment of course subject codes to price groups for funding purposes.
2. A higher education provider registered, or applying to register, with the Office for Students (OfS) in the 'Approved (fee cap)' category, and seeking the benefits of such registration for the 2020-21 academic year, must complete a data survey to inform the calculation of OfS grants for that year. These are as follows:
 - a. For a provider that has students registered in the 2019-20 academic year, the 2019 Higher Education Students Early Statistics (HESES19) survey. Unlike previous years, there will not be a separate Higher Education in Further Education: Students (HEIFES) survey for further education and sixth form colleges and academies.
 - b. For a provider that does not have students registered in the 2019-20 academic year, the Higher Education Students Forecast 2020-21 (HESF20) survey.
3. This document summarises changes to these surveys, but does not contain the full technical specification of our data requirements and definitions. We will confirm these in the data collection requests that we issue in autumn 2019. We welcome questions or comments on any of the proposed changes, but are specifically seeking views on our proposed changes to how years of instance are assigned to price groups (see paragraphs 19 to 27). Please email any comments to recurrentgrant@officeforstudents.org.uk to arrive **by noon on Monday 5 August 2019**. We will publish the full HESES19 and HESF20 guidance in September 2019.

Background

4. The OfS allocates recurrent teaching grant to eligible higher education providers registered in the Approved (fee cap) category of the OfS Register¹. To inform these funding allocations, providers are required to return aggregate student data to the OfS. For most providers, grants for 2019-20 have been informed primarily by their student numbers in the 2018-19 academic year, which they submitted in response to either the Higher Education Students Early Statistics or Higher Education in Further Education: Students surveys:
 - a. HEIFES18 was completed by further education and sixth form colleges and academies. These providers were required to submit their data by 12 November 2018.
 - b. HESES18 was completed by other providers. Providers receiving OfS funding for 2018-19 were required to submit data by 10 December 2018. Those providers that did not receive OfS funding for 2018-19 and were completing HESES for the first time were allowed extra time to complete the survey and were required to submit their data by 19 December.
5. A small number of providers did not complete either survey, as they did not have any higher education provision recognised for OfS funding purposes in 2018-19. These providers instead provided a forecast of student numbers expected for 2019-20 in the Higher Education Students Forecast (HESF19) return².
6. All providers were required to have their data signed off by their accountable officer by 28 January 2019.
7. From 1 August 2019 the OfS's regulatory framework comes into full effect, with providers on the OfS Register required to comply with ongoing conditions of registration. We wish to treat all eligible higher education providers consistently in our approach to funding for 2020-21, while recognising the different circumstances that apply. We have therefore reviewed our data collection requirements of providers with a view to harmonising these as far as possible. This publication sets out the changes we propose.

Changes to data collection to inform funding for 2020-21

The HESES19 data collection process

8. All providers registered (or applying to register) in the Approved (fee cap) category that have students registered with them in the 2019-20 academic year are required to complete the HESES19 data survey. This includes further education and sixth form colleges and academies: we will not be releasing a separate HEIFES survey for them. This is primarily a presentational change that allows us to improve consistency of approach; the two surveys already shared the

¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/what-can-registered-providers-do/.

² Further information about the HESES18, HEIFES18 and HESF19 surveys is available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/data-collection/.

same set of definitions and funding rules. However, there are some differences in the data reporting requirements for colleges that need to be reflected.

9. The version of HESES19 completed by further education and sixth form colleges and academies will:
 - a. Use the same terminology as for all other providers. For example we will refer to 'years of instance' instead of 'years of course'.
 - b. Have a separate census date and submission deadline. This is discussed further in paragraph 10.
 - c. Require colleges to complete a separate 'courses' table that will be used to populate Column 1 of Tables 1, 2, 3 and 5. Feedback from colleges is that this reduces burden and improves data quality. This is the same system used in HEIFES18. All other providers will need to complete Column 1 on the relevant tables manually.

10. The HESES19 data return will use the following key dates:

- a. Further education and sixth form colleges and academies will use a census date of 1 November 2019 and will be required to submit their data by noon on 14 November.
- b. All other providers will use a census date of 1 December and will be required to submit their data by noon on 10 December.
- c. All providers will be required to have their data signed off by their accountable officer by 3 February 2020.

This timeline is similar to the 2018-19 collection, but allows for a slightly extended data verification period before data is signed off.

11. We recognise that this timeline is not completely consistent in the way that it treats providers, and results in colleges having a longer time to verify and sign off their data. We consulted with sector representative bodies to explore the possibility of harmonising the collection dates, but the feedback received was not in favour of such a move at this time and noted that it might overlap with other data returns. Though we may wish to explore this for future returns, it will not be implemented for HESES19. Because HESES collects data for the whole academic year (including forecasts of student numbers countable after the census date), the use of different census dates should not in itself have a material effect on the student numbers counted for funding purposes.

Changes to the HESES19 workbook

12. We have reviewed the data collected in the HESES survey to minimise the burden placed on providers and to ensure that all the data collected is necessary for the OfS to perform our functions. Following this review, we will be making the following changes to the tables in HESES19:
 - a. **Table 5** in HESES is used to collect further information on students for planning purposes. In HESES19 we will no longer be separately identifying years of instance for students

taking a higher education qualification recognised for OfS funding purposes as part of an apprenticeship. Such students are still included in the main HESES19 population.

- b. In HESES18 and HEIFES18, **Table 6** collected information on years of instance taught under subcontractual arrangements by other providers. We will not be collecting this information in HESES19, though such years of instance are still included in the main HESES19 population where they meet all relevant criteria. This table has been removed from the survey workbook.
 - c. In HESES18 we required providers that were not receiving OfS funding for 2018-19 to complete **Table 8**. This collected information about the teaching location of their OfS-fundable students and allowed us to calculate any location-based funding allocations. We will not be collecting this information in HESES19 and therefore Table 8 has been removed from the workbook. If it is necessary to collect this data from any providers new to OfS funding for 2020-21, we will provide a separate table for the purpose.
13. Since 2017-18, students starting undergraduate courses that on successful completion lead to first registration as a professional in nursing, midwifery and certain allied health professions (pre-registration courses) are supported through the main higher education finance system and are eligible to be counted towards our funding calculations. This has been extended from 2018-19 to students starting undergraduate pre-registration courses in dental hygiene and dental therapy and to postgraduate pre-registration courses. In HESES18 and HEIFES18, **Tables 7a, 7b and 7c** collected information on years of instance for these students and allowed us to identify the cohorts of students who need to be counted towards these calculations. In HESES19, these tables will be renamed Tables 6a, 6b and 6c. There are also some changes to the information collected on these tables, set out in paragraph 14.
14. For HESES19, **Tables 6a, 6b and 6c** will identify years of instance for students in each profession, broken down by the following four mutually exclusive categories:
- a. OfS-fundable. We do not require separate identification of these according to the year they started their courses.
 - b. Non-fundable, undergraduate starters in 2016-17 for dietetics, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, operating department practice, orthoptics, orthotics and prosthetics, podiatry and chiropody, physiotherapy, radiography, and speech and language therapy. As in previous years, we will count these as a proxy for the additional cohort of students (those in the fourth year of their studies) to be funded from 2020-21, following the transfer of funding responsibility introduced for them in 2017-18.
 - c. Non-fundable starters in 2017-18 for undergraduate students in dental hygiene and dental therapy and for postgraduate students in the other professions listed in paragraph 14.b. As in previous years, we will count these as a proxy for the additional cohort of students (those in the third year of their studies) to be funded from 2020-21 following the transfer of funding responsibility introduced for them in 2018-19.
 - d. All other non-fundable years of instance. This applies to any non-fundable students who started in other years. These students will not be counted for funding purposes.

The definition of fundability status (including as it applies to pre-registration courses in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions) is unchanged for HESES19. **Tables 6a and 6c** will also separately identify all Home and EU years of instance, both fundable and non-fundable, for students who are starters in 2019-20. This is collected for planning, not funding, purposes.

The HESF20 data collection process

15. All providers registered (or applying to register) in the Approved (fee cap) category that **do not** have students registered with them in the 2019-20 academic year are required to complete the HESF20 data survey. There are no changes to the structure of the HESF20 tables compared with HESF19. Unlike in HESES19, Table 2, 'Teaching location for students', will still be required.
16. As it is a forecast of student numbers in the 2020-21 academic year, there is no census date that applies to HESF20. We will specify the deadline for submission when we notify any provider that we require it to complete the survey. Commonly, the submission and sign-off deadlines will be similar to those for HESES19, so that (subject to its entry onto the OfS register in time) any such provider can be included in the grant announcements we make in spring 2020.

Changes to funding definitions for HESES19 and HESF20

17. We are making a number of amendments to funding definitions that will apply equally to HESES19 and HESF20.

Recognised higher education for OfS funding purposes

18. We have amended our definition of recognised higher education for OfS funding purposes. The revised wording is not intended to change which courses count as recognised for OfS funding purposes, nor does the definition apply for purposes other than OfS funding. The changes are to refer to the definition of higher education in the Education Reform Act 1988, rather than the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, and to improve clarity. The revised definition (as drafted for the HESES19 survey) is:

1. To be included in the HESES population for 2019-20 and therefore potentially counted in HESES19, an instance must be for a course that meets our definition of recognised higher education for OfS funding purposes. That is:
 - a. A course that is designated under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011.
 - b. A 'course of higher education' as defined in Schedule 6 of the Education Reform Act 1988, other than one leading to a qualification in the Register of Regulated Qualifications.
2. Study for higher education-level credit (rather than towards a specific qualification) may be included if it meets the criteria in Schedule 6 of the Education Reform Act 1988 and **either**:
 - it is not credit that may count **only** towards a qualification in the Register of Regulated Qualifications

- it is credit that may count towards a course that is designated under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011.

Changes to how years of instance are assigned to price groups

19. The first criteria for assigning students' years of instance to price groups are common to all providers and are unchanged for HESES19 and HESF20:
 - a. Firstly, sandwich years out are assigned to price group C2.
 - b. Secondly, other years of study are mapped to price groups for students undertaking courses leading to qualification to practice in certain professions, or courses that provide further training for those already qualified in those professions. This applies in relation to medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, nursing, midwifery, certain allied health professions, social work and teacher training.
20. For any other provision, our 2018-19 data returns used four different methods for assigning years of instance to price groups. The method used depended on the characteristics of the provider and reflected how providers had historically returned, or were expected in future to return, data to the ESFA or the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This other provision was assigned to price groups based on:
 - a. Learning Direct Classification System (LDCS) codes for further education and sixth form colleges and academies.
 - b. HESA academic cost centres for other providers receiving OfS recurrent grant funding in 2018-19.
 - c. Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) codes of courses for other providers completing HESES18 but not funded by the OfS for 2018-19.
 - d. Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) codes of courses for the remaining providers making a forecast of their student numbers in 2019-20 in HESF19.
21. For 2019-20, we will ensure greater consistency in how providers assign activity to price groups. For all providers, this will be based on the subject codes of their courses. Not only does this ensure greater consistency for funding purposes, it also ensures consistency with the use of courses (rather than the departments in which students are taught) for other purposes, such as the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework, National Students Survey, Unistats, certain categorisations for the purposes of student support from the Student Loans Company, and students' applications through UCAS.
22. Further education and sixth form colleges (whether completing HESES19 or HESF20) will continue to map LDCS codes to price groups, reflecting the use of these codes by the ESFA. For all other providers we will use HECoS codes to map to price groups. HECoS codes (which replace the JACS system from 2019-20) will allow a greater focus on the subject of the course being taught, rather than of the cost centre of the teaching staff member.

23. In preparation for this approach, we have reviewed the mappings of LDCS and HECoS codes to price group used in the data returns that informed 2019-20 funding³. Our review is intended to apply a greater degree of consistency in how subjects are treated, both between different types of provider and across academically cognate disciplines. For the large majority of subjects, the mapping to price groups is obvious and should not result in significant changes to how activity is reported across price groups, but we recognise that there may be price group boundary issues for some subject areas.
24. As far as we considered appropriate, we have sought to ensure HECoS codes in the same level 3 category of the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH)⁴ are mapped to the same price groups, but not where we believe there is already different treatment for particular disciplines, reflecting their different relative costs. We recognise also that there are some differences in approach between the HECoS and LDCS coding systems and, where the impact is minimal (for example where no higher education activity is recorded in a particular subject at further education and sixth form colleges) we have not attempted to enforce consistency purely for its own sake.
25. The proposed mappings for HESES19 and HESF20 are set out in Annex A to this document. We have not provided the rationale for all the proposed changes, but examples of some of the broad issues that we considered include the following:
- a. Under HECoS, foreign language studies and foreign language literature are grouped together under CAH19-04 and mapped to price group C2. Under LDCS, these were separated, with foreign language literature mapped to price group D. We propose to change the LDCS mapping to reflect HECoS.
 - b. Similarly, the HECoS mapping does not differentiate between the study and performance of music, with most music-related subjects being grouped together under CAH25-02-02. We have changed the mapping of a number of music-related LDCS codes (LF and LG) to price group C1 to reflect this.
 - c. A number of LDCS codes (under PA, PE, PF and PG) relating to health care and related medical specialisms have been mapped to higher-cost price groups. Similarly, a number of HECoS codes relating to healthcare (grouped under CAH02-06-06 and CAH02-03-07) have also been mapped to higher-cost price groups. We believe this better represents the type of provision associated with teaching these subjects.
26. While we believe the proposed mappings provide a more consistent, fair approach across the two coding systems and between providers, we have a limited ability to model the effects this may produce for providers. Providers have not yet had to submit HESA data using HECoS

³ As published in the guidance documents for HEIFES18 (www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/heifes18-higher-education-in-further-education-students-survey-2018-19/) and HESF19 (www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/hesf19-higher-education-students-forecast-2019-20/).

⁴ For further information on HECoS and CAH, see <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/hecos>. Codes given in the text of this document are taken from version 1.3.1 of the CAH, available from the HESA website. Annex A shows both versions 1.3.1 and 1.2.

codes, and therefore we do not have a set of data which can be used to analyse these proposed changes.

27. We are seeking feedback from the sector on the appropriateness of the proposed mappings. We welcome feedback on any codes that you believe have been incorrectly mapped, but you should provide a rationale for why the costs related to that subject are not broadly comparable with other subjects in the assigned price group. Such a rationale should look at costs in a broad sense, and not solely focus on circumstances specific to a particular provider.
28. This is a technical exercise, looking at the mapping of course subject codes to our existing price group categories. It should not be seen as an opportunity to comment on the coverage or categorisations of price groups more broadly, or the rates of funding we provide through our high-cost subject funding for each price group. We will undertake, and consult on, a full review of our approach to funding over the coming months, and this will include a more fundamental review of how we prioritise funding towards high-cost activities, including different subjects.
29. We cannot guarantee that the combination of students' course fees and OfS grants will be sufficient to meet the full costs of teaching, either for a provider as a whole, or for different parts of its activities (whether broad subject groupings or individual courses). Evidence that a course or subject area is under-resourced does not provide a sufficient rationale for it to be moved to a higher-cost price group: we will look for consistency with the treatment of other subject areas where the relative costs of teaching are similar.
30. Providers themselves are responsible for the quality and accuracy of the data they submit to us and other bodies. We do not approve or agree their data submissions, but we monitor the reasonableness and credibility of data, including by comparing and reconciling different datasets and by carrying out audits. We will require providers to amend their data submissions, if we believe there are errors or inappropriate classifications which would significantly and materially affect our use of the data. This may include requiring changes to how providers use subject classifications (whether LDCS or HECoS codes) and hence how students are assigned to price groups.
31. Any comments should be emailed to recurrentgrant@officeforstudents.org.uk to arrive **by noon on Monday 5 August 2019**. Following this exercise, the final mappings will be published in the HESES19 and HESF20 guidance in September 2019.

Annex A: Proposed mapping of LDCS and HECoS codes to price groups

1. This annex is available to download as an Excel file alongside this document at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/data-collection-to-inform-funding-for-2020-21-notification-of-changes. The workbook contains two worksheets:
 - Table 1: Mapping of LDCS codes to price groups for HESES19 and HESF20
 - Table 2: Mapping of HECoS codes to price groups for HESES19 and HESF20.
2. Table 1 lists LDCS codes with their descriptions, along with columns that show:
 - the price group the code was matched with in HEIFES18
 - the proposed mapping for HESES19
 - whether the price group mapping has changed.
3. Table 2 lists the HECoS codes and the HESA definition for each code⁵, along with columns that show:
 - the price group that each code was matched with in HESF19
 - the proposed mapping for HESES19
 - whether the price group mapping has changed.
 - the Common Aggregation Hierarchy level 3 for each code.

For convenience, both CAH versions 1.3.1 and 1.2 are included in the table.

⁵ Taken from the HECoS vocabulary document available from the HESA website at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/hecos>.

Annex B: List of abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Definition |
|--------------|---|
| CAH | Common Aggregation Hierarchy |
| ESFA | Education and Skills Funding Agency |
| HECoS | Higher Education Classification of Subjects |
| HEIFES | Higher Education in Further Education: Students |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency |
| HESES | Higher Education Students Early Statistics |
| HESF | Higher Education Students Forecast |
| JACS | Joint Academic Coding System |
| LDCS | Learn Direct Classification System |
| OfS | Office for Students |



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